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# Days ahead of LS elections, EC Arun Goel resigns

**DEEPAK KUMAR JHA** NEW DELHI

In an unprecedented move a couple of days before the announcement of the General Elections schedule, Election Commissioner Arun Goel on Saturday late evening resigned from the post. The three-member Election

Commission of India already had a vacancy and will now be left only with Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar. Goel's tenure was scheduled to end in December 2027, and on

the day when he announced his departure, sources said he worked until 5 pm at Nirvachan Sadan, finalising the minutest details of the schedule.

Goel was in line to replace Rajiv Kumar as the CEC after the latter's retirement next year. As per the plan, the Election

Commission was to announce the poll dates on Wednesday afternoon following which the Model Code of Conduct would have come into effect.

"In pursuance of clause (1) of Section 11 of The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, the President is pleased to accept the resignation tendered by Arun Goel, Election Commissioner, with effect from

March 9, 2024," a gazette notification by the Union Law and Justice Ministry said on Saturday, a copy of which is with The Pioneer.

Goel's resignation comes at a time the three-member Commission was down to two after the retirement of Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey in February. With Goel's resignation being accepted, the poll panel now has only Chief Election Commissioner Kumar. As per clause (1) of Section 11 of

the law, the Chief Election

Commissioner may, at any time, resign from office by giving it in writing to the President. Goel, a former IAS officer, took

Commissioner on November 21, 2022. His appointment as EC too had led to a row as he took a

as the Election

voluntary retirement as Secretary in a Ministry of Government of India in November 2022 and that just next day he was appointed as Election Commissioner. Sources in the Nirvachan Sadan

said Goel has cited personal Commissioner or an Election reasons while resigning. The Government made frantic efforts to persuade Goel not to quit, but

he insisted.

Government sources said since the election watchdog is left with only one commissioner it would not announce the Lok Sabha schedule and before that the process of appointing other election commissioners to meet the quorum has to be done.

According to the new law on appointment of CEC and ECs passed by Parliament in the last Session, a search committee headed by the Law Minister and comprising

Secretaries will shortlist five names. Earlier Goel's Earlier appointment had challenged in the Supreme Court. "Minister of Law picks up four names from the list of names shortlisted... The file was put up on November 18; moves the same day. Even the PM recommends the name on the same day. We don't want any confrontation, but was this done in any haste? What's the tearing hurry," the court had asked.

The petition was later dismissed by a two-judge bench last year, which noted that a Constitution Bench had examined the issue but had refused to cancel Goel's appointment. During his tenure as Union Heavy

Industries Secretary, Goel catalysed the e-vehicle movement in India. He implemented Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes, securing investments worth ₹67,690 crore against a target of ₹42,500 crore. Opposition parties called the resignation of EC alarming and concerning when the nation is about to go for polls. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge asked whether it is an Election Commission or Election Omission. "India now has only One Election Commissioner, even as Lok Sabha elections are to be announced in a few days. Why?

Continued on Page 2



# **India thwarts China** influence with tunnel

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI/ ITANAGAR

In an effort to provide all weather logistical backup to the forces guarding the border facing China in Arunachal Pradesh and boosting economic development of the region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday virtually dedicated to the nation Sela tunnel project in Itanagar. The world's longest twin-lane

tunnel has been constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) at an altitude of 13,000 feet on the road connecting Tezpur, Assam to Tawang in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. Built at a total cost of ₹825 crore, the tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity to Tawang across Sela Pass on the Balipara — Chariduar — Tawang Road, boosting the preparedness of the Armed Forces and augmenting the socio-economic development of the border region. In his address, the Prime Minister

Government's unwavering commitment to the development of the Northeast region. He said the Sela Tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity and improve the ease of travel for the people of Tawang. Work on many tunnels is going on

of the border villages and reiterated his style of working as per the needs of the nation and not for electoral considerations. The Prime Minister promised the defence personnel that he would come to meet them at this engineering marvel in his next term. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Minister of Earth Sciences Kiren Rijiju were among the dignitaries present during the inauguration

constructed using the new Austrian Tunnelling Method and incorporates safety features of the

Continued on Page 2

# Himachal faces political heat



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI/DEHRADUN

Political tension is once again brewing in Himachal Pradesh as 11 including MLAs, Himachal Pradesh Congress rebels, have been camping at a resort in neighbouring BJPruled Uttarakhand.

The six rebel Congress independent MLAs, were legislators were suspended from the party for cross-voting for BJP nominee Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya

Dehradun by a chartered plane from Chandigarh on Saturday afternoon.

and also discussions on the Lok Sabha elections with the top brass.

"I have just come to know good

The development comes two days after Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu heing summoned by the Congress top brass over the growing tensions within the party and the instability of the lone Congress-led Government in North India. sources said Sukhu presented a report on the political situation in the held

> through social media that they (the rebel) have been flown by a chartered plane. This is not democracy. You are just hijacking the very principles of elected

governance," Sukhu said when his comments were the latest sought Continued on Page 2 **MOHIT KANDHARI J**AMMU

 $\prod_{i=1}^{n} a_i$  major setback to the Opposition INDIA Bloc, the two mainstream political parties in Kashmir valley, the National Conference and the Peoples' Democratic Party, have decided to part ways and contest against each other in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls rather than fielding a common candidate against Bharatiya Janata Party.

With this, the two main constituents of the INDIA Bloc in Jammu and Kashmir have also brought curtains down on the Peoples' Alliance Gupkar declaration (PAGD), floated by the Kashmir-based mainstream

political parties on the slogan of restoring the special status of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir and revoking Abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A.

Amid rumblings within the PAGD alliance, the first shot was fired by the National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Friday. Accusing the PDP of targeting



the National Conference, Omar announced at a Press conference on Friday that it would not agree to a seatsharing deal with the PDP for the coming Lok Sabha polls. Omar said the PDP

came at the third number on the Anantnag Lok Sabha seat in the last Parliament elections and how is it justified that the number one or number two party will leave the claim on the seat and give it to the third

**Continued on Page 2** 

# INDIA Bloc disintegrates BJP to go solo in Odisha

As the suspense over the BJD-BJP alliance continued to prevail, BJP election in-charge for Odisha Vijaypal Singh Tomar here on Saturday categorically said there would not be any alliance with any party in the

Tomar said the BJP is making all preparations to fight the upcoming elections on its own strength. We will win more than 80

MLAs and 16 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha. There is no discussion in the BJP about an alliance with the BJD. People should ask the people who floated the idea of an alliance. We preparing to fight for all 147 seats," Tomar

said. Two BJD leaders, VK Pandian and party organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das, had visited New Delhi in a

special flight on Thursday reportedly to carry forward discussions with the BJP on the modalities of a coalition.



However, Tomar refuted the buzz of any meetings with

"Nobody from the BJD met me in Delhi. If anybody had met our Central leaders, then they would have informed me," he added.

After a series of meetings at Chief Minister Chief Naveen Patnaik's residence, senior BID

leader Debi Prasad Mishra had told the media earlier that a discussion on the alliance was held and a

decision would be taken in the interests of the people of

BID MLA Nrusingha Charan Sahu on Saturday "I have heard speculations about an alliance. Patnaik will take a

and BJP leader Pradeep Panigrahi said, "The BJP State president has already clarified twice everything on the alliance issue. He is the only authority in Odisha who can say anything on this. And he has cleared that there has been no discussion about the alliance. There is no basis for

"The BJP will fight alone in Odisha. It will also send

#### India beats **England, wins five** match series 4-1

PTI DHARAMSALA

Ravichandran Ashwin

took a famous fivewicket haul in his 100th Test as India thrived on the impatience of England batters for an emphatic innings and 64-run victory in the final chapter of an action-packed five-match contest, handing the visitors their heaviest defeat in the 'Bazball' era. With the series already in

bag, India were playing for crucial World Test Championship points and England made their job simpler by self-imploding on day three here. England were bowled out

for 195 towards the end of the afternoon session with Ashwin running through their reckless batting lineup to end with a match haul of nine wickets.

Play tests, earn more See page 8

# Fifth graders hitch 150 km ride for chowmein adventure

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE** LUCKNOW

Amid the ongoing crisis

the

three

within the Congress in

MLAs.

seen entering the hotel under

legislators

the State, a bus

legislators arrived

at Rishikesh's Taj

Hotel, where the

including six rebel

heavy security.

Congress MLAs

carrying

Tn a surprising turn of events that could Leasily rival a script straight out of Bollywood, four adventurous students fifth-grade Mudaina Roopshah village in Uttar Pradesh's Auraiya district left their parents

and authorities in a state of Ashish A

shock after embarking on a daring chowmein expedition Firozabad, situated 150-km away. The quartet, Arun Rathore, Prajapati, Pushkar Valmiki, and Dev Kumar, all aged 11, collectively pooled a modest sum of ₹220 to fund their spicy quest for the renowned Firozabad chowmein. With the resolve of seasoned travellers, they hitched a ride on

a passing truck, setting their

awaiting them.

It was disclosed that Arun, the brains behind the operation, had previously eaten the famed chowmein during a visit to his aunt's house in Firozabad in 2020. Recalling it as the best he had ever tasted, Arun seized the chance to introduce his friends to this gastronomic delight.

sights on the tantalising noodles

'Arun's tales Firozabad's legendary chowmein during his previous visit in 2020 proved irresistible to friends, prompting escapade," remarked Singh,

Rajkumar Ajitmal SHO of police station. Over three days, Arun meticulously planned every detail of their escapade, from procuring funds to

ensuring a smooth journey. On the

decisive day, Arun made a bold move

by selling his prized cricket bat to a classmate for a substantial sum of ₹150, while his companions scraped together an additional ₹70 from households. Armed with their hard-earned cash, the

boys boldly solicited a lift from a passing truck on the highway, much to the surprise and amusement of the driver, who generously offered them a free ride. Upon arriving at their culinary

destination, the boys wasted no time and indulged in a hearty chowmein feast at a local park, relishing every bite with the enthusiasm of seasoned food critics. However, their return journey took an unexpected turn as they found

themselves lacking funds for a bus ticket. Undeterred, they opted for a 'ticketless journey,' much to the amusement of the bus conductor, who waived the fare with a hearty laugh. Instead, he informed the police about the

tale of four boys believing that their continued on Page 2 are sorry that this has happened. We want Indian parents must be worried.

# Maldives economic woes deepen as Indians shun island

ARCHANA JYOTI - NEW DELHI

In the wake of escalating diplomatic tensions between India and the Maldives, the neighbouring island is feeling the ripple effects as Indians continue to refrain from visiting the region which was once a favourite tourist hotspot. Expressing concerns over the

repercussions of India's recent boycott call on his home country's economy, particularly in the realm of tourism, Former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed has issued an apology on behalf of the Maldivian people.

It has impacted the Maldives agency. a lot, and I am actually here in India. I'm very worried about tourism earnings through this. I want to say the people Indian tourists have already of the Maldives are sorry, we



holidays to the Maldives, and there will not be any change in our hospitality," Nasheed said as quoted by a news However, the island country's

patterns, underscoring the

started painting a stark picture of shifting travel

in the region, he added. Modi criticised the earlier neglect

ceremony.
The Sela Tunnel has been new

highest standards.

final call on that." Commenting on Sahu's

the speculation about a coalition?

many MPs to Delhi to form an NDA Government at the Centre as well," Panigrahi added. BJP Odisha president Manmohan Samal, returning after talks with Central party leaders in Delhi on Friday evening, had dismissed the talk of alliance and stated that no such talks took place

Citing data available from the Maldives Tourism Ministry, Maldivian website Adhadhu has revealed that there has

to visit the country which is

inching towards China.

been a significant downturn in Indian tourist arrivals by 33 per cent compared to the previous year. Continued on Page 2

# PM Modi attacks TMC, Congress in Siliguri

from southern Bengal to Find southern part of the State Prime Minister Narendra Modi continued his tirade against the Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance and the Trinamool Congress for perpetrating a corrupt and dynastic rule.

