

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

OPINION p6

Indian women are carving out their space and reshaping the country

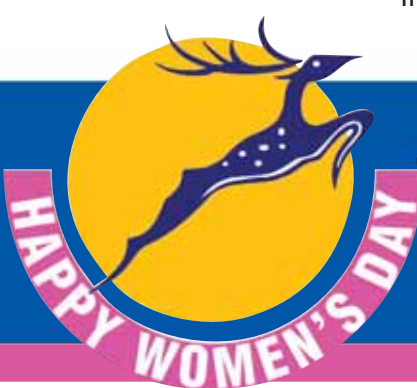


ANALYSIS p7

It's essential to reflect on women's journey of empowerment



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Modi in Kashmir Opposition knives out

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Mending fences with the people of Jammu and Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the Union Territory is touching new heights of development and breathing freely after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. The Valley, along with Jammu and Ladakh, will exercise its franchise for the first time in mainstream elections this Lok Sabha since the Abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. All political parties, national to regional, from the BJP to the Congress, the National Conference to the PDP, are bracing up for a tough contest, a litmus test that would indicate which way the people of region think and vote. While the BJP is putting up an indomitable face along with its allies, its regional rivals like the NC and PDP are already a part of the Congress initiated INDIA Bloc.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a visit to Srinagar on Thursday

PTI

partners," said Sanjiv Singh, AICC secretary. On his arrival at the highly fortified Bakshi stadium in Srinagar, the Prime Minister was accorded a warm welcome by the cheering crowd. A large number of Kashmiris were seen wearing 'Modi' masks and chanting slogans in the audience. Hundreds of

supporters, wearing tricolour turbans, also reached the venue while security personnel had a tough time managing the crowd. During his half-hour-long speech, the Prime Minister 'purposefully' avoided making any reference to the issue of granting 'Statehood' to Jammu and Kashmir and holding

Assembly polls to elect a popular Government. The last time Modi visited Kashmir was in February 2019. On ground zero several mainstream political parties in the valley were keenly awaiting a categorical statement from the Prime Minister as J&K has not had an elected Government since 2018. Batting in support of the development-oriented agenda of his Government, the Prime

Minister also described Jammu and Kashmir as the 'crown of India' claiming its success story will be the centre of attraction for the world. The Prime Minister also took a swipe at his rivals, accusing the Congress and its allies — including J&K's National Conference and the Peoples' Democratic Party — of misleading people for political gain.

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INDIA Bloc tempts Chirag with more seats

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The political chessboard in Bihar, with its crucial 40 Lok Sabha seats, is considered the most important battleground for both the ruling party and the Opposition. Recent developments indicate a slight shift as the RJD, Congress, and Left combine Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) have reportedly offered eight Lok Sabha seats to the faction led by Chirag Paswan. Sources suggest that Chirag may have to settle for only two seats to contest as part of NDA discussions, while the faction led by Pashupati Paras could secure four seats. To resolve the tussle, both Paswans may need to contest with three Lok Sabha seats each. The Grand Alliance partners have reached out to Chirag, offering eight Lok Sabha seats in Bihar and an additional two in Uttar Pradesh. Chirag's demand stems from the continuity of the Lok Janshakti Party led by his late father, Ram Vilas Paswan. He claims rights to the same seats won in the 2019 elections. Conversely, Pashupati Paras asserts that five out of the six Lok Janshakti Party MPs are now with him, and his party is part of the National Lok Janshakti Party, validating his claim to six seats. The family feud within one of Bihar's top political families — the Paswans — appears to have become a topic of interest for both the BJP-led NDA and the Congress-led



INDIA Bloc. The dispute between the national president of the Lok Janshakti Party, (Ram Vilas), and MP Chirag Paswan, along with his uncle and Union Minister Pashupati Paras, has led to a delay in the seat-sharing process for the NDA, of which the JD(U) led by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is now a part. Chirag and Nitish share a troubled equation and the former had sought a solace from the BJP when the latter broke away from the Opposition Bloc to get into the umbrella of the NDA. Simultaneously, there is also concern for the Opposition Bloc. Following the exits of JD(U) in Bihar and RLD in Western Uttar Pradesh from the INDIA Bloc to join the NDA, major stakeholders like the Congress and the Samajwadi Party are anticipating a bumpy road.

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NEWS BREAK

Terror mastermind Qasim declared designated ultra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi Government on Thursday declared Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative Mohammad Qasim Gujjar, the mastermind of several terror attacks, a designated terrorist. Announcing the Government's decision, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said LeT operative Gujjar has caused numerous deaths and injuries with terror attacks and is involved in planning a war against India. "Anyone found involved in activities against the unity and integrity of the nation will be dealt with ruthlessly," Shah posted on social media. Gujjar alias Salman alias Suleman with the intention to wage war against the country has been involved in carrying out a wide-range of terrorist activities, including coordinating, supplying, identifying locations for drones for dropping arms, ammunition, improvised explosive devices and cash, and delivering and managing consignments from across the border, according to an official notification. He has also been involved in creating new terror modules through recruitment and radicalisation by various means, including social media and other online encrypted communication applications, it said.

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BJD reaches out to BJP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A day after ruling BJD and opposition BJP held separate meetings on the possibility of forging an alliance before the upcoming elections for the Lok Sabha and state Assembly, none of the parties are forthcoming about whether the parties would contest together after more than a decade. "Odisha Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik on Thursday evening sent his close aide V K Pandian and the party's organizational secretary Pranap Prakash Das to New Delhi for a discussion with the BJP top brass. "Details of the discussion, however, are not yet known. "Though senior BJD leaders said after the meeting on

Wednesday that the party's decision would be in the 'larger interest of the state', a number of legislators were unsure whether they could contest the next elections. "Nobody has any idea whether he or she would be able to contest. Any seat may fall in the share of either party," said a BJD leader who attended the meeting at Naveen Niwas, the residence of chief minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik. "Even very senior leaders of the BJD were not sure whether they could contest from their existing seats, he said adding that the party's electoral alliance was broken exactly 15 years ago on March 8, 2009, following the BJP's demand for more seats.

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Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan rendered sleepless by Civet Cats

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's security is being beefed up further with immediate effect following threats from a different group of species in Kerala. As on date, Vijayan has the maximum security in the country to save him from the BJP and RSS activists who wave black flag whenever his cavalcade of cars passes along the roads. People in the routes through which the Chief Minister travels are asked not to wear black dress and from carrying black umbrellas lest the security commandos would misunderstand the same as a kind of demonstration against Vijayan. The new threat to the Chief Minister's life is not from human beings but from Asian Palm Civet, also known as



toddy cat or musang. Vijayan's official bungalow Cliff House has become the hunting ground of these rather harmless animals, which according to wild life enthusiasts are facing the threat of extinction. "The roofs of the house are fully infested with these Palm

Civets and they do not allow me to sleep peacefully," the Chief Minister reportedly told a group of Ministers and forest officials which has been constituted to control these animals from running helter-skelter in the bungalow. Vijayan is upset that the Palm Civets are targeting him,

robbing him of his sleep and denying him the water meant for consuming during night hours. "My well ironed shirts, dhotis and even undergarments get spoiled as these animals urinate and defecate on them. The smell of their urine and excreta are awful and I do not know why these animals selectively target me," said Vijayan. The forest department officials are busy devising plans to trap the Palm Civets and hand them over to the Thiruvananthapuram Zoo. But the zoo is not far from the Chief Minister's palace, and it's likely to return with full force to torment him. Interestingly, there has been no complaint against the Palm Civets by Vijayan's spouse, Kamala, who has been spared from the attacks by them.

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Amit Shah to inaugurate national cooperative database portal today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a groundbreaking move towards digitisation, Union Home and Cooperative Minister Amit Shah is all set to inaugurate the National Cooperative Database Portal, a pioneering centralised e-platform on Friday here.

This platform, a global first, is designed to streamline the management and dissemination of data related to over 8.5 lakh cooperative societies. The Minister will also unveil the National Cooperative Database 2023 Report, providing insights into the sector's progress and achievements on the occasion.

The creation of this repository, National Cooperative Database, addresses a longstanding need, as India despite being home to over 8.5 lakh cooperative societies having over 25% of the global total lacked a mechanism to track their activities, financial details, and membership



numbers. The portal will capture data on various parameters such as location, number of members, economic activities, and linkages, facilitating stakeholders including Central Ministries, State Governments, Cooperative Federations, and Sectoral Institutions like NABARD in planning, policy-making, and implementation to bolster the cooperative movement.

Moreover, the database will also help in identifying gaps in the geographical spread of cooperatives. A senior official from the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) which will play a key role in handling the portal being the central institution providing financial services to the sector emphasized the platform's significance. He said, "It will not only map all cooperative

societies and their ecosystems nationwide but also serve as a powerful tool to bridge geographical gaps and identify untapped areas and sectors ripe for cooperative expansion."

The data of cooperatives was collected on the National Cooperative Database in a phased manner from the various stakeholders such as Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS), Dairy and Fisheries, National Federations, State Federations, State cooperative banks (StCB), District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs), Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs), State Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank (PCARDB), Sugar Cooperative Mills, District Unions and Multi State Cooperative Societies (MSCS). More than 5.3 lakh primary cooperative societies has also been mapped from all the remaining other sectors.

Parties 82 per cent income from unknown sources came from electoral bonds: ADR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

About 82 per cent of the total income from unknown sources declared by national political parties in 2022-23 came from electoral bonds, according to a poll rights body. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) also said that the analysis of the national parties' audit reports and donation statements filed with the Election Commission (EC) shows that the sources remain largely unknown.

Out of the Rs 1,832.88 crore as income from unknown sources, the share of income from electoral bonds was Rs 1,510 crore or 82.42 per cent, according to the analysis of the financial reports for the fiscal year 2022-23 submitted to the poll panel, it stated.

For this study, six national parties were considered — the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Congress, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the National



People's Party (NPEP). The BJP declared the highest income from unknown sources among the national parties at Rs 1,400 crore or 76.39 per cent of the total amount. The Congress declared an amount of Rs 315.11 crore (17.19 per cent). The BSP has declared that it did not receive any funds from voluntary contributions — above or below Rs 20,000, sale of coupons or electoral bonds, or unknown sources of income, the ADR said.

Though the amount of donations from electoral bonds has been highlighted for the national parties, state parties also get a substantial amount of money from

electoral bonds, the NGO noted. Between the financial years 2004-05 and 2022-23, the national parties collected Rs 19,083 crore from unknown sources, it said. On its latest analysis for the financial year 2022-23, the ADR said among these unknown sources, the major contributor was income from electoral bonds, constituting a "massive 82.42 per cent of the total income from unknown sources".

Further scrutiny revealed that out of the total income from unknown sources, Rs 1,510 crore came from electoral bonds, it said. In addition, the Congress and the CPI(M) have also declared a

combined income of Rs 136.79 crore from the sale of coupons, constituting 7.46 per cent of the income from unknown sources, its analysis showed.

The BSP received Rs 29.27 crore from other known sources of income which included bank interest (Rs 15.05 crore), membership fees (Rs 13.73 crore), gain on sale of immovable property (Rs 28.49 lakh) and interest on income tax refund for 2021-22 (Rs 20.65 lakh), the organisation said.

The total income of the six national political parties in the financial year 2022-23 is Rs 3,076.88 crore, it said. Donations from voluntary contributions below Rs 20,000 formed 10 per cent of the income from unknown sources, totalling Rs 183.28 crore. Currently, political parties are not required to reveal the names of individuals or organisations giving less than Rs 20,000.

The ADR has suggested stringent measures to enhance transparency and accountability in political funding.

Mamata participates in women rally

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned that the Sandeshkhali storm would soon sweep across the State pulling down in its wake a "corrupt, oppressive and anti-women" Trinamool Government, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hit back presaging a "brewing anti-BJP tornado which will obliterate" the saffron outfit.

Desperate to pull back the steadily eroding women's vote base in the wake of Sandeshkhali uprising against land-grab and sexual assault the Chief Minister on Thursday led a massive rally on the eve of International Women's Day. At the end of the march joined by some women from the reverine islands Banerjee claimed that the members of the fairer sex were safest in Bengal.

"Some people are spreading false information about Sandeshkhali ... I don't say that some stray incidents do not take place here and there but the BJP leaders are taking advantage of it and spreading canards ... in a bid to defame Bengal," the Chief Minister said.

Claiming that Bengal was the "safest State in the country," Banerjee alleged how women were disrobed in States like Manipur and how they were tortured in places like Hathras and wondered why the "Centre sends 450 teams to Bengal to disturb us but they never send a single team to Manipur or Hathras where the women were tortured and



West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee participates in a rally on the eve of International Women's Day, in Kolkata, on Thursday PTI

paraded naked?" Earlier the Prime Minister had on Wednesday told in an all-women's rally at Barasat in North 24 Parganas of which Sandeshkhali is a block how the "TMC has committed a grave sin by torturing mothers and sisters ... that will make heads hand in shame."

At the end of march, themed "Mahilader Adhikar, Amader Angikar" (women's rights, our commitment) Banerjee said how the BJP was running a "publicity Government" which had "no other business but to spread lies about itself and others.

Stopping short of naming the Prime Minister Banerjee said how "photographs appear on ration bags and even injection (corona vaccine) certificates ... all in order to gain publicity at the expense of public money ... but they gave no photographs on death certificates when people died

of corona." Saying that "projects were being inaugurated with false claims" that they have been made by the BJP Government, Banerjee said, "yesterday many projects like the metro railways were inaugurated ... but I as the Railway Minister had sanctioned them and even ensured funds for them."

On the promises made by the Centre Banerjee said, "they are giving promises about Ujala Gas and such other schemes but after the elections prices of all these including gas, fertilizers and everything will go up."

For the first time raising the EVM issue Banerjee asked the TMC polling agents to remain alert as "they are introducing some chips in the EVMs ... you will have to be alert ... they even try to purchase you but you must remain cautious about the electoral malpractices that they might commit."

President Murmu stresses on supporting Navy through efficient logistics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With India emerging as a global power, the need for supporting the Indian Navy through efficient logistic management using the most advanced technology cannot be over-emphasised, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday.

Addressing a group of naval officers, she said they have to play a key role in ensuring the safety and security of the nation by equipping the Indian Navy with armament and other material resources at all times.

The officers of the Indian Naval Material Management Service (2019, 2020 and 2021 batches) and Indian Naval Armament Service (2023 batch) called on the President at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

Murmu said these days, countries are paying greater attention to their maritime goals and are expanding maritime cooperation and



President Droupadi Murmu during a meeting with officers of Indian Naval Material Management Service (2019, 2020 and 2021 batches) and Indian Naval Armament Service (2023 batch), at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Thursday PTI

undertaking joint exercises. "With India emerging as a global power, the need for supporting the Indian Navy through efficient logistic management using the most advanced technology, cannot be over-emphasised," she said. Both these services are vital for the smooth functioning of

the Indian Navy, especially during these times of geopolitical churning, the President said.

Murmu said she was happy to note that women officers are joining these naval services. "Women are now entering unexplored fields and making a mark. It is heartening to note

that our defence forces are also encouraging more women to join and giving them new opportunities to rise in their careers. I am happy to know that the Indian Navy has opened doors of all branches of officer cadre for women and is also taking other initiatives for gender equality," she said.

The President said she was confident "that the women officers present here today will inspire many more women to join these services".

She also highlighted the officers' responsibility towards the environment. "While undertaking various projects, you should ensure that the projects are energy efficient, eco-friendly and sustainable. We all are bound to give a healthy, safe and happy planet to our future generations," the President said.

Murmu said that as engineers, they can play a huge role in ensuring this by conceiving and implementing environmentally sound initiatives.

Terror mastermind Qasim declared...

From Page 1

The Home Ministry said the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, has been enacted to provide for more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations, for dealing with terrorist activities and for matters connected therewith.

The Central Government believes that 32-year-old Gujjar, who hails from Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district and is currently residing in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, belongs to the LeT, a banned organisation, the notification said.

He has been involved in various terror attacks and bomb blasts, and is responsible for the death and injury of a number of people in these terror incidents. This led to the decision to designate Gujjar a terrorist, it said. He will be the 57th individual to be designated a terrorist under anti-terror law UA(PA).

Kerala CM Pinarayi...

From Page 1

"Even the Palm Civets in Kerala have turned against the Chief Minister. Since Vijayan is under a heavy security blanket, the common man cannot approach him with their grievances and that could be the reason why the responsibility has fallen on Palm Civets. The Government of India should consider honouring the Palm Civets with some kind of national awards for their bravery and fearlessness," said A Jayashankar, political observer.

Wildlife enthusiasts are of the view that the Chief Minister can save himself from the attacks of Palm Civets by offering them fruits and vegetables. "All he has to do is to leave

bunches of bananas or sweet fruits on the dining table. It is because of the heavy security and denial of food to them that the civets urinate and defecate selectively on the Chief Minister's designer costumes," said a leading wildlife activist.

The non-stop protest demonstrations by the Palm Civets have upset Vijayan's rhythm of life as was evident from Wednesday evening's "Face To Face" programme addressed by him at the Capital city.

When the anchor person complimented the Chief Minister for his one hour long speech, Vijayan turned red and shouted at her and told her that he doesn't want such kind of flattery. The question being asked all over Kerala is "Pinarayi Vijayan ko gussa kyon aata hai?"

challenges," he continued. On the occasion, the Prime Minister also extended his "advance wishes" for the upcoming holy month of Ramzan and Maha Shivratri, which falls on Friday.

Modi flagged off projects worth over Rs 6,400 from Srinagar's Bakshi stadium and also distributed appointment letters to nearly 1,000 newly recruited Government employees in J&K. Modi also interacted with beneficiaries of various Government schemes including women achievers,

BJD reaches out to BJP

From Page 1

"Though both parties have so far agreed on principle to go for alliance, the seat sharing between the two parties is yet to be finalised.

"BJD insiders said that the ruling party which has 114 members in the 147-member Odisha Assembly would like to retain its seats in the alliance while BJP has been demanding 55 seats.

"While BJD wants at least 112 assembly seats leaving the remaining 35 for the BJP, it has not been accepted by the leaders of the saffron party.

"Ahead of the alliance idea came to the fore, the BJD leader Sasmit Patra had claimed that the regional party would win in 120 seats.

"The BJP which has 8 MPs in the Lok Sabha from Odisha, in turn, has been demanding 14 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in the state. But the BJD is ready to concede only 10, sources said.

"Whatever decision our central and state leadership take, we will abide by that," Lekhasree Samantsinghar, Odisha BJP's vice-president, said adding that the entire BJP state leadership including its president Manmohan Samal has been camping in Delhi.

"BJP sources said that the state leaders held a marathon discussion at the residence of Vijay Pal Singh Tomar, the BJP election in-charge for Odisha.

"The state BJP leaders were told to stay for one or two more days in the national capital till seat sharing is finalised. "The BJD and the BJP were in alliance for around 11 years between 1998 and 2009 and fought three Lok Sabha and two Assembly elections together. When Janta Dal was split in 1998, Patnaik formed his own party and joined the Vajpayee-led BJP government, as the steel and mines minister.

INDIA Bloc tempts...

From Page 1

This is due to the Hyderabad Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM, which has expressed intentions to contest multiple seats in Hindi heartland States besides Maharashtra. This move may upset the constituents of its minority voters.

The INDIA Bloc has high hopes from Bihar, UP, and Maharashtra, where the alliance is working to challenge and unsettle the BJP's numbers in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. Another battle looms over the Hajipur Lok Sabha seat, currently represented by Pashupati, where both contenders seek to run. Chirag stakes his claim on the Hajipur seat, citing the legacy of his late father, Ram Vilas Paswan.

With the AIMIM, according

to sources, planning to contest on as many as 20 seats in UP and about seven seats in Bihar may hurt interest of the INDIA Bloc. In the 2019 polls, the party had contested only one seat from the heartland, in Bihar. The AIMIM will also enter the fray in Maharashtra — where it could foray into Mumbai and Marathwada — as well as Telangana where besides its home turf Hyderabad, it may also contest from Secunderabad. The party, however, is unlikely to contest in the TMC-ruled West Bengal, where it had fielded candidates in the 2021 Assembly polls.

AIMIM currently has two seats in the Lok Sabha, represented by Asaduddin Owaisi (Hyderabad) and Intiaz Jaleel (Aurangabad). In 2019, Akhtar-ul-Iman, the AIMIM candidate from

Kishanganj, had polled almost 3 lakh votes, coming third behind the Congress and the JD(U) candidates. Kishanganj was the only seat in Bihar out of 40 that the Congress-RJD alliance had won in 2019. The AIMIM will again field Akhtar-ul-Iman from the seat.

Although the AIMIM had not fielded any candidates in UP in 2019, it had done well in local body polls in the State in 2017, securing 32 seats. And even though the party did not win any seat in the 2022 UP Assembly polls, the votes it had polled in more than 10 seats were more than the margin of defeat for the SP candidates there.

The AIMIM's bid to enter Mumbai and Marathwada, around 12 per cent of whose population is Muslim, would also be a concern for the INDIA Bloc.

Modi in Kashmir...

From Page 1

"For decades, for political gains, the Congress and its allies misled people in the name of 370. But today there are equal rights and opportunities for all. The people know the truth... they were misled."

Pointing out that Jammu and Kashmir has been the biggest victim of dynastic politics since Independence, the Prime Minister assured the people that the development campaign for Jammu and Kashmir will not stop at any

cost and the region will develop more rapidly in the next five years.

"This is the new Jammu and Kashmir for which we all were waiting for many decades.

"This is the new Jammu and Kashmir, for which Dr Syama Prasad Mukherjee sacrificed his life," the Prime Minister said.

"There is a sparkle of the future in the eyes of this new Jammu and Kashmir... there is courage in the intentions of this new Jammu and Kashmir to overcome the

challenges," he continued. On the occasion, the Prime Minister also extended his "advance wishes" for the upcoming holy month of Ramzan and Maha Shivratri, which falls on Friday.

Modi flagged off projects worth over Rs 6,400 from Srinagar's Bakshi stadium and also distributed appointment letters to nearly 1,000 newly recruited Government employees in J&K. Modi also interacted with beneficiaries of various Government schemes including women achievers,

lakhpati didis, farmers, entrepreneurs etc. Highlighting his future vision for J&K, Modi said, "Now, my next mission is 'Wed in India'. People should come to J&K and host their weddings... The world has seen how G20 was organised in J&K. There was a time when people used to say, who will go to J&K for tourism? Today, tourism in J&K is breaking all the records. In 2023, more than 2 crore tourists have come here... Now, even big celebrities from across the world are

coming to Kashmir." Expressing his gratitude for the affection of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister said "Modi will not leave any stone unturned to repay this debt of affection. I am doing all this hard work to win your hearts and I believe that I am on the right path. I will continue my efforts to win your hearts. This is Modi's guarantee and all of you know that Modi's Guarantee means the guarantee of fulfillment of guarantee."

Reacting to the Prime Minister's speech, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference in a statement said, "The Prime Minister's visit and speech have left many disappointed. It's the same worn-out rhetoric that Jammu and

Kashmir has been hearing for the past five years, yet there's still a lack of confidence in holding elections. People were eagerly awaiting announcements regarding Statehood, a promise of a democratically elected Government by September, job packages for the unemployed, relief from the power crisis, and major development projects. Unfortunately, none of these expectations were met."

Former Chief Minister and Chief of Peoples Democratic Party Mehbooba Mufti claimed the Government employees were forcibly mobilised to paint a pretty picture that all is well post-2019 & that people here are celebrating their collective disempowerment & humiliation. Stands contrary to earlier visits by previous PMs like Vajpayee & Dr Manmohan Singh at the peak of insurgency."

On his last visit to J&K, the Prime Minister launched multiple development projects — including those for education, railway, aviation and transport — worth over Rs 32,000 crore at MA stadium in Jammu. Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, Union Minister of

temperatures into vehicles at Budgam bus stand ferrying them to the PM's rally. Disheartening to see employees being forcibly mobilised to paint a pretty picture that all is well post-2019 & that people here are celebrating their collective disempowerment & humiliation. Stands contrary to earlier visits by previous PMs like Vajpayee & Dr Manmohan Singh at the peak of insurgency."

On his last visit to J&K, the Prime Minister launched multiple development projects — including those for education, railway, aviation and transport — worth over Rs 32,000 crore at MA stadium in Jammu. Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, Union Minister of

State, Dr Jitendra Singh and Rajya Sabha MP Ghulam Ali Khatana were present on the occasion among others.

The Jammu and Kashmir unit of the Congress party also reacted strongly to the visit of the Prime Minister. JKPC senior vice president and incharge media Ravinder Sharma in a statement said, "Modi has disappointed the people of Jammu & Kashmir by not announcing the restoration of Statehood & avoiding the core issues of restoration of democracy, snatching of land & job rights, record unemployment and unprecedented price rise, tax terrorism, issues of daily wagers and other temporary employees and various such categories who had pinned hopes on his visit."

Court summons Kejriwal after fresh complaint by ED

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi court on Thursday issued summons to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on a fresh complaint by the ED for evading its summonses in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam, saying there were "sufficient grounds" for proceeding against him. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Divya Malhotra directed Kejriwal to appear before the court on March 16. The judge passed the order on the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) complaint seeking prosecution of Kejriwal for repeatedly evading



though it was only a second ED complaint against Kejriwal with similar allegations, there was merit in the argument of the complainant that every

summonses on January 12 and 31 and February 14. The judge observed that under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the person summoned is bound to comply, and the law enables prosecution of those who don't. "Thus, as per the mandate of the Act, the respondent/proposed accused was legally bound to comply with the summons but allegedly he failed to do so. In view thereof, the complaint accompanied by the supporting documents discloses all the necessary ingredients constituting the offence punishable under law," the judge said. The judge noted that even

non-compliance of the summons issued by a public servant would amount to a separate offence. "To sum up, from the contents of the complaint and the material placed on record, prima facie offence under Section 174 of the IPC is made out and there are sufficient grounds for proceeding under Section 204 of the CrPC. Accordingly, issue summons to accused Arvind Kejriwal for the offence under Section 174 of the IPC for March 16, 2024," the judge said. The ED claimed in its complaint that to unearth the role of others who might be involved in the case, including that of Kejriwal, and to trace further proceeds of the crime,

the investigating officer (IO) sought to examine him for which the summonses were issued. Although a total of eight summonses were issued to Kejriwal requiring him to appear in person, the subject matter of the present complaint are the three summonses — dated January 12 and 31 and February 14, the ED said, terming the non-compliance of each of these summonses as a separate offence and clubbed together for the purposes of the subject complaint. "Instead of complying with the summons(es), the respondent sent 'frivolous' replies wherein he raised certain objections to the summons and deliberately made one or the other excuse for non-appearance to evade the processes. In this manner, he has avoided the investigation since November 2, 2023 which was the first date fixed for his appearance," the ED said. In his replies, Kejriwal had termed the summonses issued to him as "unsustainable in law" as they "failed to disclose the capacity in which he was being called i.e. As a witness or as a suspect or to be suffering from 'legal deficiencies' etc."

summoned, and at the stage of investigation it would be premature on the part of the agency to label the summoned person either a witness or an accused. "Thus, aggrieved by repeated omissions and failure to appear in compliance of the summonses, the complainant has filed the present complaint... "The proposed accused has intentionally omitted to obey the summons and to attend at the place and time mentioned in the summons which intention is manifest from the objections and queries raised by him in his replies and has therefore, committed the offence," the ED application said.

MCD clears proposals amid ruckus

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Municipal Corporation of Delhi passed 21 proposals, including one on construction of three multilevel parking, a community hall, and redevelopment of a stadium for sports training, amid ruckus in the last session of the House on Thursday. The civic body postponed eight proposals out of 29 tabled in the House. During proceedings, councillors from the opposition parties stormed into the well and raised slogans against the Aam Aadmi Party, which controls the corporation, over several issues, including the demand of an action against an AAP councillor accused of sexual harassment. The Mayor passed the proposals amid the chaos and adjourned the House till the next meeting. The passed proposals include construction of a multilevel car park each in Shastri park, Rajinder Nagar, and Rani Bagh. The corporation also approved the construction of DR B R Ambedkar Stadium with a cost of almost Rs 5 crore. The stadium will come up after dismantling an old office complex in the Darya Ganj ward. The civic body also passed a proposal to build a community hall in Pratap Vihar, Rohini zone.

Delhi University to introduce Science of Happiness course



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi University has decided to introduce a course on 'Science of Happiness' in the curriculum of its various programmes offered in five women colleges and varsity departments from the next academic session, an official statement said on Thursday. The university, along with five of its women colleges, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Rekhi Foundation for Happiness to offer the course and set up a Centre of Excellence for Science of Happiness in these colleges. According to the statement, the curriculum of the course will be developed and shared by the foundation. The Delhi University may modify this curriculum to match the needs of students and credit structure. "Happiness is most important in life. Understanding the idea and need of science of

Ankit Saxena murder case: Want death sentence for killers, says mother

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Justice will be delivered only when they are hanged," said Ankit Saxena's mother after a Delhi court on Thursday sentenced three people to rigorous life imprisonment for killing her photographer son over an interfaith love affair in 2018. The court of Additional Sessions Judge Sunil Kumar Sharma convicted Akbar Ali and Shahnaz Begum, the parents of Saxena's then-girlfriend Shehzadi, and the woman's maternal uncle



Mohammad Salim and also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on each of them. "I lost everything but they are enjoying life even behind bars. They have no remorse. Justice will be delivered only when they are hanged," Kamlesh said, asserting that she would move a higher court against the quantum of punishment. On the fines imposed on the convicts in the case, she said it was very low. "The compensation is also meagre... Although money will not bring my son back,"

she added. Earlier in the day, the court, while pronouncing the judgment, said a death sentence in the case was not justified. "They had clean antecedents with no previous involvement. Further, no history of any criminal inclination, drug abuse or any other addiction has been brought on record. Before being arrested in this case, the convicts were living with their families and were well-rooted in society," it said. Saxena, the only child of his parents, was also the sole bread earner in the family. After Saxena's death, his father Yashpal also died due to an ailment in 2021. Kamlesh still lives in a dingy lane of Raghbir Nagar in west Delhi where her son was stabbed to death in full public

view on February 1, 2018. Shehzadi's home is located a few metres away. On December 23 last year, the court convicted the trio in the murder case. They were charged under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 302 (murder) and 34 (common intention). Akbar Ali, Shahnaz Begum and Mohammad Salim had used a butcher's knife to kill Saxena in front of his parents. Shehzadi's parents had opposed her relationship with Saxena as the two belonged to different communities.

Fake call centre duping US citizens busted in Noida, 14 arrested

PTI ■ NOIDA
With the arrest of 14 people, the Noida Police on Thursday claimed to have busted a call centre being run to dupe US citizens on the pretext of tech support. The call centre was being run for over a month now from a location in A block of Sector 108 — less than a kilometre from the Police Commissioner's office here, according to police. A senior officer said the gang was busted by a team of Sector 39 Police Station and the Cyber department on

Wednesday. "A bogus call centre has been busted and 14 people arrested in this connection. The police have recovered 18 laptops, 1 internet router, 2 internet network switches, among others," DCP (Crime) Shakti Mohan Avasthy said. "The gang was involved in duping US citizens and other foreigners. The accused would reach out to foreigners through email informing them about problems with their computers. They also offered solutions to these concocted problems by asking them to connect on particular

helpline numbers," Avasthy said. Some gullible people who responded to their emails fell into their trap and called up the given helpline numbers, which landed up at their call centres using VOIPs and other technical means, the officer said. "Once in their trap, the accused would pose as tech support experts and ask the gullible people to make payment through gift cards which were then redeemed by the accused," Avasthy told reporters. The officer said the call centre operators also did not have

Delhi Cabinet approves power subsidy scheme



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi Cabinet on Thursday approved a power subsidy scheme for the 2024-25 financial year with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleging that some people tried to stop it. Nearly 22 lakh families who consume up to 200 units of electricity will continue to get zero bills while those who consume up to 400 units will get a 50 per cent subsidy. Congratulating the people of Delhi, Kejriwal, in a post on X, said, "Your 24-hour electricity (zero power cut) and free electricity has been extended till March 31, 2025. This also includes free electricity for the lawyers' chambers." "Many people had doubts about the electricity subsidy -- will it be available next year or not? Let me tell you that these people tried their best to stop it. But your son (Arvind Kejriwal) got this work done also," he added. Claiming that 24-hour power supply and free electricity are available only in Delhi and Punjab, Kejriwal, who is also the AAP national convener, said, "In the rest of the country, there are long power

Truck driver, helper nabbed for carrying marijuana worth ₹1 crore

PTI ■ GURUGRAM
Two men have been arrested in Sohna here for carrying 549 kg of marijuana worth around Rs 1 crore in a truck, police said on Thursday. The police action came following a tip-off on the movement of the alleged smugglers here, they added. Inspector Vishva Gaurav Acting on the information, a police team led by Inspector Vishva Gaurav, in-charge of crime unit at Sector 39 Police Station, reached Lakhuwas village and put up a barricade on Wednesday night. After some time, a truck coming from Palwal side was stopped and upon inspection, the police team found 549 kg of marijuana in the vehicle, police said. The seized marijuana was worth around Rs 1 crore, the police said. The driver could not produce any license and permit for the drugs found in the vehicle after which they were arrested, they said. The police then arrested the truck driver Tasleem, a resident of Chundika village in Nuh district, and his helper Mukim, a resident of Hathin in Palwal district, an official said. Inspector Gaurav said, "During police interrogation, the accused revealed they had brought the marijuana from Visakhapatnam and were taking it to supply in the Tauru area. We have seized the marijuana and the truck and are questioning the accused after taking them on police remand." An FIR has been lodged at the Sohna Sadar Police Station, he said.

Man stabbed to death in drunken row by relative

PTI ■ FARIDABAD
A man allegedly stabbed to death his 40-year-old brother-in-law with a knife during a drunk altercation in Sanjay Colony area here, police on Thursday said. The accused, Mohar Singh, stabbed Anshul Singh thrice, killing him on the spot, they said. According to police, Anshul was a native of Dharampur village of Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur Dehat district and had been living with his family in the area for many years. Mohar Singh, from Etah of the same state, and a cousin of Anshul's wife, also lived in

the same colony. Both of them worked in a workshop in Sanjay Colony, said police. On Tuesday night, since Anshul's wife was away at her parents' home, Anshul and Mohar Singh embarked on a drinking session, and were joined in it by one Manoj. While drinking, Anshul and Mohar Singh started arguing over some issue. As the fight escalated, Mohar Singh picked up a vegetable knife lying nearby and stabbed Anshul in the stomach with it. He slashed him in the neck and hand also. After the stabbing, Mohar

Singh and Manoj ran away. Police were informed about the incident by Arvind, an elder brother of the victim. An FIR was registered against Mohar Singh and Manoj under section 302 (murder) of the IPC at Mujesar Police Station on Wednesday, said police. "We have detained the main suspect Mohar Singh and are questioning him. We handed over the body to the kin after the post mortem and the further probe is underway," said Inspector Surender Singh, SHO, Mujesar Police Station. Anshul Singh is survived by his wife and a two and a half years old daughter.

LG orders termination of two non official members of DUSIB



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena has ordered the termination of two non-official members of the DUSIB who were serving as expert members without any requisite qualification in urban planning, Raj Niwas officials said on Thursday. Saxena issued the directions in the exercise of his powers under section 4(2) of the

DUSIB Act, 2010, they added. While one of them has been an expert member of the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) for nine years, the other person was appointed as a non-official member on March 9, 2022, the officials said. Both were drawing hefty remunerations in contravention of the law, they said. Saxena also sought a panel of fresh names for expert members who fulfil the requisite qualifications within a week, an official said. The LG has also directed the administrative department to frame rules regarding the service conditions of board members of the DUSIB.

Ration card is for PDS, not address proof: Delhi HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
A ration card is issued exclusively for obtaining essential commodities under the public distribution system and it cannot be considered a proof of address or residence, the Delhi High Court has said. Justice Chandra Dhari Singh, while dealing with petitions by erstwhile residents of Kathputli Colony seeking an alternative accommodation under the rehabilitation scheme following the redevelopment of the area, held that the requirement of a ration card as a mandatory document to claim benefit under the scheme was arbitrary and illegal. "As per the definition of the Ration Card, the intent of issuing the same is that it aims

to distribute the essential food items by way of the fair price shops. Therefore, it does not amount to becoming an identity proof of residence for any Ration Card holder," said the court in a recent order. "There is no mechanism set up by the authority issuing Ration Cards to ensure that the holder of the ration card is staying at the address mentioned in the ration card. "The aim of the ration card is to ensure that the citizens of this country are provided foodgrains at a reasonable price. Hence, it is not a reliable source of proof of address since the scope is limited to distribution of food items by way of the Public Distribution System," the court observed. The petitioners contended that authorities breached



their trust and played fraud on Kathputli Colony slum dwellers by suddenly changing the eligibility criteria in 2015 after the demolition of the entire colony as they wrongly mandated the requirement of a separate ration card for the first-floor dwellers of jhuggi. The court noted that a gazette notification issued by the

Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in 2015 itself disallows the use of a ration card as a document of identity or proof of residence, and in Delhi, fresh ration cards were not being issued on account of it having exhausted its state-wise ceiling of number of eligible households as per the 2011 census. Remarking

that authorities should have "introspected" into the intent and motive behind the issuance of ration cards as well as the harassment and pain caused to the petitioners, the court stated, "The requirement of a Ration Card as a mandatory document to be produced before the respondent as a proof to claim that first floor of the jhuggi is a separate dwelling unit is arbitrary and illegal." "The respondent should have exercised due caution and care before adhering to such a requirement. It should take a fair and realistic view of the circumstances before it.. The actions of the respondent are in clear violation of the petitioners' right to shelter as enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India," stated the court.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI

OFFICE OF THE DY. COMMISSIONER
REMUNERATIVE PROJECT CELL
(25th Floor), Civic Centre, New Delhi-110002

Request for Proposal for Selection of an Agency for Operations, Management and Collection of Parking Charges Using FASTag for four/six wheelers and UPI/NCMC/QR for two wheelers in MCD Owned Public Parking Spaces (01 cluster)

PRESS NOTICE E-TENDER

E-Bids are invited on behalf of Commissioner, MCD from eligible bidders for allotment of parking spaces in form of 01 cluster under the jurisdiction of MCD on monthly license fee basis in two bid system (Technical and Financial) for a period of three years and extendable further as per RFP vide Tender NIT No. 3344 dt. 07.03.2024. The Schedule of bids are as follows:-
1. Bid Download Start Date: 08.03.2024 at 09.00 AM onwards, 2. Pre-bid Meeting :- 11.03.2024 at 3:00 PM Conference Hall at 20th Floor, Civic Centre, 3. Bid submission start date:- 08.03.2024 from 09.00 AM onwards, 4. Last date of Submission of E-Tender: 14.03.2024 upto 03.00 PM, 5. Opening date of Technical Bids: 15.03.2024 from 03.00 PM onwards, at R.P. Cell/MCD Dept. 25th Floor, Civic Centre. For details visit MCDs website: www.mcdonline.nic.in and www.etenders.gov.in. Contact number-011-23227514.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
RO NO. - 96/DPI/MCD/2023-24
R.P.CELL

India emerging as a powerful nation: Rajnath

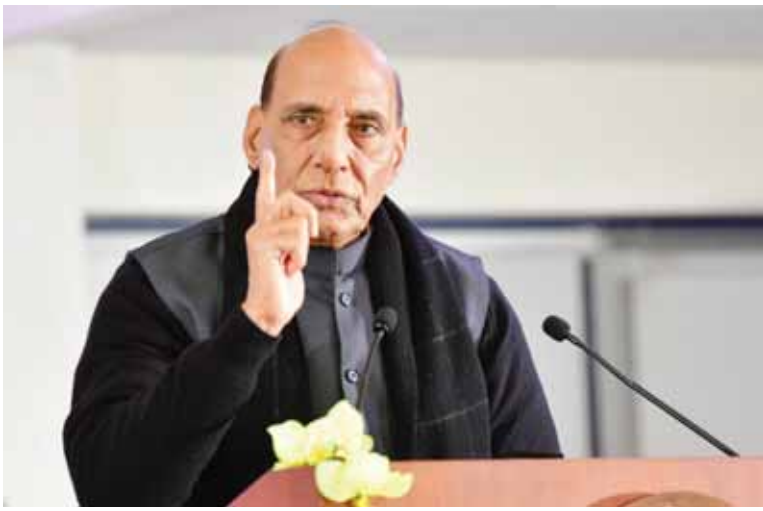
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Armed forces are well equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply if anyone casts an evil eye on India, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday against the backdrop of the nearly four-year border row with China in eastern Ladakh and concerns over Chinese military forays into the Indian Ocean.

Singh emphasised that the country's defence system has been "induced with a new energy" by the government in line with people's vision and it has resulted in India emerging as a powerful nation on the global stage with a strong and self-reliant military.

In an address at a defence summit, he also said India's defence apparatus is today stronger than ever as the Modi government has been focusing on bolstering it with the "sentiment of Indianness".

He termed "perspective" as the major difference between the current and the previous dispensations, stating that the present government ardently believes in the capabilities of the people of India, while those in power earlier were somewhat sceptical about their potential. "Today, our forces possess a strong willpower due to a powerful leadership at the centre. We are working continuously towards keeping the morale of the soldiers high," Singh said.



"They are equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply to anyone who casts an evil eye on India," he said. The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-and-half-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

Singh described promoting 'Aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in defence manufacturing as the biggest change brought about by the government, saying it is giving a new shape to India's defence sector. He also highlighted various measures

rolled out by the defence ministry for achieving self-reliance in the defence sector, including setting up of defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, reserving 75 per cent of the capital procurement budget for domestic industry and corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board among others.