Addressing a massive rally --his fourth in a span of nine days in Bengal --- at Kowakhali off Siliguri the Prime Minister said how the INDIA constituents including the TMC were dividing people to win elections and perpetrate a corrupt and dynastic rule which was their hallmark.

"While Modi is trying to develop India and Bengal, particularly north Bengal ... why Modi is trying to address the issues of the people by introducing poor-friendly schemes the constituents of INDIA are dong discriminatory politics ... they are dividing the peo-

ple to win elections and perpetrate a dynastic and corrupt rule," he said.

The Prime Minister said that "the Congress is trying to serve



moting a nephew (read Abhishek Banerjee the nephew of Mamata Banerjee) the CPI(M) is promoting these two parties ... they have no concern for the people's woes and indulge in self-aggrandis-

ing politics.' Modi's Siliguri rally took place a day ahead of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's "Jan Garjan Sabha" (public outcry meet) at Brigade Parade Ground on Sunday. An apparent show of strength Banerjee's rally is reportedly being held against alleged central deprivation including stoppage of MNRE-GA and other funds.

In the Saturday's rally that witnessed an overwhelming presence of women coming from the North Bengal districts of Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, North and South Dinajpur, Malda and even adjoining parts of Bihar, the Prime Minister said how in ten years of his rule the BJP government had managed to pull out about 25 crore people from the clutches of poverty.

## NCB arrests former DMK functionary in ₹2,000 crore drug trafficking case

PNS NEW DELHI

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Saturday said it has arrested Jaffer Sadiq, a former DMK party functionary in Tamil Nadu, in connection with an international drugs trafficking investigation case estimated to be worth more than Rs 2,000 crore.

The federal anti-narcotics agency has termed Sadiq as the 'mastermind and kingpin" of this illicit network spread between India, Australia, and New Zealand.

Sadiq, a producer of Tamil films, was recently expelled by the ruling DMK from the party after his name and purported links to the drugs network were mentioned by the agency. He was the Chennai West deputy organiser of the DMK's NRI wing. The opposition BJP and AIADMK in the state have been targeting the DMK over the matter.

Last month, the NCB said, it arrested three people, all hailing from Tamil Nadu, and seized 50 kg of narcotics-making chemical pseudoephedrine during a raid at a godown in Delhi.

The searches by the NCB



alongwith the special cell of the Delhi Police came about on a tip-off they received towards the end of 2023 from the Australian and New Zealand authorities about "large quantities" of pseudoephedrine concealed in desiccated coconut powder and mix food powder being smuggled into their countries from India.

An additional input from the US DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) indicated that the source of these consignments was in the national capital, the NCB had said in a statement. The three arrested persons allegedly said that a total of 45 pseudoephedrine consignments were sent by them over the last 3 years, containing about 3,500 kgs of pseudoephedrine valued at over Rs 2,000 crore in the international market, as per the

# Certain associations working against interest of farmers: RKPA

 $R^{
m ashtriya\ Kisan\ Progressive}_{
m Association\ (RKPA),\ a}$ pan-India association that works for the welfare and progress of farmers across the country on Friday accused certain association and vested interest of working against the interest of farmers and condemned it for presenting misleading facts in the public domain.

Addressing a press conference in the national capital, Binod Anand, National President, Rashtriya Kisan Progressive Association took strong exception to certain association pegging the level of substandard and spurious pesticides at just 2% per cent of the overall pesticides market of the country

"India's agricultural productivity has increased by more than 6 times since 1950, a remarkable achievement indeed. But unfortunately, per acre yield is way below in comparison to many developed and developing nations. Despite having 30% more arable land and 67% more rainfall than China, India's agriculture GDP is about onethird of China.

One major contributor to lower yields is the widespread



use of low-quality inputs including agrochemicals. Yet, some vested interest dares to put the level of sub-stan-dard products at 2% of the

overall Indian market. This is nothing but misleading and cheating of farmers," said Binod Anand. The counterfeit pesticides

market is a parallel industry as evident from various FIRs which have been registered against the culprits by reputed companies. It is adversely impacting

farmers' livelihoods, yield, crop quality, income, and the Indian economy on a broader aspect," Anand added.

Citing the example of the huge damage of 9 lakh acres of chili crops in South India in 2021, he said, "The damage was mainly due to usage of sub-standard pesticides in the sub-lethal dose.

The ultimate sufferers were farmers and consumers. Strict action is a must against such

vested interests are strengthening such elements by presenting a misleading picture." Citing another example, Binod Anand highlighted that the Karnataka government had drawn 250 samples of such pseudo pesticides and analyzing them in their labs, their labs and it is surprising that all of them were found laced with chemical pesticides but surprisingly no proper action was taken as it is the case of fraud, smuggling and simple case has been filed under Insecticide Act 1968 and Rules 1971.

"Few of these so-called Biopesticides/ Bio-stimulants were the cocktails of 10-12 chemical pesticides and some of them are not even registered in India which also indicates the possibility of smuggling of such chemicals from foreign countries," he

Pawan Payal, National General Secretary, RKPA, Rashtriya Kisan Progressive Association also expressed similar views and highlighted discrepancies in sampling from pesticide dealers/retailers as one of the root causes of the flourishing sub-standard pesticide market in the country.

# Demand for expelling Eezhava community political outfit BJDS gets louder

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

 $E^{ven \ as \ the \ demand \ by \ vet-}_{eran \ BJP \ leaders \ call \ for}$ expelling the Eezhava community's political outfit BJDS is getting louder by the day, the latter announced the names of its two candidates for the ensuing Lok Sabha polls from

The BJDS has been allocated four constituencies by the BJP. Tushar Vellappalli, the president of the party announced the names of the two Eezhava leaders who are being fielded by the BJDS. He said the names of the remaining two would be announced in a day or two.

The BJDS which had contested four seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha election had polled 3.8 lakh votes (1.8 per cent) of the total votes cast in the State. But veteran BJP leaders questioned the inclusion of the BIDS in the National Democratic Alliance fit as a forum of Eezhavas with criminal records. Vellappalli Natesan, general secretary of SNDP who is also the father of Tushar is an accused in the micro-finance scam running to hundreds of crores. While Tushar is rubbing shoulders with the bigwigs of the BJP, papa Vellappalli is a sidekick of chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Tushar himself was an accused in a cheque bouncing case worth Rs 19 crore and was arrested by the UAE police in 2019. It was the intervention of a Keralite business tycoon close to chief minister Vijayan which helped him to come out of

prison.
"We in BJP doubt about the credentials of Tushar and Natesan. The BJDS is in the BJP camp only because of caste reasons. Natesan, Tushar and BJP state chief K Surendran, union minister Vellappalli Natesan are all Eezhavas. Though the Nairs in the State are an equally powerful group, Surendran and Muraleedharan do not have the enthusiasm in accomsaid a senior BJP leader who has been sidelined by the Surendran-Muraleedharan

## Shah launches centralised database portal for cooperative sector

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

With just a click of a button, stakeholders of the cooperative sector across the country can now access a centralized database portal providing comprehensive information about registered cooperative societies, totaling a staggering around 8 lakh nationwide. The National Database portal

created using state-of-the-art technology, featuring a dynamic web-based platform was launched by Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah at an event here on Friday. He called it a "very important

step" for the expansion and strengthening of the country's cooperative sector.

He said a national policy for coordination of cooperative movements in every state was a long-felt need of the country, which had been fulfilled by the Narendra Modi government with the creation of a ministry for cooperation.

launched a book, "National Cooperative Database 2023: A Report" at the event in the presence of Minister of State BL Verma, National Cooperative Union of India President Dileep Sanghani, Union Cooperation Secretary Di Ashish Kumar Bhutani and NCDC MD Pankaj Bansal among other senior officials and representatives from the

Shah mentioned that under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the entire cooperatives, from PACS to Apex, have been computerized to enhance their efficiency.

He stated that this database is the answer to all cooperative activities in India.

"In the last two years, all primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) in the country have been computerised and all states have accepted common bylaws to increase their business," Shah said.

"Under the Modi government's model bylaws, PACS have become multi-dimensional and can now undertake various business activities.

"All states in the country have risen above partisan model bylaws, paving the way for the expansion of PACS," the cooperation min-

## **High Court saves** woman, goat from **Panchayat officials**

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The timely intervention of the Kerala High Court has saved a poor widow in Thrissur district from the evil designs of a group of her neighbors to liquidate her only source of livinggoat rearing.

For Remya, a 54 year old widow in Chelakkara (hometown of CPI(M) strongman and Kerala Minister K Radhakrishnan), the only source of livelihood was her goat. Since the State Government is in deep financial crisis, it has not been able to reimburse her monthly widow pension of Rs 1,300/which has thrown her life out of gear. The goat was her only source of income and she has been rearing the goat with utmost care.

But a neighbor who had some other ideas, approached the Panchayat alleging that Remya by rearing the goat was polluting the environment and many ing health related issues. The Panchayat issued a show-cause notice to the hapless woman asking her why action should

not be taken against her "terrorist" goat for causing environment and ecological hazard. Though Remya replied to the notice promptly, the masters of the local self government were not satisfied and they decided to auction the goat to "save the local residents' from the health hazards caused by the goat. The Panchayat fixed 7th March 2024 as the D-day and all concerned were asked to be present for the auction. Her neighbors, the complainants, were happy as they hoped to get the goat for a small price during the auction. The course took a twist here as a young lawyer Muraleedharan Harikiran and his colleague P T Sheeiish entered the scene. They filed a writ petition in Kerala High Court under Article 226 of the Indian Constitution which states that the High Courts have powers to issue to any person or authority including in appropriate cases any Government within those terwrits for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution (Fundamental Rights).

## Some sections worry us, anti national narratives should be dismantled: Dhankhar



**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said anti-national narratives in the current times also resound from Indian legislature and the youth have the responsibility to neutralise these tendencies which are working against the country's interest.

Addressing the naming ceremony of Shri Ram College of Commerce's multipurpose stadium after late finance minister Arun Jaitley, Dhankhar said, "Some anti-national narratives are also present in the most sacred place of democracy today There are certain sections which give us worry. We must understand nationalism is not an option. It requires 100 per cent among other dignitaries.

Young people must neutralise these tendencies working against

the internet of the country," he added. Dhankhar urged the corporates to subscribe and contribute to the economic nationalism of the country and help India emerge as a global leader. Praising the late BJP leader Jaitley, the Vice President said that he was loved and accepted by all beyond his party and political stance, and contributed sig-

> for his alma mater, SRCC. The naming ceremony of the stadium was also attended by the late minister's spouse Sangeeta Dhankhar's wife Sudesh Dhankhar and Delhi University Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh,

nificantly for the development

# Days ahead of LS elections...

"As I have said earlier, if we do

not stop the systematic decimation independent institutions, our democracy shall be usurped by dictatorship," Kharge took to social media to react to the development.

He regretted that the ECI will now be among the last Constitutional institutions to fall. He regretted that ECI will now be among the last Constitutional institutions to

While TMC Ràjya Sabha member Saket Gokhale has

Fifth graders hitch 150 km...