"The annual defence production, which was around Rs 40,000 crore in 2014, has now crossed a record Rs 1.10 lakh crore," he said. "The defence exports today have touched Rs 16,000 crore from a meagre Rs 1,000 crore nine-ten years ago. We have set a target to achieve Rs 50,000 crore of exports by

2028-29," he said. The defence minister asserted that when it comes to technology, developing countries have two options — innovation and imitation — and New Delhi is laying special emphasis on making the country a technology creator rather than a follower.

"Imitating technology from developed countries is not wrong for those whose innovation capacity and human resources have not reached the level required to produce new technologies," he said.

"If a country imitates technology from other nations, it still moves ahead from old technology, however, the problem is that one becomes addicted to imitation and gets used to second-class technology," he said. This forces them to fall 20-30 years behind a developed country, he said.

"Losing national self-confidence is a bigger problem as one always remains a technology follower. This mentality comes into your culture, ideology, literature, lifestyle and philosophy," Singh said. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls this follower mentality as the mindset of slavery," he said.

The defence minister described it as the duty of the government, media as well as intelligentsia to guide the nation out of the mindset of slavery. "We should possess knowledge about others, but we must be aware of our national heritage too, and feel proud of it," the defence minister said.



PM Modi to present first ever National Creators Award today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will present the first ever National Creators Award at the Bharat Mandapam on Friday, his office said, noting that it has been envisioned as a launch pad for using creativity to drive positive change.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in a statement said that the award is an effort to recognise excellence and impact across domains, including storytelling, social change advoca-

cy, environmental sustainability, education and gaming.

"The National Creator Award has witnessed exemplary public engagement. In the first round, more than 1.5 lakh nominations across 20 different categories were received. Subsequently, in the voting round, about 10 lakh votes were cast for digital creators in various award categories. Following this, 23 winners, including three international creators, were decided," it said.

This overwhelming public

engagement is testimony that the award truly reflects the people's choice, it added. The award will be given across 20 categories, including best storyteller, the disruptor, celebrity creator, green champion, best creator for social change, most impactful agri creator, cultural ambassador, best travel creator, swachhta ambassador, new India champion, tech creator, heritage fashion, most creative creator (male and female), best creator in food category, best creator in education and international creator award.



India, US joint exercise Sea Defenders from tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Marking a significant step in bolstering bilateral cooperation between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the United States Coast Guard (USCG), the USCG Ship Berthoff reached Port Blair on March 7, 2024, for joint exercise with Indian Coast Guard (ICG). Codenamed "Sea Defenders-2024", the joint exercise is scheduled to take place on March 9-10 off the coast of Port Blair.

Giving details here on Thursday, Coast Guard officials said the exercise will simulate scenarios relevant to maritime piracy and asymmetric threats, including simulated drone attacks on commercial merchant traffic, joint maritime search and rescue operations, major firefighting, marine pollution response, and counter-drug interdiction exercises.

Additionally, a simulated medical evacuation will be conducted to enhance readiness in emergency situations.

The Legend-class United States Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) Berthoff is equipped with advanced technology and weaponry, including helicopter landing pad, state-of-the-art

sensors and communication equipment. The ship serves the operational function for complex law enforcement, defence, and national security missions, reflecting the USCG's commitment to maritime safety and security. Its visit to India travelling more than 16,000 Nautical Miles from Alameda, California reflects a shared commitment to upholding maritime norms and promoting a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

This exercise underscores the importance of international cooperation in addressing maritime challenges. It reaffirms the longstanding partnership between the Indian Coast Guard and the United States Coast Guard which is an important component of the strategic partnership between the two countries.

The Indian Coast Guard has extensive interactions with the United States Coast Guard, particularly in the field of training, exercises and cooperative measures. High level interaction between the two maritime agencies has been a regular feature towards maintaining professional relationships. Earlier, on September 22, USCG Ship Middett visited Chennai.

Centre to give tribal students training in semiconductor technology

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre will provide training to tribal students in semiconductor technology in collaboration with the Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Science. In partnership with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the Tribal Affairs Ministry also plans to use satellite-based technology on a pilot basis to improve mobile and internet connectivity in remote tribal villages.

Officials said there are high prospects of jobs in the semiconductor industry in the coming years against the backdrop of the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) launched by the government.

The ISM is a specialised and independent business division within the Digital India Corporation that aims to build a vibrant semiconductor and display ecosystem to enable India's emergence as a global hub for electronics manufacturing and design.



The tribal affairs ministry, in partnership with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), will establish a training fab unit which will offer a course on semiconductor technology to tribal students. An official said, "2100 NSQF-certified level 6.0 and 6.5 trainings in semiconductor technology will be offered over three years."

This will be an advanced job-oriented programme for 200 students with the potential of high-paying placements in the industry. IISc Director G

Rangarajan said the country wants to become self-dependent and self-sufficient in the area of semiconductors, and the institute will provide the best possible training to tribal students.

Launching the initiatives at an event here, Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda said the ministry wants to connect them with the PM-JANMAN scheme.

The PM-JANMAN, with a budget of around Rs 24,000 crore, focuses on 11 critical interventions through nine ministries and is aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) by saturating PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities.

"When we are moving forward for a Viksit Bharat, it is important that tribals are not left behind," the minister said. Munda also asked officials to give more emphasis on mobile connectivity in

remote tribal areas.

The officials said many tribal villages face inadequate connectivity because of geographical remoteness and terrain difficulties, and the ministry, in partnership with ISRO, plans to use satellite-based technology on a pilot basis to improve the connectivity of such tribal villages.

"V-SAT stations will be established to resolve connectivity issues (community internet, e-governance, societal development) in 80 villages in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha. The project will be extended to other states in the next phase," an official said.

ISRO chairman S Somanath, in a video message, said V-SAT connectivity will help the ministry handle education and healthcare-related activities. He said that the ministry could leverage satellite-based technology in areas such as agriculture and identifying tribal land going ahead.



CSS officers protest against delay in report on cadre review

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A large number of Central Secretariat Service (CSS) officers on Thursday carried out a protest march outside the Shastri Bhawan here against the "delay" in the submission of report by a cadre review committee which has hampered their promotions. The protest march was held during lunchtime.

"As far as today's peace march in Shastri Bhawan is concerned, more than 2,500 officers participated in it," said Udit Arya, President of CSS Forum — an association of the CSS officers. He said the next march would be held on March 11th on Nirman Bhawan premises.

"We are expecting a gathering of approximately 5,000 officers there," Arya said. The central government had constituted a high-level cadre review committee (CRC) on October 27, 2022 to assess the rising demand for manpower across various ministries/departments, keeping in view the increasing number of schemes and projects of government.

It was asked to suggest the steps for better cadre management and smooth career progression of the staff members of the central secretariat, the CSS Forum had said in a recent letter to the Secretary of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

Arya said that the CSS officers are only demanding that the submission and implementation of the report of the CRC be expedited. "We still have hope that the Hon'ble Prime Minister will intervene in the matter and direct the concerned officials for immediate submission and implementation of the CRC report," he added.

The association's letter to the DoPT Secretary had said that "if the government does not wake up from its deep slumber on the cadre review matter, a full-fledged non-cooperation movement will be started". The sanctioned strength of the CSS officers, considered as the backbone of the central government working, is 13,016, according to the latest data.

"As per information available with us, at least 20 departments of the government of India have sent requisition of more than 2,500 additional posts. The number will be huge if the data of all the departments is considered," the letter said. Due to the delay in submission of the report of the cadre review committee, these departments are facing a crippling shortage of manpower, which is also hampering official work, it claimed.

Opposition slams Centre over SBI seeking extension to disclose electoral bonds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Thursday hit out at the Centre over the State Bank of India (SBI) seeking more time from the Supreme Court to disclose details of electoral bonds and claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "absolutely terrified" of revealing his corporate donors to people.

The SBI moved the Supreme Court on Monday, seeking an extension till June 30 to disclose the details of each electoral bond encashed by political parties. In its verdict last month, the top court directed the bank to furnish

the details to the Election Commission (EC) by March 6. While Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh hit out at the government, saying, "Hide and seek in New India: Nation seeks, Modi hides!", CPI(M) said SBI approaching the apex court to extend the June 30 deadline is an "obvious ploy" to ensure the details are not revealed before the Lok Sabha elections.

The CPIM said SBI approaching the apex court to extend the June 30 deadline for handing over details related to electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India is an "obvious ploy" to ensure the details are not revealed before the Lok Sabha elections. "The



Pradhan Mantri Chanda Chipao Yojana, implemented by the SBI, is built on lies," he said. "The SBI's excuse was that its data on sale and encashment of electoral bonds is decoupled to maintain anonymity. According to the SBI, it would take months to match the buyers of the 22,217

electoral bonds issued since 2019 with the beneficiary parties," Ramesh added.

"In fact, the Finance Ministry is on record having noted in 2017 that 'The records of the purchaser are always available in the banking channel and may be retrieved as and when required by enforcement

agencies'. What has changed between now and then?" Ramesh asked.

"We also know for a fact that in 2018, when a political party tried to encash some electoral bonds that had expired, the SBI sought permission from the Finance Ministry and moved with alacrity to enable the encashment of these bonds," he said.

In a statement issued, the Politburo of the CPI(M) said, it is "unbelievable" that the State Bank of India, whose operations are digitised, cannot compile all the relevant details of electoral bonds in a few days' time, and alleged that the bank took the step under government's pressure.

SC orders to set up panel to look into Corbett Reserve ecological damage

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that the presence of a tiger in a forest is an indicator of the well-being of the ecosystem, the Supreme Court has ordered setting up of a committee to suggest measures for addressing the damage caused by illegal construction and felling of trees inside the Corbett Tiger Reserve.

The top court said the committee, to be formed by the Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, will assess the environmental damage caused to the reserve and quantify the cost for restoration.

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justices BR Gavai, Prashant Kumar Mishra and Sandeep Mehta said the committee shall consider the question as to whether tiger safaris can be permitted in the buffer or fringe area.

If such safaris can be permitted, what should be the guidelines for it? the court said. The committee will recommend measures for restoration of the reserve to the state in which it was before the damage was done, it said.

"Identify the persons/officials responsible for such a damage. Needless to state that the State shall recover the cost so quantified from the persons/delinquent officers found



responsible for the same. The cost so recovered shall be exclusively used for the purpose of restoration of the damage caused to the environment," the bench said.

The apex court said the committee will consist of a representative each from the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Wildlife Institute of India, Central Empowered Committee and an officer of the environment ministry not below the rank of joint secretary as its member secretary. Highlighting the importance of tigers in the ecosystem, the top court quoted from the epic 'Mahabharata' to say, "The tiger perishes without the forest and the forest perishes without its tigers. Therefore, the tiger should stand guard over the forest and the forest should protect all its tigers."

The SC said unless steps are taken for the protection of tigers, the ecosystem revolving around them cannot be protected.

It also directed that the committee would recommend the type of activities that should be permitted and prohibited in the buffer zone and fringe areas of the reserve. "While doing so, if tourism is to be promoted, it has to be eco-tourism," it said.

The type of construction that should be permissible in such places would have to be in tune with the natural environment.

The committee, it said, shall suggest the number and type of resorts that should be permitted within the close proximity of the protected areas, besides restrictions to be imposed on resorts so that they are managed in tune with the object of protecting and maintaining the ecosystem.

The committee shall also make recommendations about noise restrictions, it said.

"The measures that are required to be taken for effective management and protection of Tiger Reserves which shall be applicable on a Pan India basis," the court said of the tasks of the proposed panel.

The court's judgment came on a petition filed by environment activist and lawyer Gaurav Bansal alleging destruction of the tiger habitat and a decline in tiger density in the Lansdowne Forest Division owing to illegal constructions in the Pakhro Tiger Safari as well as unlawful felling of thousands of trees.

New Central rule requires registration of exotic pets

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Individuals in possession of exotic species like soft shell turtles and/or exotic birds like budgerigars and cockatoos, as well as live animals listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will now have to register them with the Wildlife department in their respective States.

The Union Environment Minister has issued a notification in this regard on February 28. This move aims to monitor and track the ownership of these animals, ensuring they receive proper care and preventing illicit trade and exploitation.

The notification, titled the Living Animal Species (Reporting and Registration) Rules, 2024, was issued by the Ministry on February 28. Under these rules, owners of such pets are required to pay a registration fee of Rs 1000 per animal.



Last year, the Ministry had started regulating the sector engaged in breeding species of various bears and pandas such as the Red Panda, various species of dogs, wolves, cats, apes, chimpanzees, gibbons, lemurs, squirrels, armadillos, various birds including Hornbills, Macaws, Parakeets, Owls, and various reptiles among others. They have been asked to obtain Breeders of Species Licence under the Breeders of Species Licence Rules, 2023 notified on April 24 by the Union Environment Ministry.

Now by ensuring registration, the government seeks to strengthen conservation

efforts and protect endangered species by maintaining a comprehensive record of their ownership and ensuring they are kept in suitable conditions.

"The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (53 of 1972), provides the legal framework for the protection of various species of wild animals, management of their habitat and also for the regulation and control of trade in the products derived from various parts of wild animals," said an official from the Ministry.

He explained that the Act was last amended in 2022 following which the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022 has come into force since 2023 April 1. Section 49 M of the Act provides for registration of possession, transfer and birth and reporting of death of living scheduled animal species which are listed in the Appendices of CITES and as such listed in the Schedule IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Nari in the House

Indian women are busy carving out a place for themselves at the political high table

A significant transformation is underway — one that marks the increasing prominence of Indian women in politics, a domain largely dominated by males. Over the years, Indian politics has evolved and women have emerged as influential stakeholders, challenging tradition and reshaping the nation's political narrative. The growing women's participation is not only a testament to their perseverance but it also reflects a broader societal shift towards inclusivity. The Indian political arena has long been characterised by patriarchal structures and gender disparity, with women often being marginalised or relegated to the periphery. However, the tide is turning in a big way, and women are now asserting their presence with greater vigour. Across political parties, there is a concerted effort to woo women voters, recognising their significance as a crucial demographic. One of the primary catalysts for the increasing importance of women is the implementation of gender quotas and reservations in local governance bodies. The landmark 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution in 1993 mandated one-third of seats in local bodies to be reserved for women. Building upon that success, there was a clamour for similar quotas in State Assemblies and Parliament, which finally was given shape to by the Narendra Modi Government.



The existence of the women's reservation Bill has galvanised political parties to maximise women's representation. The reservation of seats for women in Parliament holds the promise of transforming political India. Ensuring a more equitable distribution of seats, it addresses the underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies. It sends a powerful message about the value of women's voice in shaping the nation's future and underscores their rightful place in governance. Beyond legislative measures, parties across the ideological spectrum are actively courting women voters by addressing issues that resonate with them, such as health-care, education, safety and economic empowerment. Indeed, women today are no longer content being passive bystanders in the political process; they are demanding a seat at the high table. Their participation brings a fresh perspective to governance, prioritising issues that have long been neglected and advocating for policies that promote gender equality and social justice. However, challenges remain in achieving gender parity in Indian politics: Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, entrenched gender stereotypes and systemic barriers continue to hinder women's participation and representation. Moreover, women in politics often face harassment, intimidation and discrimination. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts from policymakers, political parties, civil society and general public to create an enabling environment for women leaders. By embracing the principles of gender equality, India can truly fulfil its democratic aspirations and emerge as a beacon of inclusive governance for the world to emulate.

tribe of seats, it addresses the underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies. It sends a powerful message about the value of women's voice in shaping the nation's future and underscores their rightful place in governance. Beyond legislative measures, parties across the ideological spectrum are actively courting women voters by addressing issues that resonate with them, such as health-care, education, safety and economic empowerment. Indeed, women today are no longer content being passive bystanders in the political process; they are demanding a seat at the high table. Their participation brings a fresh perspective to governance, prioritising issues that have long been neglected and advocating for policies that promote gender equality and social justice. However, challenges remain in achieving gender parity in Indian politics: Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, entrenched gender stereotypes and systemic barriers continue to hinder women's participation and representation. Moreover, women in politics often face harassment, intimidation and discrimination. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts from policymakers, political parties, civil society and general public to create an enabling environment for women leaders. By embracing the principles of gender equality, India can truly fulfil its democratic aspirations and emerge as a beacon of inclusive governance for the world to emulate.

Women's power is breaking barriers

From redefining traditional roles to spearheading critical discussions on global issues, women are carving out their space and reshaping the country



NIRUPAMA MENON RAO

I believe every Indian woman can seek inspiration from legendary individuals like Gargi, that extraordinary Indian woman sage, who is said to have challenged her seniors with disturbing questions on the nature of human existence and the life of the soul. Gargi's example reminds us that if a woman can contemplate the origin of the universe, then there is no field of activity or realm of thought that is not within her reach. In our time, women are breaching traditional bastions and excelling in their professional roles. They do so because women before them have fought even tougher battles. For instance, the field of foreign relations and diplomacy was, for long, the exclusive preserve of men. The very thought that statecraft, the conduct of relations between sovereign countries, could involve women was anathema, even up to a few decades ago. Today, the Indian Foreign Service can proudly count in its ranks a growing number of women Ambassadors and High Commissioners, not to mention all its other women diplomats, who represent India abroad, apart from women who handle complex assignments at the headquarters of the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi. What is the impact women have on public life? First, women push our institutions to be more open and responsive. Second, women ask us all to re-examine the traditional goals and priorities that we have set, to step back for a moment, and to examine the larger picture. Are the goals and principles we set for ourselves as societies conducive to building a humane and civilised world? Even there, we try not to lose a sense of the detail, like the ancient Sanskrit saying: *samedamvicapasyema*: May we see the world as a whole, may we see it in detail. Third,



women bring a different set of skills in conflict management and problem-solving. These can often provide solutions and offer alternatives that are not one-sided and hence acceptable to many stakeholders. Indra Nooyi once said that our task is to create a world in which we feel safe, settled and happy. And, we must ask questions. How have we as women fared in democracy? And, are we the beneficiaries of globalisation? Does multiculturalism promote gender welfare and equality? Do our women enjoy full and equal citizenship? The hurdle of complete literacy is yet to be crossed. Violence is a companion in many women's lives. Rape, molestation and sexual harassment are other manifestations of violence against women — literally examples of war against women in peacetime. Patriarchal structures perpetuate female inequality. More active participation of women in governance can help bring the issues that affect their well-being onto the highest political agenda of government. More women in India are also voluntarily exercising

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT ONCE SAID: 'TOO OFTEN THE GREAT DECISIONS ARE ORIGINATED AND GIVEN FORM IN BODIES MADE UP WHOLLY OF MEN, OR SO COMPLETELY DOMINATED BY THEM THAT WHATEVER SPECIAL VALUE WOMEN HAVE TO OFFER IS SHUNTED ASIDE WITHOUT EXPRESSION'

their constitutional right of adult suffrage which is a positive and encouraging trend in Indian politics. The representation of more women in Parliament and legislative institutions across the country is a critical necessity. Today, the national average is only 14 per cent. The passage of the Bill in September 2023 by both Houses of Parliament to reserve one-thirds of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women was a landmark development which it is hoped will fundamentally alter the landscape of women empowerment in our country. Our women need more visibility. Society is beginning to recognise that women are not victims, they want agency, they have chosen survival, that gender justice is what the women of India want. The tide is slowly turning against what has been referred to as the "cultures of silence and impunity" surrounding women. Decision-making and the prioritisation of issues that affect human security have to involve women and men, not just men alone. Democracy,

human rights, development and good governance are of concern to women as much as men. Eleanor Roosevelt once said: "Too often the great decisions are originated and given form in bodies made up wholly of men, or so completely dominated by them that whatever of special value women have to offer is shunted aside without expression". This can change only if more and more women enter and occupy positions in public service. As an example, women need to be more involved in determining the future trajectory of many issues of foreign policy concern for India, whether they are border and territorial questions, neighbourhood policy, trade and inter-connectivity, regional economic cooperation and security, energy security, politico-military issues, and public diplomacy, to name a few. This will help better mainstreaming of gender-related issues also into the working of our foreign policy and bring new perspectives to bear on policy concerning our neighbours, in particular. Women can bring courage and resilience of the feminine sort into the public sphere, a concept of sisterhood that is focused on long-term solutions to problems, the building of common ground, and the creation of cross-border synergies for peace and reconciliation. Preparing our women and skilling them in the art of negotiation and empowering them to build peace is key. I believe, like many of my sisters, that history can and must be pushed in a positive direction. We can do it.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary and was Ambassador of India to China and the US; views are personal)

A call to action for women's leadership

It's crucial to recognise the pivotal role women's participation plays in driving inclusive and sustainable development in India

India passed the long overdue women's reservation bill unanimously in the parliament. As Indian women, we must never forget that this victory is a narrative woven with threads of not just struggle but also of hope. The passage of the historic bill celebrates the story of Indian women's resilience and courage in the face of adversity. For centuries, Indian women have fought against discrimination, marginalisation, and violence to assert their fundamental rights and reclaim their status in society. Despite facing immense odds stacked against them, Indian women have soldiered on. They have refused to remain silent bystanders and instead became the authors of their own transformative journey. Women's participation is key to realising demographic dividends in India. With one of the youngest populations globally, India must leverage its human capital fully. Enabling women's education and participation in the workforce can contribute to strengthening India's economic growth over the coming decades. Moreover, prioritising women's rights makes India a responsible global power. As home to one-sixth of humanity, our nation has an obligation to pioneer models of sustainable development that include women as equal partners. The country today stands at the 140th rank in the "UN: Women in Politics Report 2023" with a mere female presence of 15 per cent in the Lok Sabha and 13.8 per cent in



the Rajya Sabha. In state legislative assemblies, women on average constitute 9 per cent of the total members. Hence, the need for the women's representation bill stands not just as a matter of political reform but as a fundamental step towards societal progress and inclusive governance. It is not just a legislative necessity but a crucial instrument, as more women in positions of power and influence bring a variety of benefits that extend far beyond gender equality. However, it was disappointing to see the implementation of the same pegged to two factors— census and delimitation. It is an act that will come into force many years after its passing. The three main pillars of sustainable development—economic, social, and environmental—are dependent on gender equality. According to research by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), doubling the share of women in the workforce would help raise India's GDP growth rate from 7.5 per cent to 9 per cent. Beyond economic growth, gender equality and women's

empowerment are essential to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has been 10 years since the Indian government brought about amendments to the Companies Act, making it mandatory for listed firms to have at least one woman on the board of directors. India was the first developing country to introduce quotas for women on boards in 2013. By the end of FY23, over 4,700 women directors were serving on the boards of 3,200 listed companies in the country. The regulatory push has increased women's representation in Indian corporate boardrooms to 18 per cent in 2022, but a lot more still needs to be done. The alarming statistic that fewer than 20 per cent of India's women are engaged in paid employment, compared to over 70 per cent of men, underscores the urgency of addressing this imbalance. Despite the progress made, women still face unique challenges in their leadership journeys. These include unconscious biases, limited access to mentorship and networking opportunities, and the balancing of work and personal responsibilities. India has spearheaded a normative shift in the narrative on gender equality and empowerment, with a focus on women-led development, and not just simply women's development. This shift in the narrative on gender norms brings women as actors to the centre stage of the development story. It underlines that women are not just passive subjects but are

agents, collaborators, and decision-makers in the stories of transformative socio-economic change. However, while we celebrate India's efforts to set benchmarks on the global and regional scale, there is also a need for greater reflexivity on the national narrative on women-led development. The participation pitch for women as changemakers will be an incomplete transformative story if it is not matched with implementation and sustainability drive at the local level. It goes without saying that the story of women-led development needs to pay attention to the intersecting axis of oppression and subjugation that women continue to face in India given their positionality on the intersecting axis of caste, class, religion, and region. This begs the question: if we know women are catalysts capable of great change, why aren't we doing more to leverage this potential? Just imagine the kind of transformation we could bring about in society if we were to institutionalise this inherent potential of women at a national level! In conclusion, women's empowerment aligns perfectly with the dream of raising India to new heights of inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development. We cannot afford to squander this opportunity. The time for decisive action is now.

The writer is a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha from Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray); views are personal

INVESTING IN WOMEN A PATHWAY TO GLOBAL PROSPERITY



NISHTHA SATYAM

In the mosaic of global progress, the empowerment of women stands as an indispensable cornerstone. As the world commemorates International Women's Day 2024 under the banner "Invest in women: Accelerate progress," the clarion call reverberates through the corridors of power, urging concerted action towards gender equality. In this epoch of multiple crises, it is imperative to recognise that investing in women is more than economic pragmatism or a moral compulsion. It's both, the right and bright thing to do. At the heart of this transformative agenda lies the need for transformative and sustainable financing. Through initiatives like the project in Tablón de Gómez, Colombia, UN Women has exemplified unwavering dedication to uplifting women from the shackles of marginalisation. Deyanira Cordoba's journey, emblematic of countless others, underscores the transformative power of education and empowerment. By imparting knowledge of economic rights and bodily autonomy, UN Women has sown the seeds of empowerment, fostering resilience amidst adversity. As we continue to confront the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical upheavals, and climate catastrophes, the spectre of poverty looms large,



casting a shadow of uncertainty over the lives of millions. Shockingly, an estimated 75 million people have been plunged into severe poverty since 2020, with women and girls bearing the brunt of this socio-economic upheaval. Without decisive action, the spectre of 342 million women and girls languishing below the poverty line by 2030 looms ominously. It's important to recognise the vast, often unrecognised contribution of women's unpaid labour. When a woman dedicates her time and energy to unpaid tasks, such as caring for her family or contributing to her community, she isn't merely engaging in domestic chores; rather, she is actively boosting the economy. It's akin to a hidden engine propelling our economic growth, often overlooked and undervalued. In most countries, the national social sector relies heavily on women's unpaid labour, from household chores to community development initiatives. Despite their significant contributions, women's unpaid labour goes unrecognised in traditional economic frameworks.

Moreover, women play a pivotal role as stewards of resources and drivers of innovative solutions. They are natural climate change warriors and agents of change. Across the globe, women are at the forefront of sustainable development initiatives, from grassroots conservation efforts to pioneering renewable energy projects. Their unique perspectives and lived experiences enable them to identify and address environmental challenges in ways that are both effective and equitable. Studies have shown that empowering women economically leads to greater investment in sustainable practices, as women are more likely to prioritise the long-term well-being of their families and communities. By recognising and amplifying the contributions of women to sustainability financing, we can unlock new pathways towards a greener, more resilient future for all. Additionally, financing isn't merely about inclusion; it's about recognising the immense potential of women-led development, which includes feminist narratives,

organisations, and feminist economics at the centre. By investing in these initiatives, we not only promote gender equality but also foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development. Women must be at the forefront of decision-making processes, shaping policies and programmes that reflect their needs and aspirations. This requires a concerted effort to dismantle systemic barriers and create an enabling environment that empowers women to thrive. The global South, is leading this chorus. Amidst the tumult of our times, feminist organisations emerge as beacons of hope, steadfast in their commitment to challenging entrenched systems of oppression. However, their noble endeavours are hindered by a chronic lack of resources, receiving a mere 0.13 per cent of total official development assistance. This International Women's Day, let us heed the clarion call to support feminist change-makers, empowering them with the resources and recognition they rightfully deserve. For in their tireless advocacy lies the promise of a more just and equitable world for all. As we navigate the complex global challenges, let us remember that investing in women is not merely a matter of economic calculus; it is a moral imperative, a testament to our commitment to human rights and social justice. In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home."

(The author is Deputy Country Representative for UN Women; views are personal)



MRINALINI DARSWAL

FIRST COLUMN

I NEED A WIFE!

Reflecting on women's roles through AI-generated poetry

Another day of juggling job, school, home, kids, family, doctors - just for amusement, I asked an AI pilot, "What if I had a wife?" AI, being the sensitive, nurturing programme/ creature they are (not sure about AI gender!), apparently found the query profoundly existential and wrote me a poem. They must have thought prose too plebeian to answer such solemn probes as we faithfully execute every year on March 8. This 8th, I will do my annual reflection using the AI verses, wistfully wishing women's issues would be resolved with the vigour AI is moving - faster than the speed of light. AI version 2024; Verse 1:

"Women suffer because they do not have wives to serve them They have to juggle work and home and often feel overwhelmed They have to cook and clean and care for and sometimes face abuse They have to smile and nod and bear and sometimes feel confused."

What are my expectations of my wife? Raised in India by a working mom, surrounded by a posse of grandmas, aunts, and cousins, married, and not working, I had plenty of real-life references to organically form my expectations even before I could read. I knew this verse by heart, then, even if not the exact words.

Multiple intersecting factors shaped my women kin's choices and agency over those options: barriers, aplenty, pervaded systems, structures, cultures, and thoughts. Sending sons to school was automatic. Sending a daughter was a choice. Good housekeeping was the top merit, even of working women. My mom struggled to keep a good house while raising kids and handling an executive job, as my dad was posted miles away on his job. He got to be on his own. He was not my mom's wife!

AI version 2024; Verse 2:

"But what if women had wives too, who would share their load Who would support and comfort them and walk the same road Who would respect and value them and treat them as equals Who would love and cherish them and see them as individuals?"

I have a terrible case of FOMO when I see my male colleagues coming for their courses with their wives, who care for everything for them as they singularly focus on their coursework. I cook, clean, shop, and look after kids while maintaining



my grades, and it can be a struggle sometimes. For reconciliation, this is my choice. My husband is the epitome of support, but he is far. He is not my wife!

I wish I had a wife to care for my children when my boss expected me to stay in the office after office hours, as that was the dogma. He would frequently walk across my chamber to check whether I stayed. I lost a few points in my annual review because I could not remain in the office till the stars were out. My wife would have taken care of

the kids, and kept the stove warm, as I took care of my boss's need to look and feel productive by oversteering in the office.

Women often face more significant difficulties than men in balancing their work and family responsibilities. A very recent example bears it. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women's economic empowerment and gender equality, as women have faced higher job losses, increased unpaid care work, and greater exposure to health and safety risks. Post-COVID, women are finding accessing decent work and social protection, especially in the informal sector, where women are overrepresented and have less access to benefits and rights, difficult. Women rarely participate in decision-making and leadership for the future, as they are underrepresented in the sectors and institutions shaping recovery, such as health, science, technology, and finance. Violence against women escalated during the pandemic, as men needed stress release and access to services and support, already scant, almost disappeared during lockdowns.

I wish I had a wife, as by assumption, I would be a man then (sorry for not being inclusive here and taking the binary route). Then, I would dominate the world, be the majority on the boards and committees, and lead all the countries of the world, with very few exceptions. I could be assertive in the official meetings, even belligerent, without inviting comments like, "Imagine her husband's plight!" I would uproariously dissect politics, the economy, and find ways to end world hunger at office parties and shush if a lady officer wandered our way. Patronising would come so naturally to me, as there are so few women at higher levels that we have not had much experience with norming their presence in our circles.

Studies suggest women who display leadership qualities may be seen as too aggressive, bossy, or unfeminine. In contrast, women prioritising family or caregiving may be seen as less committed, competent, or ambitious.

AI version 2024; Verse 3:

"The answer is not simple, for every woman is unique Some may prefer to have wives; some may prefer to seek."

I am stuck by the profundity of the meaning behind this juvenile attempt at rhyme as AI intuits that women can choose to have wives. If poverty is a lack of choice, women are frequently poor. And I chuckle at what AI thinks of the fate of women who do not prefer to have wives; they prefer to seek- female Tulsidas'es in the making!

AI version 2024; Verse 4:

"Women suffer because they do not have wives to serve them But maybe women suffer more because they do not serve themselves."

We, women, have come far from being shovered to burn on the pyres of our husbands, burnt as witches, stoned for adultery, having to produce four witnesses for rape, being invisible behind veils, facing harassment- sexual or otherwise at home and work...well, no, sadly, not all of them. However, the world has made substantial progress in ensuring women's rights, giving them significant voice and choices relating to their being. Going by the final verse, we may start creating spaces, and voices, and choices for us, instead of waiting for men to concede.

If you ask me (and not AI) the one thing to focus on this 8th, I will say we must start with the young and impressionable. We may not be able to transform the gender-normative milieu any time soon. Still, we can counter the toxic influences of the status quo by providing quality and gender-responsive education that respects diversity and fosters social-emotional skills. We must teach children about the history and struggle of women's movements and achieving the partial success and challenges of gender equality. Promote positive and respectful relationships among peers of all sexes within a safe and supportive environment. Parents, families, communities, and nations must come together to recognise, challenge, and change gender stereotypes and support girls' education and empowerment.

Do you wonder if AI is a woman? I know God is.

(Dr Mrinalini Darswal, IAS, is a physician, an economist and a public health graduate from Harvard. She is trained in AI and Machine Learning; views are personal)

The indomitable spirit of Indian women

As we celebrate International Women's Day, it's essential to reflect on women's journey of empowerment and the strides they have made in various fields



DARSHANA JARDOSH

India, a country rich in diversity, culture and history, is a tribute to the fortitude and achievements of its women.

Over the years, women in India have played multifaceted roles, contributing significantly to the nation's growth, development and overall achievements. India's history is replete with stories of strong and resilient women who defied societal norms to carve a space for themselves. From Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi to Sarojini Naidu and from Savitribai Phule to PT Usha, these trailblazers have laid the foundation for gender equality. Women from various eras and fields have been the driving force behind making it the global player that it is today.

Women contribute significantly to the social fabric of a country, playing vital roles in families, communities and institutions. From the pioneers of the past to the innovators of the present, women have changed Indian culture forever. Indian women have not only excelled within the country's borders but have also made their mark globally. From business leaders and scientists to artists and athletes, Indian women have showcased their talents on the international stage, earning accolades and inspiring a new generation of individuals to dream big.

While women have entered and established themselves in every sector of governance and socio-political structure, there is still room for improvement. In fact, gender equality has been persistently highlighted in all aspects of life under the leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi. The Prime Minister has also made it quite evident where he wants the country to go: from development driven by women to development led by women. This is such a radical shift in perspective that now reflects on the achievements as well as the persisting challenges.

The degree of gender equality in a society often correlates with its level of development and modernisation.



WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ARE DISRUPTING SECTORS, PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY, MOTIVATING FUTURE GENERATIONS AND REDEFINING INDUSTRIES BY BREAKING OUT OF ESTABLISHED ROLES AND STARTING PROFITABLE FIRMS

Societies that support gender equality typically have more opportunities for all, stronger social cohesion and lower levels of discrimination. One of the significant strides in recent decades has been the increasing emphasis on education for women.

Though challenges persist, particularly in rural areas where access to quality education remains a concern, government initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have played a pivotal role in encouraging the education of the girl child. Women's economic engagement in India has also surged dramatically from 22 per cent in 2022 to 37 per cent in 2023. In the dynamic landscape of entrepreneurship, women are increasingly making their mark as formidable leaders, innovators and drivers of change. Women entrepreneurs are disrupting sectors, promoting inclusivity, motivating future generations, and redefining industries by breaking out from established roles and starting profitable firms. Their contributions extend beyond profit margins, encompassing innovation, inclusivity, and a commitment

to the positive social impact. The textile sector now engages more than 25 lakh (2.5 million) female weavers and allied workers. These women are not mere contributors; they are trailblazers who are reshaping an industry steeped in tradition. The representation of women in political institutions serves as a barometer of a country's commitment to democracy and inclusivity. Countries with higher levels of female political representation often exhibit a more balanced and diverse approach to policymaking, addressing a broader range of the societal issues.

Taking this thought forward, the "Nari-shakti Vandan Adhinyam Women Reservation Bill" was introduced to provide one-third reservation (i.e., 33 per cent) to women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, which will further strengthen our democracy. Although women participate substantially in Panchayati Raj institutions and municipal bodies, their representation in state legislatures and Parliament remains limited. Women MPs constitute a mere 15 per cent of the Lok Sabha

and account for only about 10 per cent of members in many state assemblies. The number of women members will rise to 181 from the present 82 once the law comes into force.

While women are leading in various walks of life today, it is essential to recognise that only 6-7 per cent of the Indian Railways workforce comprises women. Despite this low representation, the "first ladies" who ventured into the male-dominated areas deserve commendation. One such remarkable woman is Ms. Jaya Varma Sinha, the first female Chairperson & CEO of the Railway Board. Additionally, Indian Railways boasts a significant number of more than 800 women working as loco pilots, loco pilot (shunter) and assistant loco pilots. Some trains are even operated entirely by all-women crews, showcasing their competence and resilience.

As the world celebrates International Women's Day, it is crucial to shed light on a segment of society whose contributions often go unnoticed- the unemployed women. While unemployment can be disheartening, it does not diminish the significant impact these women make across various spheres of life.

As we celebrate the progress in women's empowerment in India, we must acknowledge that the journey is ongoing. Collective efforts from the government, civil society and the public are necessary to achieve meaningful and lasting change. Empowering women is not merely about equality, it is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development, social progress, and the overall well-being of a society. I would like to leave you with food for thought by our Hon'ble Prime Minister: "Woh shakti hai, sashaktatai, Woh Bharat ki naari hai, Na zyada main, nakam main, Woh sab main barabar ki adhikari hai."

(The author is Minister of State for Railways & Textiles, Government of India; views are personal)

Preserving the feminine essence of India

It is imperative to promote Indian classical dance forms to not only safeguard India's creative legacy but also celebrate the enduring spirit of women who nurtured these cultural traditions over centuries



TEENA VACHANI

Deeply ingrained in the nation's cultural and historical legacy, Indian classical dance forms stand as a testament to the artistic excellence that they have endured for generations. These age-old dance forms, such as Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, and Kathakali, showcase a beautiful fusion of storytelling, rhythm, and emotion. As modernity permeates through every facet of our lives, it becomes

as a medium of storytelling from Hindu scriptures like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. As such, each dance form carries a unique history, with regional variations adding to the diverse cultural landscape of the country, often shaped and perpetuated by the creative expressions of talented women who have been the torchbearers of these traditions. Preserving these dance forms is crucial to maintaining the cultural identity of the nation. These art forms serve as more than just performances; they are living repositories of Indian heritage, morals, and spiritual beliefs. The detailed hand movements, facial expressions, and body motions narrate stories that have been passed down from one generation to the next, serving as a connection between the past and the present. In addition to their cultural importance, these dances also enable artists to express a wide range of feelings, from joy and celebration to sorrow and introspection. The intricate footwork, graceful movements, and expressive gestures allow artists to communicate intricate narratives and emotions silently in a world that is evolving yet still deeply rooted in tradition.

It may perhaps be this deep connection with cultural identity that has prompted Prime Minister Narendra Modi to put India's rich cultural heritage at the forefront of Indian diplomacy. His commitment to cultural diplomacy is evident in initiatives like the International Yoga Day and the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, both of which have become global celebrations of Indian culture. Under his prime ministership, ministries and embassies around the world have undertaken numerous initiatives to actively support and promote classical

dance forms to international audiences. Through cultural exchange programmes, Indian artists have been provided with the opportunity to perform on global stages, while international artists have been welcomed to experience the diverse spectrum of Indian traditions.

In addition to being a means of artistic expression, dance forms also have the potential to bridge societal gaps by promoting inclusivity and understanding. The themes of diversity, unity, love, joy, sorrow, compassion, and communal harmony championed by these dance forms can be used to build a shared cultural understanding that transcends regional, linguistic, and religious boundaries. The heightened cultural integration, in return, will help foster a sense of unity and mutual respect among the diverse communities that make up the very fabric of Indian society.

In recent times, however, the influx of modern cultural trends, limited infrastructure, and waning interest among the younger generation have posed grave challenges to the practice and growth of these dance forms. Any effort to address these challenges requires sustained efforts in education and awareness, both at the school and community levels. Additionally, there is a need to leverage digital platforms for learning and showcasing performances to make these dance forms more accessible to a wider audience. It is perhaps this desire to promote and reignite interest in these dance forms that has prompted us at Roots 2 Routes to organise online dance courses for different dance forms, starting with Bharatanatyam, Kathak, and Odissi. Launched in collaboration with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR),

Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), along with 60 embassies around the globe, the aim of the mission is to present dance enthusiasts across the world with an exclusive opportunity to immerse themselves in the rhythmic intricacies, traditional narratives, and storytelling elements intrinsic to the Indian classical dance forms. With the majority of its proponents and practitioners being women, the initiative also aims to provide a platform for their creative expression.

As we commemorate Women's Day, the significance of preserving Indian classical dance forms assumes additional significance; it stands as a strategic investment in the very soul of the nation. Our dance forms represent a timeless link to our nation's rich cultural and historical legacy, providing us with a source of inspiration, artistic expression, and social cohesion. They also stand as a testament to the hundreds and thousands of women artists who have promoted and preserved the very essence of classical dance forms. Recognising the intrinsic value of Indian classical dance forms is pivotal, especially on this occasion. Actively contributing to their preservation is not just a nod to tradition but a deliberate step towards fostering the strength and grace of women across generations. It is a way to ensure that these eternal forms of art remain within reach amidst the present and future generations. This Women's Day, let's pledge to support and promote our cultural treasures, reinforcing our dedication to empowering women through a silent yet impactful medium.

(The writer is the founder of Roots 2 Routes, a Delhi-based NGO; views are personal)



Photo: Pankaj Kumar/Pioneer

IT MAY PERHAPS BE THIS DEEP CONNECTION WITH CULTURAL IDENTITY THAT HAS PROMPTED PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI TO PUT INDIA'S RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE AT THE FOREFRONT OF INDIAN DIPLOMACY

increasingly crucial to preserve and promote these traditional dance forms, not only for the protection of India's creative legacy but also as a celebration of the unique feminine energy that has shaped and nurtured these art forms for centuries. Indian classical dance forms trace their origins to ancient scriptures and texts, serving as a medium to convey stories from mythology, epics, and folklore. For instance, Bharatanatyam finds its roots in the Natya Shastra, a treatise on performing arts attributed to the sage Bharata Muni. Similarly, Kathak traces its origin to the Hindi word 'Katha' and developed

Haley suspends her campaign

AP ■ NEW YORK

Nikki Haley suspended her presidential campaign on Wednesday after being soundly defeated across the country on Super Tuesday, leaving Donald Trump as the last remaining major candidate for the 2024 Republican nomination. Haley didn't endorse the former president in a speech in Charleston, South Carolina. Instead, she challenged him to win the support of the moderate Republicans and independent voters who supported her.