This exactly had happened. When the boys did not return

home in the afternoon worried parents of these four students

rushed to the school to enquire about their wards. When they

were told that the quartet did not come to school at all that day,

they panicked. The parents lodged a complaint with the police

fearing that all of them have been kidnapped. The worried

police launched a manhunt. At night, police got the

information about these boys and their joyride was cut short

when authorities intercepted them at the Anantram toll plaza,

halfway through their journey back home.

"very very concerning" and pointed out that the panel to pick Election Commissioners now consists of the Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, RJD chief spokesman and a member of Ràjya Sabha Manoj Jha indicated "something fishy" in the episode.

Shiv Sena (Udhhav) Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi sought to know the way the EC resigned and the speed it was accepted. "Anyone remember this

rhyme? Ten Little Soldiers? termed Goel's resignation Reminded after reading the independent bodies like EC.

news on Arun Goel stepping down as EC and the speed with which it has been accepted. It was to be 3 then it was 2 down to 1 .... Heading towards none? Three Little Soldier Boys walking in the zoo; A big bear hugged one and then there were two. Two Little Soldier Boys sitting in the sun; One got frizzled up and then there was One. One Little Soldier Boy left all alone; He went and hanged himself and then there were none," Chaturvedi quipped and also expressed dismay over the state of affairs in the

**India thwarts...** 

The project will not only provide a faster and

more efficient transport route in the region

but is of strategic importance to the country.

The foundation stone of the tunnel was laid

## Himachal faces...

The problem started last month when six Congress MLAs and three independents cross-voted for the BJP candidate Mahajan for the lone seat in the Rajya Sabha, which led to the defeat of party's official nominee Abhishek Manu Singhvi.

The six MLAs - Sudhir Sharma, Ravi Thakur, Rajinder Rana, Inder Dutt Lakhanpal, Chetanya Sharma and Devinder Kumar Bhutto - were later disqualified. Later, acting on a complaint by the Congress, Assembly

from the House for defying a party whip to vote on the state Budget. Himachal Minister Vikramaditya Singh tried to resolve the situation by becoming a mediator between the Congress High

Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania disqualified the six MLAs

A day earlier Sukhu said he can have a dialogue with the six party rebels after he softened his stand towards them. In return, Sukhu blamed the BJP-led Union Government for using

official machinery to destabilise his Government in the State.

terrain and adverse weather conditions.

The BRO has always been at the forefront of

the development of the border areas. In the

last three years, the BRO has completed a

record 330 infrastructure projects

The Sela project consists of two tunnels and

over 8 km of approach roads, with a total

constructed at the cost of Rs 8,737 crore.

#### From Page 1

According to Maldives Tourism Ministry statistics for 2023, the number of Indian tourists visiting the Maldives by March 4 last year was 41,054. However, as of March 2 this year, the number has decreased to 27,224, which is 13,830 less than the previous year, as reported by Adhadhu.

Last year, India was the second largest source market for tourists to the Maldives, accounting for 10 per cent of market share during the same period. However, India has now dropped to the sixth position on the list, with a market share of 6 per cent. Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) president Riyaz Munshi too

noted that there has been a substantial drop in business for the neighbouring country. "This has gone in the favour of Thailand and Sri Lanka as Indians are preferring to opt for these alternatives. In fact, more than political, procountry sentiments are dissuading potential travelers

as the neighbouring country's preference to China has not gone down well with many Indians here," he added.

Maldives economic woes deepen...

Usually, such shifts preference also cast a shadow on the earnings of the hotels, resorts, restaurants, and tour operators who feel the pinch as they grapple with reduced bookings and revenue losses. In 2021 to 2023, India was the top tourist market for the Maldives, with over 200,000 tourists per year. However, the diplomatic row

which began hours after President Mohamed Muizzu, a pro-China leader, took oath in November last and vowed ensure Maldives' 'sovereignty' and one of the first steps was to demand India to withdraw all its

troops. He also broke from tradition and decided to go to Beijing on his maiden foreign trip instead of New Delhi. The controversy worsened when three Maldivian Deputy Ministers made derogatory comments about Prime Minister Narendra Modi

regarding his visit to Indian island Lakshadweep and his call for the development of the region as a beach tourism

destination. This was followed by New Delhi summoning the Maldivian envoy registering a strong protest against the viral posts. Despite the suspension of the Deputy Ministers involved, the fallout continued to reverberate, with concerns mounting in the Maldives tourism industry as a boycott campaign momentum in India, fueled by support from influential

film stars. The Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO) too had conducted a survey to gauge the impact of booking cancellations by Indian guests, underscoring the significant repercussions of the diplomatic tensions on the tourism sector. However, the specific findings of this survey were not disclosed publicly.

Indian figures, including

#### INDIA Bloc... From Page 1

"Also, I do not see any influence of the BJP on the seat (South Kashmir-Rajouri)," he said.

Referring to the PDP's conduct as an alliance partner, Omar claimed every constituent must maintain the sanctity of the alliance. "The NC alone cannot be made responsible," Omar In 2019 National Conference candidate Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi won the securing

told reporters.

Anantnag Lok Sabha seat by 40,180 votes. Congress candidate Ghulam Ahmad Mir was the runnerup. He secured 33504 votes. PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti that our enemy is very stood third garnering 30254 votes.

Later, reacting to the unilateral announcement JKNC vice Ómar, president PDP president Mehbooba Mufti

said it is very unfortunate the National Conference has changed the goalpost at this crucial juncture. She also accused the NC of reducing the Peoples' Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) to a "joke" by disbanding it. "I have always maintained strong and dangerous. We should remain united to give a tough fight. Unfortunately, I was not taken into confidence by the PAGD chairman Dr Farooq

If

National

Abdullah.

by the Prime Minister on February 9, 2019, length of approximately 12 km. The first and the construction commenced on April 1, tunnel is a single-tube tunnel spanning 980 metres, while the second serves as an emergency escape route, measuring 1.5 km in The tunnel has been completed in just five years overcoming challenges of difficult length.

Command and the rebels.

Conference leadership had some reservations they should have discussed the matter. But they decided otherwise," she said.

Mehbooba said the NC has done what the BJP couldn't accomplish against the PAGD.

Flanked by senior PDP leaders, Mehbooba said PDP may be down but we are not When asked about her

party's future strategy and

whether PDP will field

separate candidates on all

Lok Sabha seats, Mehbooba said she would talk to the Congress on the matter and arrive at a decision soon. 'We will talk to Congress in this regard and will make our decision public soon," she said.

After the collapse of its coalition Government with the BIP in 2018, PDP lost all these three seats in 2019, including its South Kashmir stronghold of Anantnag where PDP president Mehbooba lost to the NC's first-timer, Hasnain

Masoodi.

During the initial round of seat-sharing talks, PDP had proposed to leave Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat for their party candidate while urging the National Conference to contest the Srinagar and the Baramulla constituencies. The Congress, too, had backed

the suggestion. Interestingly, the National Conference leadership may have closed down the doors but they have still kept a window open for the

alliance partners during the Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir.

Responding to a question during the Press conference on Friday, Omar said despite the PDP's attacks on his party, the NC has told the Congress that it is ready to keep doors open for an alliance for the assembly polls in the Union Territory. But, first we will see their (PDP's) approach in the forthcoming Parliamentary

polls," he added. The NC vice president said

seat sharing with the Congress and the national party would contest from two seats in the Jammu region. 'We have told them to field

his party has discussed the

their candidates from Udhampur and Jammu seats. We have also told them that the NC will not field its candidate on the Ladakh seat, but our endeavor should be to field a consensus candidate there who can take back the seat from the BJP," he said.

# Prevented from speaking in Assembly on Budget: BJP MLAs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP MLAs, who I returned to the Delhi Assembly after annulment of their suspension, walked out of the House on Saturday alleging that they were not allowed to speak on the budget of Arvind Kejriwal government. Speaker Ram Niwas Goel in a

statement charged that the BJP MLAs conduct was " disruptive", leading to chaos and interruption of the legislative proceedings and they disrupted the chief minister's address to the House on the budget

Seven of the 8 BJP legislators, barring Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, were suspended by the Speaker earlier over their alleged disruption of the Lt Governor's address to the House on the first day of the budget session on February 15.

Bidhuri alleged that the speaker was running the legislative



appointment as the new Leader

of the Opposition. However,

despite being called upon to

address the assembly, he did

Bidhuri was not present in the

House when the discussion on

the budget started. When

Kejriwal started his speech,

the BJP MLAs objected and

said at least one opposition

member should be allowed to

address the House before the

Bisht tried to suggest that

chief minister.

"arbitrarily and unconstitutionally", and the opposition was again denied the opportunity to speak on the

The BJP MLAs after the Delhi High Court order, returned to the House after 17 days, but they were treated in a "biased manner" which is con-demnable, said Bidhuri, who has been fielded by the BJP as party candidate for the South Delhi Lok Sabha seat.

The Delhi Assembly Speaker said that he was informed

Rohini MLA Vijender Gupta should be allowed to speak but the Speaker turned down his request. Finally, the BJP MLAs walked out of the House.

The statement of the Speaker said that in the democratic spirit, he has always given the opposition legislators more time to speak than the time they would rightfully get based on their actual numbers.

"But unfortunately they have always engaged themselves in disrupting the due proceedings of the House. Any perceived bias in treatment is unfounded and without merit. The Speaker ensures impartiality in the conduct of the assembly sessions and strives to uphold the dignity of the institution,"

Bidhuri alleged that Kejriwal government's budget was directionless" and the opposition MLAs were prevented from speaking on it as they would have "exposed" the gov-

# LG shares pictures of civic mess

Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena continuing his campaign to tackle the civic mess in different parts of the city, took to social media sharing pictures of filth, squalour, damaged drains and roads in slum clusters of Tehkhand and Okhla on Saturday.

Posting on X pictures captured during his Friday visit to Golkuan in Tehkhand and Sanjay Colony in Okhla, both slum dwellings in southeast Delhi, Saxena requested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to take cognisance of it. This was the LG's fourth visit to underdeveloped areas like unauthorised colonies and slum clusters in the city in recent days.

Previously, he visited Kirari, Burari, Sangam Vihar and shared similar pictures and issuing directions for action by the concerned depart-

Saxena in a series of posts on X expressed concern that thousands of people were living in these areas with heaps

garbage, overflowing, smelly drains, facing diseases, alleging "inaction and insenof those concerned

for taking corrective steps. 'Complaints of lack of public facilities are being regularly received from each part of

In this connection, visited Golkuan Tehkhand JJ Cluster and Sanjay Colony, Okhla yesterday and witnessed the ground reality. Nothing could be a bigger example of inaction and insensitivity than this," he posted on X.

He stated in another post with more pictures ' shameful that our citizen are facing such plight due to years of neglect.

The LG pointed that as per news reports Rs 500 crores were spent on development of these settlements.

He directed the agencies concerned Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), Delhi

Development Corporation Ltd. (DSIIDC) and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) among others to immediately ensure sanitation in the settlements and provide necessary facilities

"....Its requested to the Chief Minister to take cognizance of this serious issue," he said in another post tagging him with more photos of the visited areas.