Haley spokesperson Olivia Perez-Cubas said, "Unity is not achieved by simply claiming, 'We're united.'"

"It is now up to Donald Trump to earn the votes of those in our party and beyond it who did not support him. And I hope he does that," she said. "At its best, politics is about bringing people into your cause, not turning them away. And our conservative cause badly needs more people."

Haley, a former South Carolina governor and U.N. ambassador, was Trump's first significant rival when she jumped into the race in February 2023. She spent the final phase of her campaign aggressively warning the GOP against embracing Trump, whom she argued was too consumed by chaos and personal grievance to defeat President Joe Biden in the general election.

Her departure clears Trump to focus solely on his likely rematch in November with Biden. The former president is on track to reach the necessary 1,215 delegates to clinch the Republican nomination later this month.

Haley's defeat marks a painful, if predictable, blow to those voters, donors and Republican Party officials who opposed Trump and his fiery brand of "Make America Great Again" politics. She was especially popular among moderates and college-educated voters and college-educated voters, constituencies that will likely play a pivotal role in the general election. It's unclear whether Trump, who recently declared that Haley donors would be permanently banned from his movement, can ultimately unify a deeply divided party. Haley planned to address donors on a Zoom meeting Wednesday afternoon, according to two people familiar with the plans.

Trump on Tuesday night declared that the GOP was united behind him, but in a statement shortly afterward,

"Today, in state after state, there remains a large block of Republican primary voters who are expressing deep concerns about Donald Trump," Perez-Cubas said. "That is not the unity our party needs for success. Addressing those voters' concerns will make the Republican Party and America better."

Haley has made clear she doesn't want to serve as Trump's vice president or run on a third-party ticket arranged by the group No Labels. She leaves the race with an elevated national profile that could help her in a future presidential run.

Swiftly following her speech Wednesday, Trump's campaign in a fundraising email falsely claimed that Haley had endorsed his candidacy and did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the message.

Earlier this week, Haley said she no longer feels bound by a pledge that required all GOP contenders to support the party's eventual nominee in order to participate in the primary debates. In a social media post, Trump continued to mock his former rival, while at the same time extending an invitation to "all of the Haley supporters to join the greatest movement in the history of our Nation. BIDEN IS THE ENEMY, HE IS DESTROYING OUR COUNTRY," he wrote. "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!!!" On Wednesday, Biden welcomed any voters who had backed Haley, acknowledging Trump's previous rejection of her supporters.

Houthi missile attack kills 3 crew members

AP ■ DUBAI

A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels on a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday killed three of its crew members and forced survivors to abandon the vessel, the US military said. It was the first fatal strike in a campaign of assaults by the Iranian-backed group over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The attack on the Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier True Confidence further escalates the conflict on a crucial maritime route linking Asia and the Middle East to Europe that has disrupted global shipping. The Houthis have launched attacks since November, and the US began an airstrike campaign in January that so far hasn't halted their attacks. Meanwhile, Iran announced Wednesday that it would confiscate a USD 50 million cargo of Kuwaiti crude oil for American energy firm Chevron Corp. aboard a tanker it seized nearly a year earlier. It is the latest twist in a yearslong shadow war playing out in the Middle East's water-

ways even before the Houthi attacks began.

The US military's Central Command said an anti-ship ballistic missile launched from a Houthi-controlled area in Yemen struck the True Confidence, causing significant damage to the ship. In addition to the three deaths, at least four crew members were wounded, with three in critical condition. Two aerial photos released by the US military showed the ship's bridge and cargo on board ablaze.

"These reckless attacks by the Houthis have disrupted global trade and taken the lives of international seafarers simply doing their jobs, which are some of the hardest jobs in the world, and the ones relied on by the global public for sustenance of supply chains," Central Command said.

The attack came after the ship had been hailed over radio by men claiming to be the Yemeni military, officials said. The Houthis have been hailing ships over the radio in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden since beginning their attacks, with analysts suspecting the rebels

want to seize the vessels.

After the missile hit, the crew abandoned the ship and deployed lifeboats. A US warship and the Indian navy were on the scene, trying to assist in rescue efforts.

The ship's managers and owners said the ship's crew of 20 included one Indian, 15 Filipino and four Vietnamese. Three armed guards, two from Sri Lanka and one from Nepal, also were on board. The ship had been carrying steel from China to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

"One Vietnamese and two Filipino crew members have lost their lives," a statement from the owners and managers of the True Confidence said early Thursday. "A further two Filipinos crew members have suffered serious injuries. All crew members were taken to Djibouti." The United Nations called on the Houthis "to cease all attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, expressing serious concern about the continuing attacks, including the latest incident where the status of the crew is unknown. Dujarric

said the attacks are causing risks "to property, to life, to ecology in the area."

At the State Department in Washington, spokesman Matthew Miller condemned the attack. "We continue to watch these reckless attacks with no regard for the well being of innocent civilians who are transiting through the Red Sea. And now they have, unfortunately and tragically, killed innocent civilians," he told reporters.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre separately warned: "The US obviously is going to continue to take action."

Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a Houthi military spokesman, claimed the attack in a pre-recorded message, saying its missile fire set the vessel ablaze. He said the rebels' attacks would only stop when the "siege on the Palestinian people in the Gaza is lifted."

The rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea and surrounding waters over the Israel-Hamas war, but up to Wednesday hadn't killed any crew members.

The vessels have included at least one with cargo bound for Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor, and an aid ship later bound for Houthi-controlled territory. Despite more than a month and a half of US-led airstrikes, Houthi rebels have remained capable of launching significant attacks. They include the attack last month on a cargo ship carrying fertilizer, the Rubymar, which sank on Saturday after drifting for several days, and the downing of an American drone worth tens of millions of dollars.

It was unclear why the Houthi targeted the True Confidence. However, it had previously been owned by Oaktree Capital Management, a Los Angeles-based fund that finances vessels on installments. Oaktree declined to comment. Meanwhile, a separate Houthi assault Tuesday apparently targeted the USS Carney, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer that has been involved in the American campaign against the rebels. The Carney shot down bomb-carrying drones and one anti-ship ballistic missile, Central

Command said. Saree acknowledged that attack as well. The US later launched an airstrike destroying three anti-ship missiles and three bomb-carrying drone boats, Central Command said.

The Houthis haven't offered any assessment of the damage they've suffered in the American-led strikes that began in January, though they've said at least 22 of their fighters have been killed. One civilian has reportedly been killed.

The US Treasury separately announced new sanctions targeting a Houthi financier and the expeditionary Quds Force of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which arms the rebels.

The Houthis have held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since 2014. They've battled a Saudi-led coalition since 2015 in a long-stalemated war there. Meanwhile, the Indian navy released a video of its sailors from the INS Kolkata fighting a fire aboard the MSC Sky II, which had been targeted by the Houthis in the Gulf of Aden on Monday.

At least 200 abducted by extremists in Nigeria

AP ■ ABUJA (NIGERIA)

At least 200 people, mostly women and children displaced by violence in northeastern Nigeria, were abducted by Islamic extremists while they were searching for firewood near the border with Chad, the United Nations office in Nigeria said late Wednesday.

The victims had left several displacement camps to look for firewood in Borno state's Gaboru Ngala council area when they were ambushed and taken hostage, the UN said, in the latest attack in the conflict-hit region where frequent abductions and killings limit movement.

"The exact number of people abducted remains unknown but is estimated at over 200 people," the UN humanitarian coordinator for Nigeria Mohamed Fall said in a statement about the attacks, which occurred several days ago but whose details are only emerging now because of limited access to information in the area.

"While an unspecified number of older women and

children under 10 have reportedly been released, scores of IDs remain unaccounted for, according to protection partners," Fall added.

Locals blamed the attack on Islamic extremist rebels who launched an insurgency in Borno in 2009 seeking to establish their radical interpretation of Islamic law in the region. At least 35,000 people have been killed and more than 2 million displaced due to the violence by the militant Boko Haram group and a breakaway faction backed by the Islamic State group.

Many of those fleeing the violence are in displacement camps like the ones in Gaboru Ngala where security is limited to areas near the camp, leaving them either to starve in the camps — amid dwindling aid — or risk their safety in search of food.

The latest attack is a "stark reminder" that women and girls are worst hit by the conflict, Fall said as he called for the immediate release of the victims. "This act of violence against already traumatised citizens offends our common humanity," he said.

Juntas ruling Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso agree to create joint force

Bamako (AP): A joint security force announced by the juntas ruling Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to fight the worsening extremist violence in their Sahel region countries faces a number of challenges that cast doubt on its effectiveness, analysts said Thursday.

Niger's top military chief, Brig. Gen. Moussa Salaou Barmou said in a statement after meeting with his counterparts on Wednesday that the joint force would be "operational as soon as possible to meet the security challenges in our area." The announcement is the latest in a series of actions taken by the three countries to strike a more independent path away from regional and international allies since the region experienced a string of coups — the most recent in Niger in July last year. They have

already formed a security alliance after severing military ties with neighbours and European nations such as France and turning to Russia — already present in parts of the Sahel — for support.

Barmou did not give details about the operation of the force, which he referred to as an "operational concept that will enable us to achieve our defence and security objectives."

Although the militaries had promised to end the insurgencies in their territories after deposing their respective elected governments, conflict analysts say the violence has instead worsened under their regimes. They all share borders in the conflict-hit Sahel region and their security forces fighting jihadi violence are overstretched.

11 fatally shot in Massachusetts; police 1 arrested

AP ■ WORCESTER

A mother and her 11-year-old daughter were fatally shot while sitting in a parked SUV in a Massachusetts neighbourhood. Police arrested one man and were searching for another. The mother and daughter were shot shortly after 3 pm Monday in Worcester, police said. Officers found them inside the SUV. They were taken to a hospital, where they were both pronounced dead, police said.

One man was arrested Tuesday. Police did not release any information on that person, but said they were searching for a 27-year-old man in connection with the killings of Chasity Nunez and her daughter, Zella Nunez.

Police said in court documents that surveillance video shows "the victims parked in their vehicle and that two people walk up to the vehicle and start shooting," the Worcester Telegram and Gazette reported. Video also showed a car consistent with a witness description circling the area before the shooting and leaving afterward, the documents said. The vehicle was later found in Hartford, Connecticut. Authorities didn't immediately release a potential motive for the killings. It also wasn't released whether there was any relationship between the men and the victims.

"Today we mourn the senseless loss of two Worcester residents, a mother and daughter whose lives were taken far too soon and far too tragically," the city's mayor, city manager, police chief and school district superintendent said in a joint statement.

"Collectively, we ask for patience and privacy on behalf of the victims' family and friends and for the Worcester Public Schools who are grieving the loss of a student. An act of such violence has no place in our city." The statement said the residents of Worcester "deserve better, and we will stand alongside our community in sorrow and solidarity."

EU's largest party endorses Leyen's bid for 2nd term as EU Commission chief

AP ■ BUCHAREST

The European Union's largest political party on Thursday endorsed Ursula von der Leyen's bid for a second five-year term at the helm of the bloc's powerful Commission.

Von der Leyen's nomination at a gathering of her center-right European People's Party in Romania's capital, Bucharest, comes ahead of June 6-9 elections for the European Parliament, the EU's only democratically elected institution. The endorsement places her firmly as a frontrunner for the top job in the 27-nation bloc. The EPP is expected to remain the biggest in the bloc's legislature after the June voting, but von der Leyen's posting would still require approval from leaders of the EU's member states.

Almost half of the EU's 27 national leaders are members of the EPP.

As the two-day EPP meeting came to a close Thursday, von der Leyen warned of the expected rise of populists in the bloc's upcoming elections and Russia's attempt "to wipe Ukraine off the face of (the) earth."

"Our peaceful and united Europe is being challenged like never before by populists, by nationalists, by demagogues, whether it's the far right or it's the far left," she said. "The names may be different, but the goal is the same. They want to trample on our values and they want to destroy our Europe... the EPP will never let that happen." Since von der Leyen was elected in 2019 as the Commission's executive representing the EU's 450 mil-

lion citizens, she has steered the bloc through a series of crises.

These include Britain's exit from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

She has also pushed a Green Deal aiming to make the EU climate-neutral by 2050. Von der Leyen noted Europe's push to reduce its dependence on Russian energy after President Vladimir Putin ordered the war in Ukraine two years ago. "We have resisted Putin's blackmail with its dirty coal, oil and gas. We got rid of this dependency," she said.

"We are massively investing in clean energy. For the first time we produced more electricity from wind and sun in Europe than from gas. This creates good jobs here at home, drives prices down and cleans up pollution."

Kim calls for stronger war fighting capabilities against US, S Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called for greater war fighting capabilities against the United States and South Korea, state media reported Thursday, after his defense ministry vowed to respond to ongoing military drills it views as an invasion rehearsal by its rivals.

During a visit to a western operational training base on Wednesday, Kim said the military must "steadily intensify the actual war drills aimed at rapidly improving its combat capabilities for perfect war preparedness," the official Korean Central News Agency said.

Kim said the heightened readiness is required to "contain the constant threat of the enemies with overwhelming force," KCNA said. It said Kim guided



maneuvers of military units at the site but didn't elaborate. Kim has previously made similar calls for a stronger military numerous times. But his latest demand came two days after North Korea's Defense Ministry threatened to conduct unspecified "responsible military activities" because South Korean-US

twice the number conducted last year. The two countries have said their drills are defensive in nature.

North Korea has reacted to previous South Korean-US military exercises with missile and other weapons tests.

Animosities on the Korean Peninsula remain high in the wake of North Korea's barrage of missile tests since 2022. Many of the tests involved nuclear-capable missiles designed to attack South Korea and the mainland US.

This year, North Korea performed six rounds of missile tests. The US and South Korean forces have responded by expanding their training exercises. Experts say North Korea likely believes a bigger weapons arsenal would increase its leverage in future diplomacy with the United States.

China calls for Palestine to join UN as criticism of Gaza war mounts

AP ■ BEIJING/JERUSALEM

China reiterated calls to admit Palestine to the UN on Thursday, and Norway warned companies against doing business in Israeli settlements, as international criticism of Israel's war in Gaza mounted.

After nearly five months of war, much of Gaza is in ruins. International pressure is growing for Israel and Hamas to reach a deal that would halt the fighting and release the remaining Israeli hostages held by Hamas. On Wednesday, South Africa went to the United Nations' top court seeking additional orders for Israel to let aid into the Gaza Strip, and the British foreign minister said Israel's allies were losing patience over the humanitarian situation.

South Africa accuses Israel of violating provisional measures imposed by the International Court of Justice on January 26, when judges

ordered Israel to do all it could to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza.

Israel's near-total blockade of Gaza and the ongoing fighting have made it nearly impossible to deliver supplies in most of Gaza, aid groups say. Many of the estimated 300,000 people still living in northern Gaza have been reduced to eating animal fodder to survive.

Israel launched its offensive after Hamas-led militants stormed across the border on October 7, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250.

Over 100 hostages were released in November in exchange for 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The number of Palestinians killed has climbed above 30,700, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.



It does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its figures, but says women and children make up

around two-thirds of the total casualties. It says over 72,000 people have been wounded.

— Houthi missile attack kills two crew members in Yemen rebels' first fatal assault on shipping.

— The hostage crisis poses a dilemma for Israel and offers a path to victory for Hamas.

— Few Americans want US more involved in current wars in Ukraine and Gaza, AP-NORC poll finds.

— A Mideast Starbucks franchisee is firing 2,000 workers after being targeted in an Israel-Hamas war boycott.

— Indiana lawmakers in standoff on antisemitism bill as critics of Israel seek changes.

— Norway's government on Thursday urged Norwegian companies to avoid trade and business activities that contribute to maintaining illegal Israeli settlements. Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said that "for years, Norway has been clear that the settlement

policy in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is in violation of international law, including humanitarian law and human rights."

"Norwegian businesses should be aware that, through economic or financial activity in the Israeli settlements in violation of international law, they risk contributing to violations of international humanitarian law or human rights," Barth Eide said.

He said that last year "was also the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since the UN began recording. I repeat that the injustice to which the Palestinians are subjected must stop," he said.

China's foreign minister is demanding that other members of the UN Security Council stop blocking Palestine from becoming a member of the United Nations.

Wang Yi reiterated China's call for a major international conference to draw up a roadmap and timetable for a

two-state solution.

"We support Palestine becoming a full member of the United Nations and call on individual members of the Security Council not to set obstacles for this any more," he said Thursday at a news conference during the annual meeting of China's legislature.

Zhang Jun, China's UN ambassador, said in January that his country supports UN membership for Palestine as a first step toward the creation of a Palestinian state.

The Security Council needs to send a clear and unequivocal signal, reaffirming the urgency of the two-state solution as the sole feasible way out, he was quoted as saying by China's official state media.

China, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, backed Palestine becoming a UN member in a joint statement issued last June during a state visit to China by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Malaysian PM urges US and China coop in Asia-Pacific

Melbourne (AP): Malaysia's prime minister said Thursday that the United States has become more "transactional," using rewards and punishments to achieve aims with other countries, and should be encouraged to enhance cooperation with China in the Asia-Pacific region.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim advocated against taking sides in US-led Western rivalries against China for strategic influence in the region. He also rejected Western criticism that Malaysia is too accommodating of China as it becomes increasingly assertive in the South China Sea.

Anwar, in a speech at Australian National University on Thursday, promoted "empathy" toward China, which he said regarded negative reactions to its rise as an "attempt to deny their legitimate

place in history."

"I believe that Malaysia and Australia have a duty to try the utmost to encourage the United States, China and other major players in the Asia-Pacific to conduct themselves in a manner that is conducive to the enhancement of regional cooperation and economic integration," Anwar said.

Without Southeast Asian nations' intervention, the region would be "principally dictated by the calculations and designs of the major powers."

Anwar outlined globally significant societal and political shifts in the US over the past three decades such as globalisation that benefited the Asian working class and reduced the US industrial base.

Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had also impacted Americans' psyche.

China strikes aggressive tone on South China Sea & Taiwan

Chides US for not honouring commitments

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's foreign minister Wang Yi on Thursday took a belligerent stance on the disputed South China Sea, warning of "justified actions" to defend its sovereignty claims and chided the US for not implementing its commitments to improve bilateral ties.

Wang, in his customary annual press conference on the sidelines of the Parliament session, took officially vetted questions from the national and international media on varied topics of global significance. Wang, 70, a veteran diplomat and member of the Politburo of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) abruptly took over as Foreign Minister last year after his junior Qin Gang was dismissed. The fate of Qin is not known yet.

There was speculation about Wang being succeeded by Liu Jianchao, the Chinese diplomat currently heading the international department of the CPC, but there was no announcement about it.

Wang, in his nationally televised press meet that lasted nearly 90 minutes, spoke sternly on the South China Sea disputes as he warned that "China will take justified actions to defend its rights in accordance with the law, and respond to unwarranted provocations with prompt and legitimate countermeasures in the South China Sea."

His comments came as the South China Sea dispute returned to haunt Beijing with the Philippines, backed by the US, began asserting its claims confronting the Chinese coast guard ships with its naval assets. China claims most of the South China Sea. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims.

"The Chinese people have lived and worked in the South China Sea for generations," Wang said about China's



claims. "For unreasonable provocations, we will take just countermeasures," Wang asserted. "We also advise certain countries outside the region not to stir up trouble, choose sides, and not to become disruptors and troublemakers in the South China Sea."

On Taiwan, which China claims as part of its mainland, he struck an aggressive note, warning that those who still connive at and support "Taiwan's independence" are challenging China's sovereignty. "Our bottom line is also quite clear: We will never allow Taiwan to be separated from the motherland," he said and sought to dismiss the recent Presidential election in Taiwan, in which a pro-independence leader Lai Ching-te won, as a "local election."

He said more countries are backing Beijing's one-China policy. China views Taiwan as a rebel province that must be reunified with the mainland, even by force. China had staged several provocative military drills around Taiwan following some high-profile visits by American lawmakers.

"There will be a family photo of the whole international community in which all members uphold the one-China principle. It is only a matter of time," he said.

On the China-US ties, Wang said Washington should honour commitments on bilateral ties. Peaceful coexistence is the baseline, Wang said.

Conflict and confrontation between two major countries like China and the United States would have unimaginable consequences.

The US side's wrong perception of China still persists, and the commitments it made have not been truly fulfilled. Its list of unilateral sanctions continues to lengthen, he said, adding: "If the US says one thing and does another, where is its credibility as a major country? If it gets jittery whenever it hears the word 'China', where is its confidence as a major country?" he said.