No immediate reaction was available from the AAP gov-ernment or the Chief Minister's office over the LG's posts. Earlier, Chief Minister Kejriwal reacting to the LG's visit of Sangam Vihar, thanked him saying he was doing what opposition party was supposed to do and ordered Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to address the shortcomings within a week and submit daily action taken

Teams of senior IAS officers were deputed by the chief secretary to ensure proper redressal of the civic infra related issues raised by the

# Namaz incident: Security forces remain deployed in Inderlok

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aday after a Delhi Police Sub-inspector was suspended for kicking people offering 'namaz' in Inderlok, security personnel remain deployed to maintain law and order in the area, officials said. At least three companies of paramilitary along with the local police will continue to be deployed in Inderlok and its nearby areas in north Delhi on Saturday, they said.

Official sources said the senior police officers also held meetings with the members of a peace committee to calm flared tempers in the area.

Joint Commissioner of Police (north) Parmaditya on Saturday said the situation is completely under control and peace prevails in the area. "Our officers have continued

their vigil with sufficient number of security personnel remain deployed in the area," Parmaditya said.

Sub-inspector Manoj Kumar Tomar shoved and kicked a few people offering namaz on a



road in the north Delhi area on Friday, leading to a protest by hundreds of locals against the force, and suspension of the accused with immediate effect. People from various sections of the society, including political leaders, condemned the act after a video of it went viral on social media.

Tomar was posted as in-charge of Inderlok Police Post that comes under Sarai Rohilla Police Station. He was deployed at the police post two months ago. The incident took place during a Friday prayer around 2 pm near the Inderlok Metro Station.

In the video, Tomar is seen trying to disperse a few men praying on the road near a mosque and in what seems like a sudden burst of rage, he starts shoving and kicking some of them. Locals, resentful over the inci-

dent, came out in hundreds and blocked the road

The incident took place just a few days ahead of the beginning of holy month of Ramzan.

# Government seeks LG nod to Cabinet decision extending power subsidy



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has sent the file of Cabinet decision to continue electricity subsidy scheme in 2024-25 for approval of Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, govern-

ment officials on Saturday said. The Delhi Cabinet on Thursday last approved the scheme for providing free electricity supply to consumers with monthly 200 units and 50

percent subsidy to those having 201-400 units consumption per month.

However, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal speaking in the Assembly on Saturday on his government's budget for 2024-25 alleged that the BJP wanted to send him to jail and stop good works of his government like free electricity scheme and shut down Mohalla Clinics and hospitals. Finance Minister Atishi pre-



ment's budget with total outlays of Rs 76,000 crore in the Delhi Assembly on Monday.

In Delhi, nearly 22 lakh families who consume up to 200 units of electricity will continue to get zero amount bills. Earlier, the chief minister after the Cabinet's decision to extend the power subsidy for 2024-25, congratulated the people saying it has been extended till March 31, 2025.

# Uttarakhand woman thrashed by bouncers at Gurugram club

**PTI** ■ GURUGRAM

An woman from Uttarakhand was allegedly thrashed by the bouncers of a club here police said on Friday. The woman claimed the bouncers "tried to strangle" her and threw her out "without any reason," they said.

The entire incident that happened Wednesday evening was captured on the CCTV cameras installed at the club.

According to the complaint filed by Aditi, a native of Dehradun, the incident took place at a club located in a service lane beside the Delhi-Gurugram Expressway near Signature Tower. She was at the club with her friends, the complainant said

The incident happened around midnight when three to four bouncers came -- two of them women, the woman said.

"They started abusing without any reason and started fighting as I was defending myself.



and threw us out of the club. During this, I got injuries on my neck, chest and face and my Tshirt also got torn," Aditi said in her complaint. Based on the complaint, an FIR was registered against the

bouncers under sections 323 (causing hurt), 506 (criminal intimidation), 34 (common intention) of the IPC at Sector 40 Police Station on Thursday, said police. "We have confiscated the CCTV footage from the club and the probe is underway. The accused will be arrested soon," said Inspector Manoj Verma, SHO of the police sta-

# Elvish arrested for assaulting YouTube singer Sagar



**SAMAR PANDEY** GURUGRAM

Aday after social media influencer and Big Boss winner Elvish Yadav allegedly assaulted YouTuber Sagar Thakur, also known as Maxtern, Yadav was arrested by Gurugram police on Saturday. Thakur, a 25-year-old Delhi resident, was reportedly beaten by Elvish and his accomplices on Friday. Following the incident, Thakur filed an FIR against Yadav. The video of the fight had gone viral on social media platforms.

According to the Gurugram police officials of Sector 53 police station, Elvish had called Thakur to a mall on Golf Course road for some discussion.

"That shop was owned by some of Elvish's friend and when he came in he started beating Thakur," Police said. In a video released by Sagar Thakur it is clearly shown that Elvish coming inside the shop along with some of his friends and started beating Sagar without having any conver-

Though Thakur resisted but he couldn't prevent and fell to

the ground later being joined by the accused companions and assaulted him. In another video clip posted

by Thakur on social media platform, he is heard that Yadav called him to meet him and when Thakur reached the designated place Yadav started thrashing him and threatened to kill him. He also said that he got some injuries in his mouth after the fight. On the other hand Elvish Yadav is also alleging that Sagar Thakur had threatened him and said that he'll kill his family and that's the reason of the fight and that fight took place in the heat of the moment and not in planned

In the FIR registered by Thakur, Elvish has been booked under IPC sections 147,149,323 and 506. Thakur also alleged that he tried to kill him and police is not working properly and all sections are bailable and that the accused will be out of the bars soon. Police said Thakur's medico-legal test report confirmed that he suffered four minor injuries from the inci-

## CM hurts sentiments of devotees by taking Lord Ram name for political reasons, says BJP leader

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday said L every time Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal takes Lord Ram's name for political reasons, it hurts the sentiments of crores of devotees.

Speaking in the Assembly on Saturday, Kejriwal said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would have sent central agencies even after Lord Ram if he existed in this era for forcing him to join the saffron outfit or If Lord Ram existed in this era,

they (BJP) would have sent the ED and the CBI to his home too and asked him at gunpoint whether he wanted to go to the BJP or jail," the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said, citing the eight summonses issued to him by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a money-laundering case linked to the now-scrapped excise policy of his govern-

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said while speaking in the Assembly, Kejriwal sounded like he was fighting a

It is regrettable that AAP lead-



ers repeatedly use Lord Ram's name to gain sympathy, he

"Kejriwal should know that every time he takes Lord Ram's name for political reasons, like he did while talking about the ED notices to him, he hurts the sentiments of crores of voters who are devotees of Lord Ram," Sachdeva said. He further alleged that in his speech, Kejriwal also tried to extend a false hope to former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish

Speaking on the budget for

the Assembly on Monday, Kejriwal remembered Sisodia, who also served as the finance minister in his government, before being arrested in the excise policy case last

The chief minister hoped that his former deputy would be able to present the city govern-ment's budget in the Assembly next year. "Kejriwal is under pres-

sure from Sisodia and so

he gives him false political hopes time and again, while he actually knows that Sisodia is unlikely to get bail in the near future," the BJP leader

The chief minister hit out at the BJP in the Assembly, accusing it of pursuing a model of "vinash" (destruction) to eliminate opposition parties, stall the work of their governments and topple them by using central agencies and poaching their MLAs. He also claimed that the BJP has planned to place him under arrest and topple his government in Delhi to

## **AIIMS signs MoU** PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Armed Police Forces Institute of Medical Sciences (CAPFIMS) on Saturday signed an MoU with the AIIMS to run CAPFIMS as a campus of the AIIMS here. The funds for procurement of medical equipment and furni-ture and the recurring cost towards operations and maintenance of the campus shall be provided to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) by the Ministry of Home Affairs, an official statement said.

Further, a part of the hospital beds in the campus shall be earmarked for providing healthcare services to all Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) beneficiaries.

The Union Cabinet has approved budgetary support of Rs 2,207.50 crore in the 15th Finance Commission cycle to run the CAPFIMS as a campus of AIIMS, New Delhi.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, enhancing healthcare infrastructure in the country and providing world class health facilities to the people is one of the priorities of the govern-



ment of India, the statement

The MHA, under the guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has envisioned the CAP-FIMS to provide world class health care services to all CAPFs employees, their dependents, pensioners, CGHS beneficiaries, AB-PMJAY beneficiaries and the general pub-

Memorandum Association (MoA) was signed in New Delhi on Friday between the CAPFIMS and the AIIMS, New Delhi to run CAPFIMS as a campus of the AIIMS, New Delhi, the state-

The CAPFIMS is a state-ofthe-art medical institute with a 970-bedded referral and research hospital with 500bedded general hospital, 300bedded super-specialty hospital and 170 ICU/ critical care

It has been established at a cost of around Rs 2,091 crore. It is also having a Medical College (100 seats), a College of Nursing (60 seats), and a School of Paramedics (300 seats) in Maidangarhi, South Delhi, which shall also provide Post Graduate/PG Diploma Courses (60 Seats) and Post-Doctoral Courses (DM & McH-10 Seats).

## House directs Delhi chief secretary to resolve sewer overflow complaints

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $T^{\text{he Delhi Assembly on}}_{\text{Saturday passed a resolution}}$ that directed the chief secretary to address issues related to overflowing sewers and problems of contaminated water in the national capital within a

The resolution said the complaints of people regarding overflowing sewers and contaminated water should be addressed on a war footing and added that the chief secretary will be

responsible for disposal of these complaints. The resolution gave one week to

the chief secretary for resolving the complaints. He has also been asked to submit a daily report to the Delhi government's water minister. It has also called a House session

on March 15 for a detailed discussion on the issue and asked the chief secretary to be personally present and present a progress report on the com-

The House proceedings of the

ongoing Budget session have been adjourned till 11 am on March 15.

Speaking in the House, Water Minister Atishi said she has been receiving 50-100 complaints regarding overflowing sewers, contamination due to intermixing of sewer and drinking water and leakage of water

Responsibility needs to be fixed and action ensured. Enquiry and action against those officials responsible for the existing problems should be ensured by the chief secretary," Atishi, who is also the Delhi Jal Board chairperson, said.

The resolution, tabled by AAP Chief Whip Dilip Pandey, said people from different constituencies have been complaining about sewer overflows and contamination of water

He said the Delhi Jal Board has failed to resolve the issue despite regular complaints.

Atishi charged that despite orders, the Delhi Jal Board CEO neither visited the affect-

ground report. On Friday (March 8) alone, I

ed areas nor submitted any

received 80 complaints within 24 hours, both on my official email and personal email, related to Delhi Jal Board matters. The problem related to the Delhi Jal Board has become quite widespread in Delhi," she

The board's grievance redress portal has over 10,000 pending complaints, she claimed. "I have sent these complaints to

the CEO and members of the

number of complaints continued to rise, I instructed all the Delhi Jal Board officials to conduct morning rounds in their respective areas to investigate the complaints," Atishi said in the House. Not only that, I also instruct-

board several times. As the

ed the Delhi Jal Board CEO to conduct at least two area visits per week and members to conduct at least three area visits per week to understand the ground reality, with reports to be submitted weekly," she added.

# Congress shaken as Gandhi family loyalists join BJP in MP

n a jolt to the Congress in In a joil to the Congress II.
Madhya Pradesh ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, senior leader and former Union minister Suresh Pachouri, ex-MP Gajendra Singh Rajukhedi and several others, including the party's former MLAs, joined the BJP on Saturday. Pachouri, 71, who was close to the Gandhi family, was Union minister of state for defence (defence production and supplies), and also served as a fourtime Rajya Sabha member of the Congress.

He had earlier held several key positions in the Congress, including the post of the party's Madhya Pradesh unit president. He was also the state unit president of the Youth

The leaders joined the BJP in the presence of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, state BJP president V D Sharma and former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan at the party's state headquarters in the morning. Former MLAs Sanjay Shukla (Indore-1), Arjun Paliya (Pipariya), Vishal Patel



(Depalpur) were among the leaders of the grand old party who also joined the ruling

After joining the BJP, Pachouri slammed the Congress, saying it used to talk about a casteless and classless society earlier, but was dividing the country on the caste lines now. "Congress is now talking about the caste divide, which resulted in increasing caste conflict in the country now," he said. Welcoming Pachouri into party fold, former CM Chouhan said that the veteran leader did not put forth any conditions before joining the party. "Pachouri ji

joined the BJP without setting any conditions. When Pachouri ji was asked about it, he said Congress has become irrelevant and doesn't have leadership and policy. He wanted to serve the country under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership," Chouhan said.

Rajukhedi, a prominent tribal leader, was elected as an MP from Dhar (Scheduled Tribes) Lok Sabha seat on the Congress ticket thrice - in 1998, 1999 and 2009. Before joining the Congress, he was elected as a BJP MLA in 1990.

the party. In the letter, Pachouri said he served the Congress for 50 years, but the party has now Several other leaders, including deviated from the principles that it once stood for. former district Congress pres-

#### Naval top brass reviews operational readiness during Commanders conference

The naval top plass ie, to the operational readiness ¬he naval top brass reviewed of the force to meet any challenge and pace of modernisa-tion of its fleet during the first edition of the four-day bian-nual Commanders conference from March 5-8.

Giving details here on Saturday, navy officials said the conference is an institutional forum that enables deliberations on important maritime security issues at the militarystrategic level.

The inaugural session of the Conference was held onboard the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya. Follow-on proceedings were conducted here in hybrid format March 07-08. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presided over the inaugural session, with Chief of the Defence Staff, Defence Secretary and other senior defence ministry officials and Naval Commanders in atten-

Commending the brave and prompt response by the Indian Navy to recent incidents and developments in West Asia and the adjoining seas, Rajnath exhorted the Commanders to remain poised for operations

across the spectrum of conflict. He underscored the leadership role expected of the Indian Navy towards ensuring peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region.

The defence minister also emphasised the importance of tri-Services jointness and Integration to favourably shape and influence the future battlespace. The proceedings at included

review of major operational, materiel, infrastructure, Logistics and personnel related initiatives. Besides, the senior naval leadership reviewed existing and future plans, including capability enhancements in the island territories, to mitigate contemporary and future challenges in the maritime Service Chiefs of the Indian

Army and the Indian Air Force also engaged with the Naval Commanders, sharing their assessment of the operating environment, outlining readiness levels to defend national interests amidst prevailing and evolving security challenges. On the sidelines of the conference, Naval Commanders also interacted with various 'Think Tanks' during a \_'Sagar Manthan'\_ event on Friday.

## Tri Service exercise Bharat Shakti to showcase prowess of desi manufactured defence equipment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

The three Services will carry L out a joint exercise 'Bharat Shakti' in Pokhran, Rajasthan on March 12 showcasing capabilities of indigenously designed weapon systems. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to witness the exercise. Giving details here on Saturday, Additional Director General, Army Design Bureau, Major General C S Mann said the drill will showcase the "shock and awe" that the

armed forces seek to achieve in an operational situation by employing manoeuvre and fighting capabilities effectively. 'Bharat Shakti' will also demonstrate the prowess of indigenously manufactured defence equipment of the three services, he said adding the integrated tri-service firepower and manoeuvre exercise at Pokhran will be held for about 50 minutes, he said.

"The exercise will showcase live integrated multi-domain operations of the three services in offensive operations using indigenous equipment," Mann

Indigenously designed and manufactured Tejas Light



Combat Aircraft(LCS), ALH Mk-IV, mobile anti-drone sys tem, T90 tanks, Dhanush, K9 Vajra and Pinaka are among the platforms that will be demonstrated during Exercise Bharat Shakti, he said.

"It will showcase the 'shock and awe' that the three services seek to achieve in an operational situation by employing manoeuvre and fighting capabilities effectively," Major General Mann said.

The live demonstration will be followed by a static equipment display.

Synergised joint operations will be decisive in the Indian context. Through live firepower and manoeuvre demonstration, it is endeavoured to showcase the tri-services operational capabilities to counter any threat leveraging indigenous capability and the ability to undertake conflicts in the face of global upheavals," he

# Madhya Pradesh women help desks earn global praise

The Madhya Pradesh Government's initiative to set up specialised help desks (SHDs) for women in local police stations in the State which led to increased registration of gender-based violence and criminal cases, especially those staffed by female officers compared with those without, has earned global accolades.

The Northern State's police reform measures highlighted by University of Virginia professors Sandip Sukhtankar and Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner - in collaboration with a University of Oxford researcher in their study 'Policing in Patriarchy' has been recently honored by the Financial Times with a prestigious Responsible Business Education Award in the academic research catego-

The award recognizes the best



academic research with a societal impact that has influenced policy or practice with the juries noting that such research prompts new police training modules on gender.

The study spanning two-year said that those stations with WHDs registered 14 per cent more "first information reports (FIRs)", which led to criminal

proceedings, as well as a staggering 1,000 per cent more domestic incident reports, which can initiate civil proceedings. It may be mentioned here that during Covid pandemic, while violence against women had increased, a few victims had approached the police stations manned by

and particularly in India, these types of cases simply go unreported," said Sukhtankar, an associate professor of economics in UVA's College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences and co-director of the University's Democracy Initiative's Corruption Lab on Ethics, Accountability and the

Mishra, former state unit chief

of the National Students' Union

of India (NSUI), the students'

wing of the party, Atul Sharma,

senior Congress leader Alok

Chansoriya also joined along

Meanwhile, a letter dated

March 7 addressed to Congress

chief Mallikarjun Kharge by

Pachouri also surfaced on

social media in which the lat-

ter said he was resigning from

with Pachouri.

"And the essential first step is registration of cases. Previous estimates suggest that anywhere from 95 to 99% of cases are not reported, and even fewer are registered," he said about the findings from the largest randomized controlled trial of police reform measures to date.

It suggested that deliberate measures designed to make police officers more responsive to women's security needs, and the presence of female officers in visible positions of authority, can be effective in making

the police more accountable to women and in increasing women's access to the justice

The judicial system in India is hugely backlogged and problematic and has a lot of issues, but just the fact that thousands more women are able to even access the justice system because of this intervention is a huge deal," Sukhtankar con-

'Everybody who works on these topics in India knows sort of how hard it is to move the needle on this," he added.

This indicates that women were more willing to come forward and report incidents of violence when provided with specialized support and assistance at police stations.

Early last year, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar too launched the facility of WHDs in 500 police stations in the State to be operated by women police officers

#### **Study brings to light persistent** challenges faced by elderly women treatment and abuse."

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $A^{
m midst}$  the celebration and praise on International Women's Day, a study on the status of women has brought to light a disturbing trend revealing that all is not well in their world: About 71 per cent of elderly women are dependent on others for meeting their needs while 51 per cent of them experience marginalisation or isolation due to gender discrimination. Shockingly, more than 45% of elderly women report mistreatment or harassment by their own family members or relatives, said the study by NGO Agewell Foundation, revealing persistent challenges and inequalities that women continue to face. The findings of the study which had a sample size of 10,000 were released ahead of the International Women's Day on



In its report, the Agewell Foundation urged people to extend a helping hand to those who often go unnoticed and are marginalised, particularly those who are dependent on "In this era, where the issues

of younger women dominate discussions, the plight of older women is often overlooked," said Himanshu Rath, chairman, Agewell Foundation. He "Neglecting the challenges faced by elderly women not only renders them more vulnerable but also exposes them to various forms of mis-

Rath said older women play a vital role in preserving traditional values, cultural heritage and familial happiness. To address the needs of elderly women, the study suggested steps like engaging in mean-

ingful conversations with them,

listening attentively to their concerns, providing necessary assistance and care, and advocating for their rights and protection. Dr Jagdish Kaur, founder of the WILGA group which is engaged in the legal and eco-

nomic empowerment of women said that the findings serve as a sobering reminder that while strides have been made towards gender equality, there is still much work to be done. It is crucial to amplify the voices of those who are marginalized and address the root causes of discrimination and

## India, Bangladesh border forces vow to stop attacks on security personnel

 $B^{\text{order guarding forces of }}_{\text{India and Bangladesh}}$ Saturday agreed to undertake joint efforts to "bring down to absolute minimum the incidents of attack on BSF personnel by criminals from the neighbouring country along the 4,096-km-long International Border (IB)

#### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Shadab Khan s/o Ayoub Ali Khan, r/o 42-A. Pocket-1. Mayur-Vihar Phase-1, Delhi-110091 bring to your notice that my mother's name is mentioned as 'Shazi Khan' in my 10th and 12th marksheet, and passport. My mother's legal name since my birth has always been 'Shahjahan Khan', and I am getting the same corrected in my documents. 'Shazi Khan' is my mother's short/ nick

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

Know to all that my client Mr. Nooruddin S/o Late Sh Badruddin R/o House No. B-16, DDA Flat, Behind Police Bhawan, Turkman Gate, Delhi-110006, ha evered all relations from his son Mr. Mohamma DDA Flat, Behind Police Bhawan, Turkman Gate Delhi- 110006 due to their misbehavior, misconduc and disobedience towards my client and his family Therefore, my client disowned them from his movable & immovable properties and my client & his family shall not be liable for any act, commission or deeds done or acted by his son Mr. Mohammad Asad and his

#### M.RAIS FAROOQUI (ADVOCATE Ch.No. B-135, B.G.S. Block, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-54 PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that Smt. Devki is the GPA Holder of Ground Floor without roof rights area measuring 50 sq. yds built on Property No. A-349 out of Khasra No 773 situated in Abadi Budha Marg Mandawali ir Village Mandawali Fazalpur Illaqa Shahdara Pelhi 110092. She acquired the above property prough Notarized GPA, ATS, WILL dated 11.11.2013 executed by Smt. Sundari Devi ur of Smt. Devki.

Smt. Devki intends to transfer the ownership b y of Sale Deed of aforementioned property to tt. Laxmi Devi. Subsequently, Smt. Laxmi **Devi** is in the process of mortgaging the said property **SMFG India Home Finance Co.** Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 17 days from the date of this public notice. Any bjections submitted after the completion of this 17-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests

anyone wishes to raise an objection, please d within the stipulated 07-day period b ntacting Law Veritas: North (Advocates & egal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Flo .egai consultants at office No. 14, 15t Floor Suilding No. A-44/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttal Pradesh- 201301; Landline(s):+910120-t101683; e-mail: accounts@lvnorth.in

Place: New Delhi

statement said. between the Border Security discussions.

shared by them, an official Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) The bi-annual Director ended in Dhaka with the General (DG) level talks signing of a joint record of

Before the Regional Director, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Northern Region In the matter of the Companies Act. 2013, section 14 of Companies Act. 2013 and Rule 41 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014

In the matter of Los Angeles Food Processing Limited having its registered office a W-39, GREATER KAILASH PART-II, South Delhi, NEW DELHI, Delhi, India, 110048.

Notice is hereby given to the general public that the company intending to make ar application to the Central Government under section 14 of the Companies Act, 2013 reac with aforesaid rules and is desirous of converting into a private limited company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 05th March 2024 to enable the company to give effect for such conversion. Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change/status of the company may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his interest and grounds of opposition to the concerned Regional Director, Northerr Region, at the address B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex New Delh 110003, within fourteen days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company at its registered office at the address mentioned below: Registered Office Address: W-39, Greater Kailash Part-II, South Delhi, New Delhi, Delhi, India, 110048.