"If it only wants itself to prosper, but denies other countries legitimate development, where is international fairness? If it persistently monopolises the high end of the value chain and keeps China at the low end, where is fairness and competition?" he asked.

Wang's comments on the US come as the Biden administration steps up controls to narrow the kinds of high-end technology that can be accessed by China. Wang also accused the US, without mentioning it by name, of stirring up trouble in Taiwan and the South China Sea. On the North Korean issue, he said anyone undermining peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula region will pay a heavy price.

He also made a strong pitch for a bigger role for BRICS, (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), saying that it is a growing force for global peace and justice.

The five-member BRICS bloc is set to double its membership with the inclusion of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. "BRICS should not be seen as a challenge. In the broader sense, BRICS expansion reflects the collective rise of the Global South and the world evolving faster to the multi-polarity consisting of emerging markets and developing countries," Wang said.

He reiterated China's support for the UN reforms, including the UN Security Council but remained vague about Beijing's proposals. India and several emerging economies accuse China of blocking the UNSC reforms to retain its power. China supports the UN in holding the Summit of the Future and reaching a Pact for the Future that benefits all parties, he said. He also called for ending the Ukraine conflict saying that Beijing backs holding, in due course, an international peace conference.

On the Israel-Hamas conflict, he said there should be a broad-based and authoritative international peace conference to come up with a road map to end the crisis and the international community should promote an immediate ceasefire and work for a two-state solution to resolve the Palestine issue. He defended the close China-Russia ties, saying that both have forged a new paradigm of major-country relations that differs entirely from the obsolete Cold War approach.

Based on non-alliance, non-confrontation and not targeting any third party, China and Russia strive for lasting good-neighbourliness and friendship and seek to deepen their comprehensive strategic coordination, he said. Wang also announced a visa-free policy for Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg on a trial basis, starting March 14.

US diplomat flays China for using coercion

AP ■ BANGKOK

The top American diplomat for East Asia and the Pacific criticized China on Thursday for using intimidation tactics against other countries in the region to press its sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea. Speaking to reporters after returning to the United States from meetings with officials in Singapore, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Brunei, Daniel Kritenbrink said he had used the trip to emphasize Washington's commitment to ensuring all nations respect "freedom of navigation and freedom of overflight in the peaceful resolution of disputes."

He said China "has taken a number of steps in the South China Sea that both run counter to international law, but that also utilize coercion to intimidate partners in ways that we find deeply unacceptable and destabilizing," said Kritenbrink, who is the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. China claims almost the entire South China Sea as its own territory, and has active disputes with the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei. It has become growingly assertive with its maritime presence in the resource-rich and busy waterway, and Kritenbrink's comments came the same week that a Chinese coast guard ship sideswiped a Philippine patrol vessel at sea.

The hostilities Tuesday off the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal were just the latest in the contested waters, which many fear could spark a larger conflict between China and the US and its allies.

The US regularly sails warships through the Taiwan Strait and conducts naval maneuvers in the South China Sea and "everywhere that international law allows, which Kritenbrink said demonstrates that "all countries share those same rights." The US strategy also involved helping ensure its partners "have their own ability to protect their sovereignty and their own interests," he said.

Nawaz's sons to surrender before court on March 12

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif's two sons have approached a special court here, seeking suspension of their arrest warrants in three corruption cases related to the Panama Papers, to surrender before it on March 12, a media report said on Thursday. Hussain Nawaz and Hassan Nawaz, through their counsel Qazi Misbahul Hassan, filed an application in the Islamabad accountability court, seeking the suspension of their perpetual arrest warrants issued in the Avenfield Apartments, Al-Azizia and Flagship Investment references, the Dawn newspaper reported. According to the report, both sons of the former three-time premier would reach Pakistan's capital city on March 12, and they requested the court to suspend their arrest warrants, enabling them to reach the court to surrender.

The counsel informed accountability court Judge Nasir

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Javed Rana that they are residents of Saudi Arabia and the UK respectively, and were named as accused persons in these cases along with their father, former premier Nawaz Sharif, their sister, Maryam Nawaz, and retired Captain Safdar, their brother-in-law.

The counsel said the trial in these cases commenced when both of them were not in Pakistan. The advocate said they were unaware of the formal legal process, and the state never attempted to adopt the due course to serve the legal process, which included the issuance of notices, arrest warrants, and proclamations, the report said.

Incidentally, Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz were both convicted in the Avenfield case days before the previous general elections in 2018. Sharif was also convicted in the Al-Azizia

corruption case in December 2018 but acquitted in the Flagship Investment reference, the Dawn reported. Sharif, Maryam, and Capt Safdar challenged their conviction in the Avenfield reference before the Islamabad High Court (IHC). Sharif also challenged the conviction in the Al-Azizia case. However, when Sharif went abroad in a self-imposed exile and did not return, the IHC declared him a proclaimed offender. While he was in the UK, Maryam and Capt Safdar pursued the case, and the IHC finally set aside their conviction. When Sharif returned to Pakistan in October last year, his appeals against convictions were revived, leading to the IHC setting aside his conviction in both cases as well. Nawaz's younger brother Shehbaz Sharif was elected as Pakistan's prime minister for a second time after the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Peoples Party agreed on a power-sharing deal to form a coalition government.

HK court affirms landmark sedition conviction for pro-democracy activist

AP ■ HONG KONG

Criticizing laws or chanting anti-government slogans can be enough to jail someone for sedition in Hong Kong, an appeal court ruled on Thursday in a landmark case brought under a colonial-era law increasingly used to crush dissent. Hong Kong's Court of Appeal upheld a 40-month sentence for pro-democracy activist Tam Tak-chi, the first person tried under the city's sedition law since Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Tam's lawyers had argued his conviction should be overturned because the prosecution did not show he meant to incite violence. The prosecution is widely seen as part of Beijing's clampdown on dissent in the former British colony, following widespread anti-government protests in 2019. Tam was convicted on 11 charges in 2022, including seven counts of "uttering seditious words."

A judge at the lower court took issue with him chanting the popular protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times" — words the government says imply separatism — and criticising the Beijing-imposed National Security Law during a primary campaign. The judge said his words broke the law

because they incited disobedience to the law.

Tam and his lawyers had drawn hope from a ruling made by a top Commonwealth court in a 2023 case about a similar law. In that case, the London-based Privy Council said that the sedition law in Trinidad and Tobago could not be used to convict people unless they intended to incite violence or disorder. The Privy Council is the court of final appeal for a number of Commonwealth countries.

But the Hong Kong court rejected the argument, finding that the Privy Council ruling only applied to the law in Trinidad and Tobago. Judge Jeremy Poon said sedition in Hong Kong is a statutory offense, not a common law offense. He added that law's legislative history made it clear that an intention to incite violence is not a necessary element of most sedition offenses.

"Nothing suggests that any individual, including the applicant, a politician and activist highly critical of the government and a stern opponent of government policy, would be subject to an unacceptably harsh burden because of the restriction on seditious acts or speeches imposed by the offense," the ruling said.

China coast guard flexes might against Philippines

AP ■ ABOARD BRP SINDANGAN

It was a heart-pounding moment far out in the disputed South China Sea: One of at least five Chinese coast guard ships aggressively approached and sideswiped a Philippine patrol vessel, creating a loud, jarring noise that sent its Filipino crew scrambling to lower rubber fenders to cushion the boat's hull. As the high-seas faceoff unfolded on Tuesday, two Chinese coast guard ships used water cannons against a smaller supply boat carrying a Filipino admiral and his sailors. The high-pressure spray shattered the boat's windshield and mildly injured the admiral and four sailors with glass shards and splinters of debris.

"That's very concerning and very worrisome," Vice Adm. Alberto Carlos later told reporters, after witnessing firsthand the Chinese actions against the supply boat Unzaiah Mae 4, which he was aboard.

As the highest-ranking

Filipino military commander overseeing the disputed waters, Carlos joined the trip to ensure that any confrontation would not spiral out of control, the navy said. It was the latest showdown in one of the world's most hotly disputed waters that many fear could descend into a larger conflict that puts the United States and China on a collision course. Tuesday's hostilities off the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal lasted about five hours starting after dawn and were witnessed by two Associated Press journalists.

The journalists were invited to join the trip aboard the Philippine coast guard ship BRP Sindangan, which was sideswiped by the Chinese coast guard ship in a tense and dangerous moment they caught on camera. The Philippines adopted a strategy last year of exposing China's increasingly assertive actions in the disputed sea by embedding journalists on its coast guard patrol ships. Manila said the "transparency cam-

paign" aims to pressure China to abide by international law, including anti-collision regulations. It has publicly released coast guard videos and photos of dangerous Chinese actions against Philippine forces, including the use by China's coast guard of a military-grade laser that temporarily blinded Filipino crew in an incident last year that angered Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

The campaign has sparked a war of words with Beijing, which has accused the Philippines of hyping up the disputes and allowing itself to be used as a pawn in US efforts to contain China's rise.

Aboard the BRP Sindangan, the journalists witnessed up close how a mission to deliver food, water and other supplies to a long-marooned warship was partly thwarted by a Chinese blockade of at least 26 ships, including coast guard and suspected militia vessels. They caught on video and camera how the Chinese ships shad-

ded, surrounded and blocked the two Philippine coast guard ships and two small supply boats carrying Filipino sailors to the disputed shoal. Aside from China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei also have overlapping claims in the resource-rich and busy waterway, where a bulk of the world's commerce and oil transits.

Beijing claims almost the entire sea, a key global trade route. In the last decade, China has turned barren reefs into seven islands that now serve as missile-protected island bases, including three with runways, that have bolstered its capability to fortify its territorial claims and patrols. In response, Washington has been strengthening an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific, including with the Philippines, Vietnam and other countries at odds with China in the disputed sea. After China effectively seized another disputed atoll, the Scarborough Shoal off the

northwestern Philippines, in 2012, Manila brought its disputes with Beijing to international arbitration and largely won. China, however, rejected the 2016 ruling of the UN-backed tribunal that invalidated its expansive claims on historical grounds and continues to defy the decision.

Filipino officials said the latest confrontation was particularly serious because of the injuries sustained by its navy personnel and damage to their vessel. "The systematic and consistent manner in which the People's Republic of China carries out these illegal and irresponsible actions completely negates any of its calls for peaceful dialogue and de-escalation of tensions in the West Philippine Sea," Jonathan Malaya, a spokesperson for a Philippine government task force dealing with the South China Sea disputes, told a news conference on Wednesday, using the Philippine name for the long-troubled waters.

Pak's external public debt rises by USD 1.2 billion in 6 months

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Cash-strapped Pakistan's external public debt sharply rose by USD 1.2 billion in six months to USD 86.358 billion as of September 30, 2023, with the World Bank and China emerging as the largest multilateral and bilateral contributors to total disbursement, a government report has said.

Pakistan received total foreign inflows of USD 3.5 billion in July-September 2023 against loan repayments of USD 1.5 billion, resulting in a net inflow of USD 1.97 billion. As of September 30, 2023, the total external public debt of the government was USD 86.358 billion, the first quarterly report on Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA) of the current fiscal year released on Wednesday by the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MEA) said.

Around 64 per cent of the total external public debt was obtained from multilateral and bilateral sources having conces-

sional terms and longer maturity, according to a report in newspaper The Dawn that quoted the MEA.

The external public debt as of March 31, 2023, amounted to USD 85.18 billion. In comparison, the country had received USD 2.2 billion in loans and repaid USD 2.06 billion during the same period last fiscal year (July-September 2022), leading to a net addition of USD 142 million. The report also said Pakistan had signed new agreements worth USD 642 million in fresh commitments during the first quarter of the year and all new commitments had been funded by multilateral development partners. International bonds and commercial loans could not be secured because of adverse market conditions following poor credit rating and resultantly unaffordable interest rates, it said.

This USD 3.538 billion FEA is in addition to USD 1.2 billion released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on July

13 as the first tranche of the USD 3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) and USD 1 billion by the United Arab Emirates that are separately accounted for by the State Bank of Pakistan.

The World Bank (USD 306 million) and Islamic Development Bank (USD 100 million) were amongst the largest contributors among multilateral development partners while on the bilateral side, China emerged as the primary contributor to the total disbursements during the period disbursing USD 509m, followed by USD 300m from Saudi Arabia for import of oil and petroleum products.

During the first quarter (July-Sept 2023-24), the disbursed amount is in the shape of programme financing, project financing, commodity financing, and budgetary support helped the government support economic reforms, execute development activities and provide support to its balance of payments position, the report said.

US wants India, Pak to have 'productive, peaceful relationship'

Washington (PTI): The US has said it wants India and Pakistan to have a "productive and peaceful relationship" but made it clear that the pace, scope, and character of any dialogue was a matter for the two neighbours to determine.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said this on Wednesday while responding to a question on Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulating the newly-elected Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on taking the oath of office for his second term. "We, of course, welcome the prime minister's statement. The United States values its relationship with both India and Pakistan, and we want to see them have a productive and peaceful relationship," Miller said. "We would welcome productive and peaceful talks between India and Pakistan, but the pace, scope, and character of any dialogue

is a matter for India and Pakistan to determine," he said in response to another question.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Modi congratulated Sharif on taking oath as the prime minister of Pakistan. Sharif took the oath on Monday, assuming the cash-strapped country's reins for a second time, nearly a month after an inconclusive election marred by allegations of vote rigging. As Sharif assumed office, experts in Pakistan said they do not see an immediate improvement in ties between Pakistan and India in the near future 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.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that Varinder Nath Marwaha and Shashi Marwaha (hereinafter called the Owner's) claims to be owner and in possession of Rear Portion of Ground Floor of Prop. No. H-56, Block H, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi (hereinafter called the said property) by virtue of Relinquishment Deed Dated 14.09.2023 executed by Sudesh Soni, Ruchika Malhotra & Hemant Marwaha through Attorney Shashi Marwah reg. vide Doc No. 12098, being the surviving legal heirs of late Faqir Chand & Narinder Nath Marwaha. said Faqir Chand was the owner of the said property vide sale deed dated 13.10.1980 reg. vide doc no. 3230 and said Owner's has agreed to sell the said Property to Dhruv Luthra And Said Dhruv Luthra has agreed to create a mortgage in favour of our clients IDFC First Bank Limited, ITO Branch, which our clients having claim against the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, lien or otherwise howsoever, are hereby intimated to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 10 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof. Vishal Diwan (Advocate) For Diwan and Company LLP H. No.2 (LGF), NRI Complex New Delhi-19 Mobile No. 9816399999

PPGCL

Regd Office: Shatabdi Bhawan, B12 & 13, Sector 4, Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301
Plant Address: PO- Lohgara, Tehsil-Bara Prayagraj (Allahabad), Uttar Pradesh-211077
Phone: +91-120-6102000/6102008 CIN: U40101UP2007PLC032835

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited invites expression of interest (EOI) from eligible vendors for Procurement of "Environment Monitoring/PPGCL-MARCH-24".
3x660 MW Thermal Power Plant at Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited, Bara, Dist. Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India.
Details of pre-qualification requirements, bid security, purchasing of tender document etc. may be downloaded using the URL-<https://www.ppgcl.co.in/tenders.php> Eligible vendors willing to participate may submit their expression of interest along with the tender fee for issue of bid document latest by 12th March 2024.

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot

Sadiq Road, Faridkot - 151203 Ph. 01639- 256232, 256236

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 22/03/2024
1) House Keeping Services 2) supply and installation of Medical equipments for ENT Deptt 3) Supply and installation of PET-CT and SPECT-CT Machine with Civil Work 4) Linear Accelerator

E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 02/04/2024
1) Supply and installation of CCTV cameras at University premises 2) Class Room Furniture for Pharmacy college 3) OCT machine 4) Mesher 5) Electric Cauteary 6) High resolution ultrasound machine with colour doppler for fetal imaging
Terms and conditions can be downloaded from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. The tenders will be accepted in E-Tender mode only. Bidder can also download tender notification and document from the University website i.e www.bfhu.ac.in

00/12/22/00/2023/33372 Dated CHD :- 3/7/2024

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, चतुर्थ वृत्त, लोक निर्माण विभाग, रुद्रपुर (उधम सिंह नगर)

फोन / फ़ैक्स : 05944-240921 ई-मेल: sepwduasn@gmail.com

पत्रांक : 703/23 एम-04/2024 दिनांक : 07/03/2024

अत्याधुनिक राष्ट्रीय प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक निविदा (e-tendering)

महामहिम राज्यापाल उत्तराखण्ड की ओर से अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, चतुर्थ वृत्त, लोन्निविदे रुद्रपुर (उधम सिंह नगर) द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु ई-टेंडरिंग द्वारा टू-बिड सिस्टम के अंतर्गत निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। निविदा से सम्बन्धित सभी सूचनायें वेबसाइट <http://www.uktenders.gov.in> पर दिनांक 12.03.2024 से उपलब्ध होगी।

क्र. सं.	कार्य का नाम	घरोहर घनराशि (लाख में)	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य (रु० में)	निविदा की वैधता (दिवस)	कार्य पूर्ण करने का समय (माह में)	टेकेदार की श्रेणी।
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1	राज्य योजना के अन्तर्गत जनपद रुधमसिंह नगर के विधानसभा क्षेत्र किच्छा में एन०एच०-०९ लालपुर से महाराजपुर तक मार्ग का टी०डब्ल्यू०टी० द्वारा पुनः निर्माण एवं चौड़ीकरण का कार्य।	3.42	5000.00 + 18%GST	90 दिन	09 माह	भारत सरकार / किसी भी राज्य सरकार के विभाग एवं उपक्रम में मार्ग कार्य हेतु श्रेणी B एवं उच्चतर में पंजीकृत
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अधीक्षण अभियन्ता

Sensex, Nifty edge higher to close

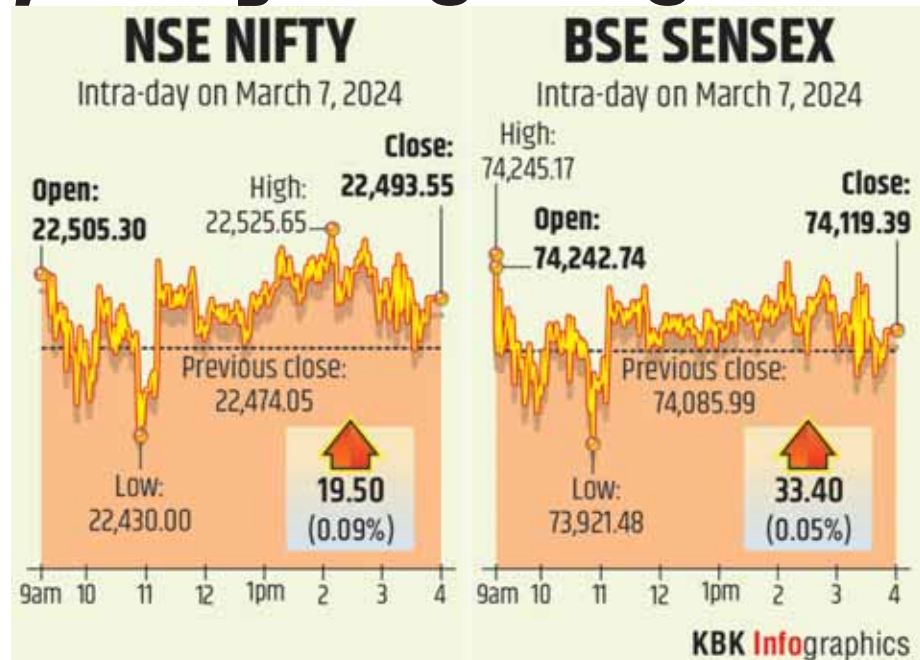
PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty edged higher to close at fresh record highs on Thursday driven by gains in metal and FMCG shares amid firm global trends and foreign fund inflows. In a highly volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 33.40 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at a new peak of 74,119.39. During the day, it jumped 159.18 points or 0.21 per cent to hit an all-time high of 74,245.17.

The broader Nifty rose by 19.50 points or 0.09 per cent to close at a record 22,493.55. During the day, it climbed 51.6 points or 0.22 per cent to an all-time high of 22,525.65.

"Equity benchmark indices edged higher after hitting a record high amid a firm trend in the US market and FII inflows," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Faster-than-expected economic growth for the current fiscal year boosted sentiments for metal and capital goods stocks, Nair said. Among Sensex firms, Tata



Steel rose the most by 3.9 per cent. JSW Steel gained 2.09 per cent, Tata Motors by 2.14 per cent, Bajaj Finserv by 2 per cent, and Bajaj Finance by 1.71 per cent. Asian Paints, ITC and Nestle were also among the major gainers.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank and Power Grid were among the laggards. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.70 per cent and midcap index spurred by 0.39 per cent. Among the indices, metal jumped 1.36 per cent, capital goods climbed 1.05 per cent. Commodities (1 per cent), FMCG (0.98 per cent), telecommunication (0.98 per cent) and industrials (0.93 per cent) also advanced.

Auto, bankex, oil & gas and realty were the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul settled in the green while Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday.

Analysts said that global indices exhibited mixed sentiments, driven by the Fed's signals of hope for a potential rate cut this year.

Further clarity on the labour market, anticipated with the release of non-farm payroll data on Friday, will offer insights into potential rate adjustments, they added.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,766.75 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.65 per cent to USD 82.42 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark jumped 408.86 points or 0.55 per cent to settle at a new record high of 74,085.99 on Wednesday. The Nifty climbed 117.75 points or 0.53 per cent to settle at a fresh closing peak of 22,474.05.

RBI, Bank Indonesia ink pact to promote local currencies

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India and Bank Indonesia (BI) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote use of local currencies for bilateral transactions.

The MoU was signed here for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies viz., the Indian Rupee (INR) and the Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) for cross-border transactions, RBI said in a statement.

This framework would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of an INR-IDR foreign exchange market.

"Use of local currencies would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions," RBI said.

The MoU was signed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das and Bank Indonesia Governor Perry Warjiyo.

"The MoU on establishing a framework for cooperation in the area of cross-border



transactions in local currencies between India and Indonesia, aims to promote the use of INR and IDR bilaterally," RBI said. The central bank further said the collaboration marks a key milestone in strengthening bilateral cooperation between RBI and BI.

Use of local currencies in bilateral transactions will eventually contribute to promoting trade between India and Indonesia as well as deepen financial integration and strengthen the long historical, cultural and economic relations between India and Indonesia, it added.



Gold jumps ₹500 to scale record high

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices on Thursday jumped by Rs 500 to Rs 65,650 per 10 grams in the national capital amid a rally in precious metal's rates in international markets, according to HDFC Securities. Maintaining its upward march for the third straight day, the precious metal touched a fresh lifetime high of Rs 65,650 per 10 grams. The yellow metal had closed at Rs 65,150 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver prices also rallied by Rs 400 to Rs 74,900 per kg. In the previous session, it closed at Rs 74,500 per kg.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 65,650 per 10 grams, up by Rs 500, taking bullish cues from the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,152 per ounce, up by USD 30 from the previous close. Comex spot gold reached a new high of USD 2,161.50 per ounce in Asian trading hours on Thursday after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell reiterated that the US central bank will most likely lower interest rates this year, Gandhi added.

In his semiannual Humphrey-Hawkins testimony to Congress, Powell said that the US Fed remains squarely focused on its mandate to promote maximum employment and stable prices for the American people.

The policy rate is likely at its peak and it will likely be 'appropriate' to cut rates at some point this year, he added.

However, he observed that the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) still needs 'greater confidence' before cutting rates.

Silver was trading higher at USD 24.10 per ounce. In the previous trade, it had closed at USD 23.75 per ounce.

"Looking ahead, the market focus shifts to the upcoming US Consumer Price Index (CPI) data for February, which is poised to be a key trigger for gold prices next week."

"Additionally, non-farm payroll and unemployment data to be released on Friday will provide further direction for gold trends," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said.



No extension of FAME II beyond March 31: Officials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday said it has not extended the flagship scheme to promote electric mobility FAME-II beyond March 31, according to officials.

The Ministry of Heavy Industries denied media reports claiming that the Centre has granted a temporary four-month extension to the scheme till July 31, with an outlay of Rs 500 crore for the period.

Subsidies under the second phase of the FAME Scheme will be eligible for e-vehicles sold till March 31, 2024, or till the time funds are available, the Heavy Industries ministry stated last month.

It also shared that the outlay of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-II) programme has been enhanced from Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 11,500 crore. The ministry had said in the statement that the second phase of its flagship scheme to promote adoption of EVs in India — FAME II — was "fund- and term-limited". As per the revised outlay, electric two-wheelers, electric three-wheelers, and electric four-wheelers are eligible to avail of subsidies to the tune of Rs 7,048 crore. Besides, Rs 4,048 crore has been allocated towards grants for creation of capital assets, whereas Rs 400 crore has been earmarked for the 'others' category.

Need for reforming economic laws to suit India growth: Vaishnaw

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Thursday made a case for reforming economic laws to suit India's growth requirement as has been done through enactment of three new criminal laws to replace the colonial-era legislations.

Addressing an event organised by government think tank NITI Aayog, Vaishnaw said the country is going to witness changes in criminal jurisprudence with the enactment of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Act.

"Similarly, the economic laws too need to change in view of our current needs and growth requirements," the Minister



of Communication, Railways and Electronics & IT said. The three criminal laws got the

Parliament's approval on December 21 last year and President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent on December 25. These legislations will replace the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, respectively.

"If you hire 2,000 good lawyers then you can reform about 35,000 laws in the next 5 years," he added.

Vaishnaw asserted that in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term, the government will give greater focus on manufacturing sector as this sector has a huge employment generation potential.

Vaishnaw also launched government think tank NITI Aayog's platform 'NITI For States', a digital public infrastructure for policy and

governance. He also inaugurated the 'Viksit Bharat Strategy Room' at NITI Aayog.

The 'Viksit Bharat Strategy Room' will enable visualization and engagement with insights, sharing of information and knowledge to enable effective in-person decision-making.

A multi-sectoral live repository of 7,500 best practices, 5,000 policy documents, over 900 datasets, 1,400 data profiles, and 350 NITI publications will be part of the new platform, according to an official statement.

The platform will equip government officials with robust, contextually relevant, and actionable knowledge and insights, thereby enhancing the quality of their decision-making, the statement said.

TVS supply chain solutions expands warehouse footprint

PTI ■ CHENNAI

TVS Supply Chain Solutions Ltd has expanded its warehouse footprint in the country, by adding 6.50 lakh sq ft additional space at its ultra-modern facility in Hosur, the company said on Thursday.

The global supply chain solutions provider, in a statement here, said with the latest expansion, the company's total warehouse capacity has gone up to 21.85 million sq ft from the earlier 21.2 million sq ft in the country.

The creation of additional space at the warehouse would

create 1,200 jobs of which 300 would comprise women, the release said, but did not divulge the details of the existing employee base at the Hosur unit.

"We are thrilled to unveil our new warehouse equipped with cutting-edge automation and IT systems. This marks a pivotal step in our commitment to efficiency, innovation, and delivering unparalleled service to our customers," company Managing Director Ravi Viswanathan said.

TVS Motor Company, Director and CEO, K N Radhakrishnan formally



inaugurated the facility in Hosur. "This new facility by TVS Supply Chain Solutions

have strategically positioned our Global Parts Distribution Centre in this new facility, which will serve as a hub for our global market," Radhakrishnan said on the expansion of the warehouse.

The warehousing solutions offered at the facility include — storage facilities such as contract warehousing, cross-docking, open yard management, rework and refurbish management among others.

TVS Supply Chain Solutions operates around 300 warehouses across five continents, the statement added.

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Horticulture crops output seen flat at 355 MT in 2023, 24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's horticulture crops production is estimated to remain flat at 355.25 million tonne in 2023-24, despite a fall in onion output by 4.7 million tonne, according to the government data.

Releasing the first advance estimates for 2023-24, the agriculture ministry said that the horticulture production in the country is estimated to be about 355.25 million tonne as against 355.48 million tonne in the previous year. Area under horticulture crops has seen a marginal rise to 28.77 million hectare in 2023-24 from 28.44 million hectare in the previous year, according to an official statement.

As per the data, the production of fruits is expected to reach 112.08 million tonne (MT) in 2023-24 from 110.21 million tonne in 2022-23. The increase is mainly due to increases in the production of banana, mandarin, and mango.



Production of vegetables is estimated to fall at 209.39 million tonne from 212.55 million tonne in 2022-23 (Final Estimates). An increase is expected in the production of cabbage, cauliflower, pumpkin, tapioca, tomato, and other vegetables. Tomato output is expected to rise at 208.19 lakh tonne compared to 204.25 lakh tonne last year.

"Production of onion in 2023-24 is expected to be around 254.73 lakh tonne compared to around 302.08 lakh tonne last year due to a decrease of 34.31 lakh

tonne in Maharashtra, 9.95 lakh tonne in Karnataka, 3.54 lakh tonne in Andhra Pradesh and 3.12 lakh tonne in Rajasthan," the statement said. The decline in onion production in 2023-24 is 16 per cent compared to the previous year.

As per the data, onion production stood at 316.87 lakh tonne in 2021-22. The centre has already banned exports of onions to control prices in the domestic market. Potato production in 2023-24 is expected to be around 589.94 lakh tonne compared to around 601.42 lakh tonne in the previous year. This is attributed to a decrease in West Bengal over the previous year.

The department of agriculture has released the final estimates of 2022-23 and the first advance estimates of 2023-24 of the area and production of various horticultural crops compiled on the basis of information received from states/UTs and other governmental source agencies.

Tata Motors to hike commercial vehicle prices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors on Thursday said it will increase prices of its commercial vehicles by up to 2 per cent from April 1, 2024.

The price increase is to offset the residual impact of the past input costs, the auto major said in a statement.

While the price increase will vary as per individual model and variant, it will be applicable across the entire range of commercial vehicles, it added.

Tata Motors is a leading manufacturer of commercial vehicles, including trucks and buses, in India.

Sebi bans JM Financial from taking new mandate

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Thursday barred JM Financial Ltd from taking new mandate for acting as a lead manager for any public issue of debt securities, for indulging in unfair trade practices.

However, in case of existing mandates, JM Financial can continue to act as a lead manager for public issue of debt securities for a period of 60 days, Sebi said in its interim order.

This came days after the Reserve Bank barred JM



Financial Products Ltd from providing any form of financing against shares and debentures, including sanction and disbursement of loans against initial public offering.

Sebi's order came after the regulator undertook a routine examination of the public issues of Non-Convertible Debentures (NCD) during the year 2023.

"The regulator noted that notice (JM Financial) along with its connected group entities were prima facie noted to have given an assured exit to certain investors at a profit thereby incentivising them to apply in the public issue in contravention of the regulatory mandates," it added.

It further said the action of JM Financial appears to be an unfair trade practice.

BUSINESS BRIEF



SRMIST, RENAULT NISSAN TECH SIGN PACT

NEW DELHI: SRM Institute of Science and Technology — India's premier higher education institution in engineering, technology, management, law, arts and science — and global automobile major Renault Nissan Technology and Business Centre India (Renault Nissan Tech), entered into a Memorandum of Understanding. The partnership will pave the way for driving advancements in automobile technology and education, while serving as a platform for innovation in research and developing skilled talent. As a part of the pact, Renault Nissan Tech also handed over a car to SRM's Fab Lab, giving students an opportunity to test and develop products directly on the vehicle. Sharing his views, Philippe Pelletier, Vice President, Human Resources, Renault Group, said the partnership between industry and academia was paramount for nurturing talent, advancing skills, and conducting research in automotive technology.

GAIL, ONGC to look at importing ethane at Shell Hazira terminal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd and oil producer ONGC will explore possibility of using Shell's import terminal at Hazira in Gujarat for importing ethane and other hydrocarbons to fuel their petrochemical ambitions.

GAIL had in May last year signed a memorandum of understanding with Shell Energy India Pvt Ltd to explore opportunities in energy value chain, including sourcing of ethane.

On Thursday, "GAIL, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Shell Energy India (SEI) Pvt Ltd signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) to explore opportunities for

import of ethane and other hydrocarbons and development of evacuation infrastructure at Shell Energy Terminal, Hazira," GAIL said in a statement.

Both GAIL and ONGC are exploring import of ethane from countries such as the US for planned petrochemical plants that are aimed at catering needs for goods ranging from plastics to paints and adhesives in the fast expanding economy. GAIL is looking to build an ethane cracker which will produce ethylene that is required for products such as plastics.

GAIL said it has previously entered into a bilateral MoU with SEI for scouting opportunities in different facets of energy cooperation,



wherein a feasibility study was conducted by a reputed consultant on developing ethane import infrastructure in the existing SEI terminal at Hazira.

ONGC has a bilateral MoU with GAIL for importing and handling of hydrocarbons. "In view of the emergence of ethane requirement in India and proposed development of ethane infrastructure, the three

parties ONGC, GAIL and SEI have joined hands," the statement said. Speaking on the occasion, Rajeev Kumar Singhal, Director (Business Development), GAIL said ethane has emerged as a preferred petrochemical precursor in India and development of its import facilities have gained considerable traction.

"Definite plans are being formulated to import ethane for domestic petrochemical plant requirements." Echoing the sentiment, ONGC group general manager and head of petrochemicals Ashok Kumar said going forward, ethane is the fuel of the future as feedstock to Indian petrochemical industry. "India is adding good petchem capacities, and making available viable and affordable ethane is the key for the plans ahead."

The MoU signed on Thursday includes "cooperation with clear focus for developing ethane import facilities after gap assessment in existing Shell Hazira Terminal facilities and usage of existing pipeline routes and facilities. The MoU

signed envisages to foster efficiency and swift progress of the shared project by leveraging the combined strengths of all three parties." The move coincides with the objective towards assessment of existing operational infrastructure, ensuring its sufficiency, operational flexibility and effective management of upstream and downstream uncertainties.

"The MoU is expected to offer new business prospects to all the parties along with offering diversification of petrochemical feedstock while aligning with the national priorities and Government of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self Reliant India) mission with manufacturing in India," the statement added.



Where service is a way of life

E-AUCTION
(Sale through E-Auction only)

ZONE - DELHI ZONE-I, SIDDHARTH ENCLAVE, ASHRAM CHOWK, NEW DELHI-110014

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES ON 28.03.2024 & 25.04.2024 (12.00 PM to 3.00 PM)

[APPENDIX-IV-A] Sale Notice For Sale Of Immovable Property

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of immovable assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) are Guarantor(s) that the be cw described immovable property mortgaged to the secured creditor, the physical / Symbolic possession of the which has been tar by the Authorised officer of Punjab & Sind Bark secured creditor will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is basis."