For and on behalf of the Applican Deepak Agarwal -Director

## Short textbooks in Indian non scheduled languages launched the government's efforts to

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Saturday launched 52 short textbooks in Indian nonscheduled languages, including tribal lan-

guages, for early childhood care and education, to provide young learners access to education in their mother tongue.

"The in primers Indian nonscheduled languages going to be a

transformational step for young learners, specially for early childhood care and education, providing them access to education in their mother tongue/local language. It will initiate an inspirational journey for young minds, paving the way for deeper understanding, lifelong learning, more familiarity and rooted beds in indigenous culture and greater success in academics and beyond," he said. The primers -- short books for introducing a subject to students -- have been prepared by the NCERT in collaboration with the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysuru.

Non-scheduled languages refer to all other languages spoken in India that have



not been given official recognition.

The 52 primers in Indian languages have paved the way for the beginning of a new civilisational renaissance. These initiatives will create a seamless and futuristic learning landscape, promote learning in Indian languages, realise the vision of NEP -2020 and holistically transform school education," the minister said.

The initiative is in line with

promote Indian languages in education at all levels, in line with the NEP (National Education Policy) - 2020, he 'The primers will initiate an

inspirational journey for young minds, paving the way for deeper understanding, lifelong learning, more familiarity and rooted beds in indigenous culture and greater success in academics and beyond," Pradhan said. The minister also announced

the District Institute of Education & Training (DIET) of Excellence, National Professional Standard for Teachers, National Mission for Mentoring, and integration of National Vidya Samiksha Kendra with their

state counterparts and 200 TV DTH channels, with an aim to empower teachers and learners and to make quality education more inclusive, innovative and equitable.

"Financial assistance will be provided to states/Union Territories for the physical upgradation of all DIETs to develop them as DIET of Excellence in the country in a phased manner in the next five years up to Rs 15 crore/DIET under the centrally-sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha," the ministry said.

School Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar highlighted the recommendation of NEP -2020 to take gross enrolment ratio in the secondary level to 100 per cent by 2030.

## BJP, TDP join hands for polls as former Andhra Pradesh CM Naidu predicts sweep

PTI NEW

Office of the Superintending Engineer

3<sup>rd</sup> Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh
Email: sepwdpth@rediffmail.com Letter No.: 1203/962C-03(Yata 'C')/2024

National Competitive E-Tender Notice

The Superintending Engineer, 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites ender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available online from date 11-03-2024 at 5.00 PM onward on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in

SI. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (in Lac)	Tender	Validity of Tender (day)	Period of Completion (months)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Development work of Haat-Kalika temple in Pithoragarh district under Manaskhand temple series.	9.20	5000.00 + 18% GST	120	12	Category A & higher for Building works, in State Govt./Govt. of India
2	Development work of Patal Bhuvaneshwar temple in Pithoragarh district under Manaskhand temple series.	4.62	5000.00 + 18% GST	120	09	Category B & higher for Building works, in State Govt./Govt. of India



¬he BJP sealed its alliance with I the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) on Saturday for the upcoming Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections, with former chief minister of the southern state N Chandrababu Naidu asserting

PUBLIC NOTICE

that the combine will sweep the The alliance was formalised after

the two parties and actor Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP) held another round of talks involving Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief J P Nadda, besides Naidu and Kalyan. A joint statement issued by the

three parties said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "dynamic and visionary" leadership, they have decided to contest the Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Assembly polls together as they are committed to ensuring the country's progress and an uplift of the state

and its people. "We hope that the alliance will come up to the expectation of the people of Andhra Pradesh with their wholehearted support," Nadda, Naidu and Kalyan said in the statement. The seat-sharing modalities for the 25 Lok Sabha and 175 Assembly seats in the state would be deliberated in a day or two, the statement said.

## Government launches Catch the Rain drive to promote sustainable water management practices

The Ministry of Jal Shakti on I Saturday launched the 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain-2024' to optimise rainwater harvesting and other sustainable water management practices. Speaking at the launch of the campaign here in the national capital, Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat emphasised the pivotal role of women in water management, conservation, and sustainability. The event themed 'Nari Shakti se Jal Shakti', which marked the fifth edition of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan, was held at the New Delhi Municipal Council Convention Centre. Under 'Nari Shakti se Jal Shakti' the campaign seeks to establish a strong connection between women empowerment and the sustainable management of water resources, Shekhawat

said. Key highlights of the event

include the screening of a documentary titled 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2019 to 2023'- a public-led movement marching towards water security' and unveiling of two books - 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan: 2019 to 2023' and '101 Water Champions of Jal Jeevan Mission' and talks by 'Women Water Warriors'.

water conservation, rainwater harvesting, geo-tagging of water bodies, establishment of Jal Shakti Kendras, intensive afforestation, and awareness generation, according to a government statement. Additionally, the campaign

The campaign aims to cover

emphasises on desilting and cleaning of water bodies, revitalising abandoned borewells, geo-tagging, and mapping of water bodies, intensified afforestation in catchment areas, snow harvesting in hilly regions, and rejuvenation of

# Top PLA General calls for crackdown on fake combat capabilities in Chinese military

n a surprise development, a top Chinese military general has cast aspersions on the PLA's much-publicised 'real combat-oriented exercises' as 'fake combat capabilities' at a time when Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered it to prepare for "maritime military struggles" to

The remarks by General He Weidong, the second-ranked vice-chairman of China's powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the three Armed Forces headed by Xi, during a discussion with a People's Liberation Army (PLA) delegation on Tuesday, according to minutes of the meeting made available to media.

Though it was just one line – Gen He called for a crackdown on 'fake combat capabilities' in the military — military analysts say

the remark by a top official in the backdrop of the recent purges carried out by Xi, questions the authenticity of the realtime combat exercises as insisted by Xi since he took over power in 2012-13 and the quality of the equipment, Hong Kongbased South China Morning Post newspaper reported on Saturday.

Xi recently sacked Defence Minister Gen Li Shangfu last year, which was followed by the removal of another nine senior generals, many of them from the key Rocket Force, which operates the country's missile forces. Since Xi took over, the Chinese military, at all levels, is carrying out realtime drills splitting forces into two groups to test their combat skills.

Analysts say the message from Gen He, China's number three military official, was "brief and ambiguous", but could relate to the procurement of flawed equipment, and also deception among the ranks during

The Chinese government early this week hiked the defence budget by 7.2 per cent to USD 232 billion as it continues with the massive modernisation of its military amid prevailing tensions over Taiwan, the disputed South China Sea as well as border frictions with India and increasing rivalry with the US.

China is the second largest spender after the US, whose military budget last year was USD 886 billion.

Fu Qianshao, a former equipment expert with the PLA, said He appeared to be partly referring to the procurement of flawed weapons, which could affect the military's combat capabilities.

'The weapons and equipment should reach the technical standards. So, counterfeiting will surely have an impact on how they function," he told the Post.

"Fake combat capabilities" could also



refer to "fake" drills that do not reach the standards required, such as "night exercis-

es" being conducted around sunset something military mouthpiece PLA Daily has reported about in recent years, the Post said. Xi, who heads the ruling Communist Party and has the Presidency, places a premium on the combat readiness of the military as its battle readiness has not been tested in recent decades.

For his part, Xi has called hi-tech integration of the armed forces, which is vital to joint operations.

Xi also ordered the PLA to prepare for "maritime military struggles" and protect maritime rights, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

"The preparation for the military struggle at sea, the defence of maritime rights and interests and the development of the maritime economy must be integrated," he said, adding, "Strategic capabilities in emerging areas are an important part of national strategies and are of great signifDuring the PLA discussion at the parlia-

ment in Beijing on Tuesday, there was more emphasis on loyalty to Xi than in previous years, according to the Post report. Earlier, Xi's anti-corruption drive also targeted the military with dozens of top generals either sacked or investigated in the last 10 years. Besides the sacking of nine generals, the government also removed three senior executives from the stateowned aerospace and defence sector from the top political advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in December.

The PLA, meanwhile, is under pressure to boost combat readiness, with President Xi calling for the military to step up "real combat" exercises and training to prepare for "stormy seas" ahead at a time when geopolitical tensions are rising and rivalry with the US is heating up.

# Yemen's rebels set off blasts ahead of ship in Gulf of Aden

#### US and allies down Houthi drones

An attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels set off explosions ahead of a Singapore-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Aden, authorities said, the latest in a campaign of assaults by the Iranian-backed group over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The attack on Friday targeted the bulk carrier Propel Fortune, which continued on its way, according to the United States military's Central Command. "The missiles did not impact the vessel," the US military said. "There were no injuries or damages reported."

The Houthis said Saturday they were behind the attack. Houthi military spokesman

that along with targeting the Propel Fortune Attack, the Houthi forces also launched 37 drones targeting American warships. American officials said early Saturday that the US Navy, allied warships and aircraft have shot down 15 bomb-carrying Houthi drones in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.

Friday's attack on Propel Fortune came after a Houthi missile struck a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday, killing three of its crew members and forcing survivors to abandon the vessel. That was the first fatal strike in the Houthi's campaign over the war in Gaza. The Houthis describe the attacks as trying to

pressure Israel into stopping the



war, but their targets increasingly have little or nothing to do with the conflict.

Other recent Houthi actions include an attack in February on a fertiliser-carrying cargo ship, the Rubymar, which sank on Saturday after drifting for several days, and the downing of an American drone worth tens of millions of dollars. The

US also conducted airstrikes Friday that it said destroyed two Houthi truck-mounted anti-ship missiles in Yemen. The rebels did not directly acknowledge any destruction from those strikes. The Houthis have held

the country's capital of Sanaa since 2014. They've battled a Saudi-led coalition since 2015 in a longstalemated civil war in the Arab world's most impover-

ished country. Since the US began its airstrike campaign in January, the Houthis have acknowledged the killing of at least 22 of its fighters. One civilian has also

#### 10 dead as flash floods hit Sumatra island

**AP** ■ PADANG

Torrential rains have triggered flash floods and a landslide on Indonesia's Sumatra island, killing at least 10 people and leaving 10 others missing, officials said Saturday. Tons of mud, rocks and uprooted trees rolled down a mountain late Friday, reaching a river that burst its banks and tore through mountainside villages in Pesisir Selatan district of West Sumatra province, said Doni Yusrizal, who heads the local disaster management

Rescuers pulled out seven bodies in the worst-hit village of Koto XI Tarusan, and recovered two others in two neighbouring villages, said National Disaster Management Agency's spokesperson Yusrizal. Ten are still missing. He said that 46,000 people had fled to a temporary government shelter after the flood and landslides.

# Asif Ali Zardari elected Pakistan 14th president the most votes against Zardari.

**PTI** ■ ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

Pakistan Peoples Party co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari was elected as Pakistan's 14th President on Saturday, becoming the head of state for a second time.

Zardari, 68, was the joint candidate of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) while his rival Mahmood Khan Achakzai, 75, was the candidate of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

He received 255 votes while his opponent got 119 votes in the National Assembly and the Senate.

The new president was elected by the electoral college of the newly elected members of the National Assembly and the four provincial assemblies, as per the provisions of the



Zardari's PPP is at the helm, he bagged the most votes while he also swept the Balochistan Assembly votes bagging all votes polled there.

He also defeated Achakzai in the Punjab assembly. In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

assembly, where SIC/PTI has the government, Achakzai got

A businessman-turned-politician, Zardari is the husband of slain Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto. Zardari would replace the

incumbent Dr Arif Alvi, whose five-year term ended last year. However, he has continued since the new electoral college was not yet formed.

Zardari, who served as the president from 2008 to 2013, will also be the first civilian to be elected for the second time as president. He is expected to

be sworn in on Sunday. Achakzai is the head of his Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) and was contesting from the platform of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), which came to prominence after independent candidates backed by jailed former prime minister İmran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) joined it.

# **Biden frustrated with Netanyahu** over Gaza humanitarian crisis

**AP W**ASHINGTON

President Joe Biden's growing frustration with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to mount, with the Democrat captured on a hot mic saying that he and the Israeli leader will need to have a "come to Jesus meeting."
The comments by Biden came as

he spoke with Sen. Michael the House chamber following Thursday night's State of the Union address.

In the exchange, Bennet congratulates Biden on his speech and urges the president to keep pressing Netanyahu on growing humanitarian concerns in Gaza. Secretary of State Blinken and Antony Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg were also part of the brief conversation.

Biden then responds using Netanyahu's nickname, saying, "I told him, Bibi, and don't repeat this, but you and I are going to have a come to Jesus' meeting." An aide to the president standing nearby then speaks quietly into the president's ear, appearing to alert Biden that microphones remained on as he worked the room.

"I'm on a hot mic here," Biden says after being alerted. "Good. That's good." The president on Friday



acknowledged the comments, lightheartedly poking at reporters that they were "eavesdropping" on his conversation. Asked if he thought Netanyahu should be doing more to alleviate the humanitarian suffering, Biden responded, "Yes, he does." A widening humanitarian crisis across Gaza and tight Israeli control of aid trucks have left virtually the entire population desperately short of food, according to the United Nations. Officials have been warning for months that Israel's siege and offensive were pushing the Palestinian

territory into famine. Biden has become increasingly public about his frustration with the Netanyahu government's unwillingness to open more land crossings for critically needed aid to make its way into Gaza. In his address on Thursday, he called on the Israelis to do more to alleviate the suffering even as they try to eliminate Hamas. "To Israel, I say this humanitar-

ian assistance cannot be a sec-

ondary consideration or a bar-

gaining chip," Biden said. The president announced in his speech Thursday that the US military would help establish a temporary pier aimed at boosting the amount of aid getting into the territory. Last week, the US military began air dropping aid into Gaza.

Biden said the temporary pier, 'will enable a massive increase in humanitarian assistance getting into Gaza."

Later on Friday, Biden at a campaign stop in suburban Philadelphia told reporters that the prospects of forging an extended cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan is "looking tough." Ramadan is expected to begin on Sunday.

#### Lebanon urged to stop flow of funds to Hamas

top US Treasury official vis-A top US Treasury officers to prevent Lebanese authorities to prevent funds from being funnelled to cials said. Jesse Baker, deputy assistant secretary of the Treasury for Asia and the Middle East in the Office of Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes, met with Lebanese politicians and officials from the financial sector Thursday and Friday.

His visit came as negotiations for a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza appear to have stalled. Should the war continue during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which could begin late Sunday, many fear a regional escalation, including in Lebanon. A Treasury official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters said Baker had shared with Lebanese authorities "specific concerns" about "the movement of Hamas funds through Lebanon, Hezbollah funds from Iran into Lebanon and then out into other regional areas" and called for "proactive measures" to

#### Two killed in Russian artillery strikes in Ukraine one person was killed in artillery

Ukrainian authorities said two people including a teenage boy were killed Saturday in Russian artillery attacks and Russia reported it had shot down a Ukrainian fighter jet and destroyed a wave of drones over several regions.

The attacks came as Russia is gaining momentum on battlefield and Ukraine is running low on ammunition.

Ukraine's allies in the West are delicately raising the prospect Minister Radek Sikorski said Friday that deploying NATO

unthinkable". French President Emmanuel Macron said last month that the idea should not be ruled out.

Serhiy Lysak, governor of Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region, said a 16-year-old boy was killed and a 22-year-old man injured in a morning artillery attack that hit the town of Chervonohryhorivka. The town is on the opposite bank of the river from the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest, and the

Russian attacks. In the town of Chasiv Yar, fire, according to authorities in the Donetsk region, much of which is under Russian control and where fighting has been heavy throughout the war that is now in its third year.

The Russian Defence Ministry said its forces shot down 41 drones that were launched over the Rostov region, which borders Ukraine and is home to Russia's southern military command, along with two drones over the Kursk region and three over Volgograd. There

The ministry also said the

air force had shot down a Ukrainian MiG-29 fighter jet over Pokrovsk, a city and important railway junction in the Donetsk region that is a prime Russian target following Ukrainian forces' February withdrawal from Avdiivka, a significant setback for Ukraine's strug-

gling war effort.

The governor of Russia's Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine, reported that Ukrainian drones attacked two villages near the border Saturday. but that no one was injured. The did not specify damage from the

## Microsoft unable to shake Russian state hackers

Microsoft said on Friday it's still trying to evict the elite Russian government hackers who broke into the email accounts of senior company executives in November and who it said have been trying to breach customer networks with stolen access data.

The hackers from Russia's SVR foreign intelligence service used data obtained in the intrusion, which it disclosed in mid-January, to compromise some source-code repositories and internal systems, the software giant said in a blog and a regulatory filing.

A company spokesman would

not characterise what source code was accessed and what capability the hackers gained to further compromise customer and Microsoft systems. Microsoft said on Friday that the hackers stole "secrets" from email communications between the company and unspecified customers - cryptographic secrets such as passwords, certificates and authentication keys —and that it was reaching out to them "to assist in taking mitigating measures". Cloud-computing company Hewlett Packard Enterprise disclosed on January 24 that it, too, was an SVR hacking victim and that it had been informed of the breach — by

whom it would not say — two weeks earlier, coinciding with Microsoft's discovery it had been hacked. "The threat actor's ongoing

attack is characterised by a sustained, significant commitment of the threat actor's resources, coordination, and focus," Microsoft said on Friday, adding that it could be using obtained data "to accumulate a picture of areas to attack and enhance its ability to do so". Cybersecurity experts said

Microsoft's admission that the SVR hack had not been contained exposes the perils of the heavy reliance by government and business on the Redmond,

Washington, company's software monoculture — and the fact that so many of its customers are linked through its global cloud network.

This has tremendous national security implications," said Tom Kellermann of the cybersecurity firm Contrast Security. "The Russians can now leverage supply chain attacks against Microsoft's customers."

Amit Yoran, the CEO of Tenable, also issued a statement, expressing both alarm and dismay. He is among security professionals who find Microsoft overly secretive about its vulnerabilities and how it handles hacks.

# With spotlight on Araku Coffee, UN leaders hail India Naari Shakti

**PTI** UNITED NATIONS

auding the transformative power Lof India's "Naari Shakti", top UN leaders said Indian women are the narrators of their country's development story, as they hailed women-led development across the nation in areas ranging from sustainable farming to technology.

A special event was hosted by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN to mark International Women's Day on Friday with a spotlight on the Journey of Araku Coffee cultivated by the tribal communities in Araku Valley in Andhra Pradesh. "From finance and digital technology to health, education, space, and aviation, Indian women are the narrators of their country's development story.... India's dedication to championing women-led development serves as an inspiring example for nations around the world," President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly Dennis Francis said at the event.

"Let us take inspiration from India's commitment to advancing gender equality, empowering women, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of a more just and equitable world," he said.

The event 'The Role of Women in Sustainable Farming Practices: The Extraordinary Story of Araku Coffee' shone the spotlight on the impactful role of women in sustainable farming practices through the story of the "seed-to-cup" journey of Araku Coffee.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said the link between women and sustainable farming practices in India is remark-

"I would like to commend the Indian government for its leadership and its commitment to advancing the food systems conservation agenda at the country level," Mohammed

Francis recalled that during his visit to India in January this year, he witnessed firsthand the transfor-

mative power of 'Naari Shakti' or women-power." "I was energised and motivated by

the many initiatives aimed at empowering women economically ensuring women entrepreneurs' access to finance and creating an enabling environment for them to self-actualise, in business, in community service and their personal lives," he said.

Francis said the event not only honours the tribal women of Araku Valley but also recognises their trailblazing role in spurring an agricultural, economic, and social revolution through coffee cultiva-

The stories of women, as agents of change - such as that of the women of Araku Valley - must be told repeatedly, including within the walls of this very institution. I commend India for sharing one of its inspiring success stories," Francis

Francis, who had also met President Draupadi Murmu, the country's



first tribal Head of State, during his visit to India, said that the long list of India's historical contributions to the empowerment of women would be incomplete without the mention of pioneering reformer and educator Hansa Mehta.

Mehta served as the Indian delegate

to the UN Commission on Human Rights from 1947 to 1948 and is widely known for ensuring a more gender-sensitive language in the landmark Universal Declaration of Human Rights by changing the phrase "All men are born free and equal" to "All human beings are born free and equal." "Since her time, India has been a

steadfast advocate of gender-inclusive language in international agreements – consistently paving the way for equality and progress," Francis

The head of the 193-member UN body said that the story of the women of Araku Valley is not just about coffee but about empowerment, dignity, and autonomy of local communities.

"It embodies a model of true social development - fostering transformation, progress, and prosperity." The Indian mission said that Araku Coffee, with its rich flavour and sustainable cultivation methods, serves as a symbol of empowerment and

environmental stewardship.

"Araku Coffee's production is a driving force in empowering women within these tribal communities. Women play a crucial role in the entire coffee production process, from cultivation to harvesting, ensuring the organic integrity and quality of the coffee," India's Permanent Mission said.

The event, attended by UN diplomats and senior officials, included an Araku coffee-tasting experience. Coffeeologist Sherri Johns shared the journey of Araku coffee and highlighted the role played by women in its sustainable farming practices.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said on International Women's Day "We carry forward the legacy of countless women who have paved paths in stone so future generations like ours can walk on roads paved in aspirations and dreams." As the day celebrates the journey of empowerment, resilience and trans-

formation led by women across the globe, Kamboj said that in India, this journey is not just a narrative. It's a palpable living experience that flows now through the veins of our nation, energising its spirit and guiding its steps towards sustainable growth." Kamboj said the story of Araku cof-

fee is an "emblem of this remarkable journey that is ongoing in India." She added that Araku Valley's "incredible women" cultivate the finest organic coffee and their "hands not only nurture the soil but also cradle the future of sustainable agriculture and community development." "In the nurturing hands of these

women, coffee beans are not just agricultural products but seeds of change...Let the story of Araku Coffee inspire us to recognize and celebrate the role of women in sustainable development everywhere. Every effort counts, every voice matters and together, we can brew a better world," she said.

# Centre to take all measures to contain food prices: Goyal

The Centre will pull all stops to ensure prices of essential food Litems from onion to tomatoes to pulses do not spike particularly during the elections, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said as he cited the Modi government's track record of controlling rates within days of any temporary hike.

In an interview with PTI, Goyal, who is heading the food and consumer affairs ministry, asserted that the Modi government would continue to take measures to ensure that there is no stress on the household budget of "our Nari-Shakti".

Replying to a query regarding the government's strategy to ensure that there are no spikes in prices of food items when the general election kicks in, the minister said, "We are going to be on top of it. And I can assure the people of India that this government

Office space

demand will

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

remain healthy

this year: Report

Office space demand in India's six major cities will remain healthy this year as

domestic and foreign firms are

expected to lease 50-55 million

square feet area to expand their businesses, according to a FICCI-Colliers report.