DESCRIPTION OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

S1. No.	Name of Borrower/ Guarantor & Branch	Description of the property	Demand Notice Date & Outstanding Amount (Rs.) as on + future interest & other expenses thereon	Reserve Price EMD Bid increase Amount	EMD SUBMISSION ACCOUNT DETAILS	Name & contact no. Branch	Property inspection date & Time	Last Date & Time of EMD Submission Status of Possession	Date/ Time of e-Auction	O/s Govt. dues, if any
1.	Mrs. Priyanka Branch - Defence Colony, New Delhi.	Property bearing all the part and parcel of immovable mortgaged property: Entire Second floor without roof terrace rights, RZ-327-A, plot no. 2, gali no. 5, Village Nasipur, out of khasra no. 297, colony known as West Sagarpur, New Delhi- 110046. Measuring 95 sq. yds. With rights of one car silt parking.	03-04-2019 Rs. 36,04,937/- as on 31-05-2022 plus further interest, expenses & other charges etc. thereon.	25,00,000/- 2,50,000/- 25,000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Defence Colony Mobile-9041939975 Ph- 011-24629260 E-Mail: d0250@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
2.	Mrs. Kumari Shweta Singh & Mr. Vishal Singh Branch - Defence Colony, New Delhi.	Second floor without roof terrace rights, Area measuring 50 sq.yards that is 41.805 sq.meters out of property bearing no RZ/H/8, along with proportionate undivided indivisible and impartial ownership right of underneath land measuring 50 sq.yards that is 41.805 sq.meters with one two wheeler parking on silt floor out of khasra no. 15/7, Mirzapur, colony known as Mahavir Enclave, New Delhi- 110045	03-07-2018 Rs. 38,30,347/66 as on 31.05.2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	15,00,000/- 1,50,000/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Defence Colony Mobile- 9041939975 Ph- 011-24629260 E-Mail: d0250@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
3.	Mr. Ravinder Kumar Tyagi Mrs. Neha Rani Branch- Geeta Colony, Delhi	Property no. 1/6296, old no. 1327-B, part of khasra no 1986/229, Uper ground floor, gali no.3, East Rohtas Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi 110032.	04-04-2017 Rs. 22,19,787/50 as on 30.11.2020 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	13,72,000/- 1,37,200/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. - 07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Geeta Colony Mobile- 9897856363 Ph- 011-22021020 E-Mail: d0626@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
4.	Mr. Dinesh Kumar & Mrs. Bharti Branch - Geeta Colony, Delhi	Flat No. 02, GF, LIG, Plot No. C-103, Ganga Vihar, Loni Ghaziabad, UP.	30-04-2021 Rs. 1071354/41 as on 31.05.2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	8,17,000/- 81,700/- 25,000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Geeta Colony Mobile- 9897856363 Ph- 011-22021020 E-Mail: d0626@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Symbolic Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
5.	Mrs. Deepali Malik & Mr. Harish Malik Mr. Deepak Kumar Sharma Branch - Jyoti Colony, Delhi	1/6759, Third floor with Roof and Terrace Rights, Gali no. 5, village sikdarpur, East Rohtas Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110032. Measuring 15.05 sq. mtr.	04-07-2017 Rs. 11,41,169/20 as on 31.12.2020 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	4,25,000/- 42,500/- 25,000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Jyoti Colony Mobile-8874786160 Ph- 011-22803322 E-Mail: d0783@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
6.	Mrs. Raj Bala Bhardwaj & Mr. Raj Mohan Bhardwaj & Ashu Sharma Branch- Jyoti Colony, Shahdara, Delhi	Property No. 1/5057, 3rd Floor, Gali No. 3, Old plot No. 1469, Plot no. B-5,6&7, BalbirNagar, Shahdara, Delhi- 110032 Measuring 50 sq. yds.	04-04-2017 Rs. 3887949/34 as on 31.05.2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	15,39,000/- 1,53,900/- 25,000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Jyoti Colony Mobile-8874786160 Ph- 011-22803322 E-Mail: d0783@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
7.	Mr. Subhash Sharma & Babi Sharma & Mahesh Sharma Branch- Jyoti Colony, Shahdara, Delhi.	1040/A, UGF, Chandrawali, khasra no. 292, Block- G, Near Railway line colony, Mansarovar Park, Shahdara, Delhi- 110032 Measuring 540 Sq. ft.	23-10-2015 Rs. 4553548/11 as on 31.05.2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	16,73,000/- 1,67,300/- 25,000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Jyoti Colony Mobile-8874786160 Ph- 011-22803322 E-Mail: d0783@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
8.	Ms. Rinkey & Ravinder Branch- Krishna Market, Lajpat Nagar, Delhi.	Entire 2nd floor, Property bearing no 1738/2 area measuring 110 sq yards(approx) part of khasra no 282, Rishi Nagar, Kotla Mubarakpur, New Delhi- 110003	12-07-2014 Rs. 4154521 as on 29.02.2024 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	22,65,000/- 2,26,500/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Krishna Market Mobile-9625348168 Ph- 011-29812217 E-Mail: d0774@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
9.	Mrs. Parvati & Mr. Narayan Branch- Mata Sundry College, New Delhi	Property bearing Flat no. G-2, Ground floor, category MIG, plot no. B-1/152, DLF Dilshad Extn.-II, in the area Bhopura, Loni, Dist. Ghaziabad, UP.	09-02-2015 Rs. 34,99,098/10 as on 31-05-2019 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	22,00,000/- 2,20,000/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Mata Sundry College Mobile-7508944804 Ph- 011-23236817 E-Mail: d0784@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
10.	Mr. Ashok Kumar Branch - Mata Sundari College, Delhi	Plot No. RZ 155-A, IIrd Floor, Nand Ram Park, Khasra No. 628, Village - Bindapur, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi - 59.	10-08-2015 Rs. 4055089/00 as on 29-06-2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	20,66,000/- 2,06,600/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Mata Sundry College Mobile-7508944804 Ph- 011-23236817 E-Mail: d0784@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
11.	Sh. Gopal Ji & Mrs. Ranjeeta Branch - Preet Vihar, Delhi	H.I.G Flat No. . U G - 2, Plot No.B-1/91, DLF Dilshad Extn.II, Bhopura, Sahibabad, Loni Ghaziabad, UP. Measuring 700 sq. ft.	30-01-2015 Rs. 4932000/00 as on 18-06-2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	15,41,000/- 1,54,100/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: PreetVihar Mobile- 9971685684 Ph- 011-22520506 E-Mail: d0878@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
12.	Mr. Kanhaiya Lal & Mrs. Sapna Branch - Preet Vihar, New Delhi	Property No. 1/10336, Khasra No. 370 Upper ground floor (Left hand side), Gali No. 1 Village Babarpur, Colony West Gorakh Park Shahdara, Delhi-110032AREA-81.47sq.mtrs.	05-03-2020 Rs.45,64,687/45 as on 31.01.2021 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	41,47,000/- 4,14,700/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: PreetVihar Mobile-9971685684 Ph- 011-22520506 E-Mail: d0878@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
13.	Mrs. Sanjeeta Rathi Branch : Vasant Vihar, New Delhi.	Property No. 11, 2nd floor, Pocket-01, Sector 20, Rohini Delhi-110085 Measuring 57.41 sq. yds.	21.08.2014 Rs. 65,39,000 as on 30.09.2023 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	17,17,000/- 1,71,700/- 25,000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch : Vasant Vihar Mobile- 9795079444 Ph- 011-26141578 E-Mail: d0487@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
14.	Mr. Deepak Gupta & Mrs. Pooja Gupta Branch : Vivekanand School	Flat- Ground Floor (Back Side Portion), Pvt. Flat No.G-3, Category-LIG, on property Bearing No. C-82, Block-C, Near Purana Aggarwal Sweets, situated in the residential Colony Known as DLF Dilshad Ext. Part-II Bhopura, Loni Ghaziabad UP-201005	16-09-2019 Rs.13,81,947/25 as on 31.01.2021 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	12,31,000/- 1,23,100/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Vivekanand School Mobile-9675844471 Ph- 011-22162033 E-Mail: d0901@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Symbolic Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
15.	Mrs. Kanchan Devi & Mr. Nand Lal Branch : Vivekanand School	Property bearing no. WS-1B, (Part of Plot No. WS-1) Khasra No. 148, Second Floor, Bhagat Singh Gali No. 1, Ilaqa Shadra, Delhi-110032	16-09-2019 Rs.20,95,893/71 as on 31.01.2021 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	16,90,000/- 1,69,000/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch : Vivekanand School Mobile : 9675844471 Ph- 011-22162033 E-Mail: d0901@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
16.	M/s. Provibtech (India) Pvt. Ltd. Prop. Mr. Akash Sharma & Mrs. Archana Sharma Branch: Preet Vihar	Build up residential property bearing Flat no. C-16-17/G-5, ground floor, Ocean palace on plot no. 16-17, block C, Shalimar garden Extn II, village parsonda, Dist. Ghaziabad, UP covered area 640 sq.ft.	30-08-2022 Rs. 2325616/29 as on 30.08.2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	21,76,000/- 2,17,600/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Preet Vihar Mobile- 9971685684 E-Mail: d0878@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
17.	Ms. Alka Narayan Khanna Branch: Jyoti Colony	Part of H No. 1/10330 B 3rd Floor with roof rights, gali no. 1, out of khasra No. 359 west Gorakh park Shahdara, Delhi	02-11-2019 Rs. 1836445/45 as on 30.06.2021 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	14,45,000/- 1,44,500/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Jyoti Colony Mobile-8874786160 Ph- 011-22803322 E-Mail: d0783@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
18.	Harish Kumar Branch- DHLI	Property No 37 3rd floor Front side flat Block- RZ Gali No 02 out of Khasra 35 Near Vasu Sweets village Bindapur colony subhash park extn-II Uttam Nagar Delhi	19-07-2019 Rs.982501/37 as on 29.02.2024 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	19,00,000/- 1,90,000/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch- DHLI Mobile-3041681296 Ph-011-23518178 Email:d0908@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
19.	Mukesh Kumar Branch- Geeta Colony	Flat No. FF1 & FF2, First Floor, MIG, Plot No. B-14, Ganga Vihar, Loni, Ghaziabad, UP-201010	14-09-2022 Rs. 2743167/70 as on 31.08.2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	29,00,000/- 2,90,000/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Geeta Colony Mobile- 9897856363 Ph- 011-22021020 E-Mail: d0626@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
20.	Manoranjan Hota Branch- Geeta Colony	Flat No. FF-03, First Floor, HIG, Plot No. A-45, Ganga Vihar, Loni, Ghaziabad, UP-201010	02-01-2018 Rs. 2108266/80 as on 31.12.2019 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	17,38,000/- 1,73,800/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Geeta Colony Mobile- 9897856363 Ph- 011-22021020 E-Mail: d0626@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
21.	Harbans Lal Branch- Geeta Colony	Flat No. SF-3, HIG, 2nd Floor, Plot No. A-44, Ganga Vihar, Loni, Ghaziabad, 201102	04-10-2019 Rs. 1771210/- as on 30.09.2019 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	19,00,000/- 1,90,000/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Geeta Colony Mobile- 9897856363 Ph- 011-22021020 E-Mail: d0626@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
22.	Rajesh Kumar Branch- Geeta Colony	B-406, Ground floor Gali No. 1, Ashok Nagar, Mandoli Road, Delhi 93.	06-04-2021 Rs. 1048738/10 as on 31.03.2021 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	8,77,000/- 87,700/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Geeta Colony Mobile- 9897856363 Ph- 011-22021020 E-Mail: d0626@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
23.	Asha Seth Branch- Geeta Colony	Flat No. UGF 1, Upper Ground Floor, Plot no. C-93, Ganga Vihar, Loni Ghaziabad, UP-201102	02-06-2022 Rs. 847619/06 as on 31.05.2022 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	15,74,000/- 1,57,400/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Geeta Colony Mobile- 9897856363 Ph- 011-22021020 E-Mail: d0626@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
24.	Rajni Dhunna Branch: Jyoti Colony	First Floor Without roof rights No. 1/9877 B Out of Khasra No. 297 Gali no. 1, East Gorakh Park, Shahdara Delhi 110032 measuring 45.15 Sq. Mtrs	02.01.2018 Rs. 18,49,020.50 as on 30.12.2017 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	15,55,000/- 1,55,500/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Jyoti Colony Mobile-8874786160 Ph- 011-22803322 E-Mail: d0783@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
25.	M K MEDICAL STORE Branch: Jyoti Colony	19-A, Block-S, Flat N-2, Back Side Upper Ground Floor, Shalimar Garden, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201005. Measuring 55.73 Sq. Mtrs	28.04.2022 Rs.19,97,215.94/45 as on 31.07.2021 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	33,15,000/- 3,31,500/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Jyoti Colony Mobile-8874786160 Ph- 011-22803322 E-Mail: d0783@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
26.	Sunil Kumar Branch: Jyoti Colony	Second floor flat no. S-02 with roof rights bearing property no. B-63 Shalimar Housing Complex Vikram Enclave Ghaziabad UP. Measuring 38.08 Sq. Mtrs.	04.07.2017 Rs.16,59,144.00 as on 30.06.2017 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	12,60,000/- 1,26,000/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Jyoti Colony Mobile-8874786160 Ph- 011-22803322 E-Mail: d0783@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
27.	Santosh Branch- Krishna Market, Lajpat Nagar, Delhi.	Entire first floor, property bearing no. C-145/4, Residential colony situated at Village Ghonda gurajan Khadar, C block, Gali no.-6, Main market, bhajanpura, shahdara, Delhi-110053	29-07-2017 Rs. 3010751 as on 29.02.2024 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	13,91,000/- 1,39,100/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Krishna Market Mobile-9625348168 Ph- 011-29812217 E-Mail: d0774@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	27-03-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Physical Possession	28-03-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
28.	Sunita Branch- Krishna Market, Lajpat Nagar, Delhi.	First floor, Prop. Bearing no-1738/2, area measuring 110 sq yards(approx) part of Khasra no 282, situated at Rishi Nagar, Kotla Mubarakpur, New Delhi- 110033	13-08-2021 Rs. 1495415 as on 29.02.2024 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	19,03,000/- 1,90,300/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Krishna Market Mobile-9625348168 Ph- 011-29812217 E-Mail: d0774@psb.co.in	Date 23-04-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM	24-04-2024 Upto 4.00 PM Symbolic Possession	25-04-2024 12.00 PM to 3.00 PM	Not known to the Bank
29.	Radha Ghosh Branch: Yamuna Vihar	1/5801, Second Floor Old Municipal No 1439/A/49 Part of plot No. 3 & 3A Gali no. 12 Balbir Nagar Shahdara Delhi	23-06-2021 Rs. 1467415/37 as on 30.09.2021 + further interest, expenses and other charges etc. thereon.	13,60,000/- 1,36,000/- 25000/-	EMD ACCOUNT A/C No. -07075038010002 IFSC PSIB0000707	Branch: Yamuna Vihar Mobile-9641677773 Email:d1244@psb.co.in	Date 26-03-2024 between 11.30 AM to 3.00 PM			

Kuldeep led Indian bowlers leave England in tailspin

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA

The fragility of England batters against high-quality spin was exposed once again before India showed them how to bat on a flat track by cruising to 135 for one at stumps on day one of the fifth and final Test here on Thursday. Opting to bat, England were all at sea against the mastery of left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav whose fourth five-wicket haul in Tests allowed India to bowl out the visitors for 218 in their first innings shortly after tea. Playing his 100th Test, R Ashwin cleaned up the tail with four wickets while Ravindra Jadeja took one. Contrary to expectations, all 10 wickets went to the spinners at the scenic HPCA Stadium and the last seven batsmen fell while adding only 43 runs. India came out to bat in bright sunshine and Rohit Sharma (52 batting off 83 balls) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (57 off 58b) put the hosts in firm control with a 104-run stand. India reached 135 for one in 30 overs at close. Shubman Gill (26 off 39b) was batting alongside Rohit. It was the highest opening stand of this series for India and was broken when Jaiswal got a bit carried away to be stumped off Shoaib Bashir after collecting back-to-back boundaries. The southpaw's pre-meditated charge down the



ground came soon after he became only the second Indian to amass 700 runs in a series after the legendary Sunil Gavaskar, who achieved the feat twice against the West Indies in 1971 and 1978-79. The ball did not do much for

the England pacers and spinners compared to their Indian counterparts. Jaiswal was watchful to start with and waited for the spinners to be in operation. He put Bashir to sword in his very first over by dispatching

him for three sixes into the stands, two of them over extra cover. The Indian skipper, at the other end, too played confidently. He made his intentions clear by pulling a 150kmph rising delivery off

Mark Wood over fine leg for six in the fourth over of the innings. His second maximum came off spinner Tom Hartley in the cow corner region. However, India's march to command started in the

second session when they reduced the visitors to 194 for eight at tea as Kuldeep engineered a middle-order collapse that saw England lose three wickets for no run. All of a sudden England found themselves reeling at

175 for six from three down on the same score. England lost six wickets in the middle session for 94 runs. Kuldeep could have got rid of Zak Crawley (79 off 108) on the second ball after lunch break but India opted against DRS for a catch. But the 29-year-old spinner did not have to wait long thereafter as he got one to turn massively from the imaginary fifth stump to shatter the England opener's leg-stump. Both the inward drift and the sharp turn led to Crawley's dismissal. Jonny Bairstow (29 off 19b), who is also playing his 100th Test, showed plenty of intent in his innings but could not last long. Like the other batters, he could not read Kuldeep from his hands and got a faint outside edge off a googly. He went for a review but ended up wasting it, exactly what Joe Root (26) and Ben Stokes (0) did on the same score of 175. Jadeja trapped Root in front with a straighter one after beating the English batter's outside edge on the previous ball. Stokes was the fifth victim of Kuldeep who had the opposition skipper plumb in front with a googly. Kuldeep ended up bowling 15 overs straight on either side of the lunch and afternoon session. Ashwin sent back Hartley and Wood in quick session to join the spinners' party. In the morning, Crawley made a classy unbeaten half-

century after surviving an extended opening spell from the Indian pacers before Kuldeep struck twice to leave the visitors at 100 for two at lunch. On expected lines, the skillful duo of Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj made the ball talk but Ben Duckett (27 off 58) and Crawley were able to see off the first 14 overs of fast bowling after being beaten multiple times. Crawley, who has been England's stand-out batter in this series, was meticulous with his shot selection and played some delightful cover drives off pacers on way to his half-century. Siraj ended up bowling eight overs in the morning session and Bumrah seven with both conceding 24 runs. Kuldeep came to bowl in the 18th over and struck instantly. Despite being hit for two fours off his first five balls, Kuldeep was not afraid to flight the ball and was rewarded when Duckett's mistimed hit was pouched by Gill, who took a spectacular catch running backwards from cover. Like Duckett, Crawley too was beaten by the pacers in the first hour of play but he picked the right balls to flaunt his cover drives. He reached his fourth half-century of the series with a boundary down the ground but that remained the only bright spot for England this day.

Rajeshwari Gayakwad hopes for turnaround in UP Warriorz fortunes on better Delhi wicket



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

UP Warriorz spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad is confident of a turnaround in the fortunes of her team which has lost three out of five matches in the ongoing Women's Premier League. She is expecting that the wicket at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here will get better later in the tournament, which can help her team win matches. "Delhi's wicket was quite slow, and the first two matches in Bangalore also felt the same. But I feel the wicket here will get better as the tournament progresses. We will go out there with a positive mindset and look to

win matches," she told PTI Video in an interview. "Even though we lost two matches, we have made a good comeback," she said. UP Warriorz are currently at fourth spot in the five-team tournament with four points from five matches. Gayakwad shared her thoughts on the ground-breaking initiative of recognizing women warriors through a dedicated wall. "It's a really good feeling, for all the women warriors, this wall is for them," said the 32-year-old left-arm spinner. UN Women, the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, has recently acknowledged UP Warriorz as a 'Generation Equality Ally'. "There are many talented women in UP, and women coming from middle-class families, this is a good thing," she said. Gayakwad's team-mate and Australian player Grace Harris, meanwhile, said that there were no clear favourites in the WPL. Acknowledging the tough competition in the league, Harris described it as a "four horse race to the finals."

Marais Erasmus draws curtain on umpiring career

PTI ■ DUBAI

South Africa's Marais Erasmus will retire from international umpiring after officiating in the second and final Test between New Zealand and Australia in Christchurch starting on Friday. The 60-year-old Erasmus, whose long career as an umpire began in 2006, on Thursday announced his decision to retire from Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Umpires. "I have had a wonderful time on the Elite Panel, officiating in some top-class matches around the world and in global ICC events," Erasmus said ahead of his final Test as umpire. "I am very fortunate to have continued my association with the game after my time as a cricketer in South Africa and have enjoyed every moment. While I will miss being on the Elite Panel and the challenges that come with it, I feel it is time for me to step away and look to contribute to the game in some other way." The second Test between Australia and New Zealand will be his 380th as an official — 131 of them as TV umpire.



Erasmus, a former first-class cricketer, was appointed to the Elite panel of ICC umpires in 2010, making him the joint-longest serving current umpire on the list, alongside Rod Tucker. The Christchurch Test will be Erasmus' 82nd men's Test match as umpire, putting him 10th on the list of umpires to officiate in most Test matches. Erasmus, who won the David Shepherd Trophy for the ICC Umpire of the Year in 2016,

2017 and 2021, has officiated in four World Cups (2011, 2015, 2019, 2023), seven T20 World Cups (2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2021 and 2022) and two Champions Trophy tournaments in 2013 and 2017 in men's cricket. He also officiated three Women's T20 World Cups (2010, 2012, 2014). Notably, Erasmus was one of the two on-field umpires for the dramatic final of the 2019 ODI World Cup between England and New Zealand.

He also stood as the umpire in the last two T20 World Cup finals in 2021 and 2022. He was also in charge in the final of all three Women's T20 World Cups he officiated in and was one of the on-field umpires in the high-octane 2017 ICC Champions Trophy final between India and Pakistan. Congratulating the South African on his outstanding career, ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said: "Marais has had an outstanding career as an international umpire. "He has officiated in many global ICC tournaments, including World Cup finals, as well as high-profile series all over the world, at all times displaying his skill, calmness and composure, even in the most challenging of situations. "He has not only been an excellent umpire but also a fine team man who is respected by his colleagues in the ICC and on the Elite panel." Erasmus was the on-field umpire in 25 ODI World Cup matches, 33 T20 World Cup games, 18 Women's T20 World Cup matches and six ICC Champions Trophy games. He stood in seven finals of ICC tournaments.

Ben Stokes aggressive captaincy brought about England downfall: Binny

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA

India seamer Roger Binny strongly feels that England skipper Ben Stokes' aggressive captaincy has been trumped by his Indian counterpart Rohit Sharma's patience and tactical nous in the ongoing series between the two teams. India have already clinched the five-Test series with an unassailable 3-1 lead and look good for a 4-1 final result after dismissing the visitors for 218 on the opening day of the fifth Test here on Thursday. Binny ended the day at a comfortable 135 for 1. "Well, the captaincy of Ben Stokes so far he has been more aggressive, and I think that has been the (reason for their) downfall in the few Test matches," Binny, who is here to watch the proceedings, told PTI Video in an exclusive chat. The 68-year-old Binny, who played 27 Tests and 72 ODIs for India between 1979 and 1987, didn't find it prudent on the part of English willow wielders to take an all-or-nothing approach on most occasions against a quality Indian spin attack. "Being so aggressive and

trying to take on the Indian spinners in difficult times (situations) rather than hanging around and trying to make a big score," said Binny. The BCCI president is very impressed with the manner in which Rohit has waited for opportunities and the right time to pounce on the Opposition. "Rohit Sharma again has been very tactful. You know he knew exactly what he wanted to do and he got his bowlers to do that." England started the series with a victory in Hyderabad but things have gone downhill for them since then. So what changed? "I don't think England changed their strategy. They went on the same attacking mode like what they did in the first Test match. But, I think, Rohit was more patient because he had the first Test in his pocket at one stage and then he let it go. He was patient enough in the next two Tests and won both." England on the opening day of the final Test were 100 for 1 at one stage before being all out for 218 and Binny believes that only they are to be blamed for this downfall.

How Kuldeep 2.0 emerged as India most impactful spinner

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As soon as the last wicket fell, Kuldeep Yadav tossed the 57.4 over old red SG Test ball towards his senior colleague and the team's milestone man Ravichandran Ashwin, who promptly tossed it back to him. After another round of catching, like an insistent older brother, Ashwin literally forced the ball into Kuldeep's palms. Ashwin had taken four in his 100th Test but Kuldeep did one better, a five-for that he had missed in the previous game against England. But the 37-year-old's sweet gesture of depositing the ball in Kuldeep's hands may have subtly been a change of guard in terms of who the leader of the spin attack will be in the coming years. Ashwin has had 21 wickets in this series with another innings to go and Kuldeep, who wasn't picked for the opening match,

has 17 to his credit. But in terms of impact, the man from Kanpur, after a roller-coaster ride in the past few years, has stood head and shoulders above his esteemed seniors. The traditional 'Chinaman's leg-break', which turns in for a right-hander, sent back the opposition's best batter Zak Crawley and also brought back memories of Babar Azam's dismissal in the 2019 World Cup when he was at his absolute best in white ball cricket. A beautifully tossed up delivery outside the off, luring Crawley into a lunge drive before sneaking in between the bat and pad, leaving the batter dazed. It was everything that makes up a left-arm wrist spinner's day-dream. In a 2019 Test in Sydney, where he got a five-for, he then head coach Ravi Shastri had announced that he would be "India's lead spinner in



overseas Tests", but that particular team management never walked the talk. A subsequent loss of form and a career-threatening knee surgery pushed him further down the pecking order. Those close to him recall how when he needed a comforting arm around his shoulder, Kuldeep had practically no one

standing by him. This is something that current skipper Rohit Sharma has managed to do with elan. If one checks Kuldeep's stats, he has felt more empowered across formats whenever Rohit has been the captain. Kuldeep's childhood coach Kapil Pandey, a tough cookie from Azamgarh, a

thoroughbred in Mumbai club cricket and someone who has navigated through the Kanpur maze wouldn't allow his ward to throw in the towel. "He has three hat-tricks in white ball cricket but I completely understand that team combination is always paramount," Pandey, who runs his academy in Kanpur, told

PTI during a recent interaction. Kuldeep was back in his elements when he played against Bangladesh in December 2022, picking eight wickets and scoring a valuable 40, only to be replaced by a mediocre Jaydev Unadkat in the very next game. But that Bangladesh series was the turning point for Kuldeep, feels Pandey. "Before the tour of Bangladesh, we worked on his flight, line and length. The frame of mind for maximum bowlers now is that we don't need to use flight. It is just about containing the flow of runs and get wickets in the process like they do in T20," Pandey said. **How Kuldeep countered 'Bazball'** There are times when cricket as a game is over-analysed and solutions become complicated. Pandey wanted his best student to follow his process of getting

wickets in ODI games, where he has enjoyed commendable success. "Aap batao Bazball hai kya? Old fashioned ODI cricket hi toh hai? (You tell me what is Bazball? It is just old fashioned ODI cricket)," Pandey summed it up lucidly. "In yesteryears' ODIs, a good score in 50 overs was 250 at five runs per over. Now just translate that to 90 overs and it is 450 runs in a day. That is exactly how England played the game. They took Test batting into ODI mode." "So, Kuldeep was simply told that way you bowl the way you bowl in ODIs. Bring that aspect of your bowling into Tests."

was changed. "Post surgery, his run-up to the crease became straighter, arm speed increased. The moment arm speed increases, the balls spins at a higher speed." The next part, which was also the most important, was weight transfer while delivering the ball. That is called pivot, where a spinner with his twist of waist, puts the entire weight of his body on the bowling shoulder. "For a spinner, the pivot is weight transfer -- while he pivots, he needs to lean forward more, the classic example is Shane Warne. While pivoting, you would see how much his bowling shoulder used to lean forward, due to this transfer of weight. The ball would whizz at a faster clip while travelling through the air. "Kuldeep also became better in using the footmark patches of his teammates bowling from other end."