Gross leasing of office space stood at 58.2 million square feet across six major cities namely Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, Hvderabad

Industry body FICCI and real

estate consultant Colliers India earlier this week released its

ʻIndia

The report has given three

scenarios for office demand

forecast - optimistic, realistic,

In a realistic scenario, the gross

leasing of Grade-A office space is estimated at 50-55 million

The demand could go up to

55-60 million square feet in an

optimistic scenario, while the

leasing numbers could drop to

45-50 million square feet in a

"India's office space demand is

likely to breach the 50 million

square feet mark for the third

consecutive time in 2024.

firmly establishing the new

benchmark in commercial real

estate," said Arpit Mehrotra,

Managing Director, Head of

The office market continues to

"Domestic origin companies

are likely to contribute almost

half of the anticipated office

The Grade A office space

leasing by domestic origin

occupiers has been witnessing

significant momentum in

recent years, with its share in

total leasing rising from 34 per

cent in 2019 to almost 50 per

cent in 2023, the report

persistent

Office services, Colliers India.

demonstrate

dynamism, he said.

space uptake

Mehrorta said.

highlighted.

pessimistic scenario.

Repurposed to scale-up'.

and pessimistic.

these six cities

Mumbai and Pune.

Hyderabad,

cares for the women of India." He highlighted that the government

has spent in the last few years about Rs 28,000 crore to the price stabilisation fund to support the effort to fight against food inflation. "We will continue to be there with our

sisters and mothers and make sure that we do not give stress...We are pro-actively on the job to make sure that we respect our Nari- Shakti and respect that they need to get a better household budget," Goyal asserted. The Election Commission is expected

to announce the poll schedule soon and the Lok Sabha elections are likely to be held in April-May. The minister spoke at length about

the government's various measures in the last few years to check prices of food items like onion, tomato, and

When the whole world was facing severe inflation, particularly food inflation, and never seen before levels,



some countries of the developed world were showing 40-year high inflation, India was a bright spot in the subject of inflation," he said.

During the UPA-era, Goyal said, the inflation was at high levels and food prices were going haywire. "If you look at the India story, even during the worst times, we were able to maintain our inflation at pretty much reasonable levels.

"We did not allow any product to see

spikes beyond a point. If we saw any product going expensive, very often for reasons beyond our control, we acted immediately," he said.

Citing examples of price rise in tomatoes because of rains in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Karnataka and at about the same time, Goyal said the government immediately intervened and started procuring tomatoes from other regions to boost supplies across the

'We didn't allow the price to remain at those elevated levels beyond a few days. And as soon as the government intervention came in, prices came back to normal levels," he said.

The food and consumer minister added that similar efforts were taken when the prices of onion and pulses rose beyond reasonable levels. "Even at nominal increases, the

government now takes proactive

India can leapfrog to accelerated

computing as it has no legacy: Vishal

Goyal highlighted that the Centre has introduced Bharat Chana daal at Rs 60 per kg; Bharat Atta (wheat flour) at Rs 27.50 per kg and Bharat rice at Rs 29 per kg for sale in the open market. These steps, he said, have brought "salutary effects" on prices.

"Inflation of food has been kept under control and our overall inflation is also very much within the RBI mandate," he said.

Referring to the government's latest estimate about lower onion output in 2023-24, he said, "I can assure you that the government will be proactive in its effort".

The government has 18,000 outlets of NCCF, NAFED, Kendriya Bhandar and retail stores of state governments for sale of subsidised items like pulses, aata and rice.

That apart, he said, the government has also roped in e-commerce platforms for sale of these goods.



## Open access solar capacity addition at record 3.2 GW in 2023: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India added a record 3.2 gigawatt of open access solar capacity during 2023, posting a 6.66 per cent rise supported by factors, including reduced module cost, according to a

In its latest report, US-based research firm Mercom Capital said the open access solar capacity addition was 3 gigawatt (GW) during 2022. Solar power through open access is an arrangement where

a power producer establishes a solar power plant to supply green energy to consumers. It is the record high open access solar capacity addition in a calendar year. The cumulative installed solar capacity in the open access

segment stood at 12.2 GW as of December 2023, the 'Mercom India Solar Open am worried about are we doing right skilling and upskilling, Access Market Report' said. Open access solar is one of the bright spots in the country's market, attracting commercial enterprises and industrial units to shift towards

solar and other clean energy sources, Raj Prabhu, CEO of Mercom Capital Group, said. The potential cost savings for businesses are hard to ignore, especially as solar costs continue to decrease while retail electricity prices rise.

With a strong pipeline, the

outlook is very promising for

this market segment, and we anticipate strong growth in 2024," he said. Karnataka remained the top cumulative for state for cumulative installations, accounting for 33.1 per cent of the country's installations, followed by Maharashtra (13.5 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (11.4 per

India had 13.9 GW of projects under development and in the pre-construction phase at the end of 2023.

Mercom Capital specialises in providing market intelligence on energy storage, smart grid technology and solar energy, in addition to offering advisory services on emerging markets and

decision-making.

#### PTI ■ NEW DELHI

s the world looks to double As the work roses of the data centre industry size to about USD 8 trillion, India has an opportunity to leapfrog into accelerated computing as it has no legacy infrastructure, a senior official of GPU major NVIDIA said on

Friday.

Speaking at Tie-Con Delhi-NCR, NVIDIA Asia South
Managing Director Vishal
Dhupar said India can
transform itself from being
"back office" of the world

"the office" of the world.

He said the global data centre industry is around USD 4 trillion which is going to double and India has close to about 1.2 per cent of the total about 1-2 per cent of the total

global capacity.
"We have no legacy. We are going to take this whole world's software into accelerated computing because it is common sense and I think yesterday's announcement can process data at a higher

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The first cargo of ONGC's newly explored crude oil

from KG basin deep-sea block was received at Mangalore

Refinery and Petrochemicals

Ltd (MRPL) on Saturday, the

The new crude oil from

Krishna Godavari basin block

to Mangalore by a ship named

Swarna Sindhu, which was

flagged off by Prime Minister

"This sweet (low sulphur)

indigenous crude is poised to

be transformed into various

fuels and petrochemicals at

contributing impactfully to

the Athmanirbhar Bharath

mission of the Government of

and Natural

Corporation's (ONGC) KG

block KG-DWN-98/2, which

started oil production in

January, lies in Andhra

The field is producing some

12,000-12,500 barrels of oil

per day currently using a

floating production and storage offloading (FPSO).

The oil is stored on the FPSO

and once it reaches a critical

level, it is transferred to a ship

which carries it to a refinery

for processing into fuels like

MRPL is a subsidiary of

petrol and diesel.

India," it said.

offshore.

Mangalore,

Narendra Modi on March 2.

refinery said in a statement.

First cargo of ONGC crude

reaches Mangalore refinery

oil from KG basin block

(cabinet decision) is a signature to that fact," Dhupar

The Cabinet has approved the India AI Mission with an outlay of Rs 10,372 crore for five years to encourage AI development in the country. Under mission,

supercomputingcapacity, comprising over 10,000 GPUs (graphics processing units), will be made available to various stakeholders for creating an AI ecosystem. GPUs have been

computers for processing multimedia content like video, digital games etc. The demand for GPU-based servers has increased as they

expected to reach 45,000

barrels of oil per day of crude

oil and 10 million standard

cubic metres per day of

natural gas," the statement

Speaking on the occasion,

MRPL managing director M

Shyamprasad Kamath said

that this crude oil production

results from ONGC Group's

commitment and technical

capabilities to contribute to

the nation's energy self-

He said this crude oil would

amount to a 7 per cent increase in India's crude oil

and natural gas production

'MRPL, a coastal refinery

with three separate crude

distillation units and essential

supporting infrastructure, is

well poised to process newer

crudes. This has enabled it to

have a diverse crude basket of

250 crude oil from around the

globe, of which more than

100 have already been

processed in the refinery

complex at Mangalore,"

potential at its peak

dependence.

commonly in use in personal

speed compared to CPU-based

"It makes more sense to go accelerated computing because the world is about a data centre and not about chip, not about a system, node or interconnect. Óne single data centre is a compute node. You need AI

factories to translate what you language barriers that restrict nation's sensitivities, nation's culture, the way we think, all this will get codified into it and the nation will benefit from accelerated compute," Dhupar

The race for AI development among global companies has led to shortage of GPUs.

According to industry estimates, NVIDIA dominates the GPU market with about 88 per cent share and there is a lag of 12-18 months in getting GPUs from the company due to its high demand across the

Dhupar said that GPU-based accelerated computing capacity can help the country solve several problems, especially those related to

growth of businesses. He said there is a need to develop AI models around

Indic languages that will help

address language barrier and

expedite the growth of businesses. In response to questions on job losses due to AI, Dhupar said that productivity is way forward. "For sure there will be displacement of jobs. You need to reskill and move. I am not

too worried about job losses. I

he said. Dhupar said that India is a country of software engineers and it is the time now for the country to start building its

#### India, EFTA to sign trade pact; services sector, investments to boost PTI ■ NEW DELHI linked incentive scheme) are

India and four-nation European bloc EFTA will sign a free trade agreement on Sunday, which is likely to help promote investments and exports of key domestic services sectors such as IT, audio-visual, and movement of skilled professionals, an official said.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

time in the history of free trade agreements (FTAs), a legal commitment is expected to be included in the pact about promoting target-oriented investment from EFTA to India and creation of employment.

India has sought an investment commitment of USD 50 billion during the first ten years after the implementation of the agreement and another USD 50 billion over the next five years from the member countries of the bloc and to facilitate the generation of 1 million direct employment in India through such investments. This commitment would be

linked to duty reduction under the agreement Sectors related to almost all the

industrial goods exported from India to the bloc are likely to benefit from the agreement. Another official said that Indian processed agricultural products may also get greater market access in EFTA countries. Besides, sectors like pharma, medical devices and processed food (these segments are cov-ered under the production

expected to figure in the agreement. Items such as soya, dairy and sensitive agricultural products would be kept in the exclusion list, meaning no duty con-cessions would be provided in the agreement for these items. The signing of the pact, officially dubbed as Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), follows

approval from the Union Cabinet on March 7. There is no official announce-

March 10 so far. The agreement has 14 chapters, including trade in goods, rules of origin, intellectual property rights (IPRs), trade in services, investment promotion and cooperation, government pro-

curement, technical barriers to

trade, and trade facilitation. From the EFTA bloc, the four ministers who may attend the signing are Guy Parmelin, Swiss Federal Councillor and Head of the Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research: Bjarni Benediktsson, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland; Dominique Hasler, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein; and Jan Christian Vestre, Minister of Trade and Industry of Norway. India and EFTA have been negotiating the pact since January 2008 to boost econom-

Commenting on the pact, economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that since 98 per cent of India's exports to Switzerland are of industrial goods and they are already entering at zero customs duties, there "would not" be any

benefit from the agreement. minimal and unlikely to increase significantly due to strict quality standards and non-tariff barriers," GTRI Founder Ajay

Srivastava said. GTRI said that as per estimates, Switzerland exported services worth about USD 1 billion to India in 2022-23, with about half the earnings stemming from Indian tourists visiting Switzerland.

**About EFTA: EFTA countries** are not part of the European Union (ÊU). It is an inter-governmental organisation, set up in 1960, for the promotion and intensification of free trade.

It was founded as an alternative for states that did not wish to join the European community. EFTA has 29 free trade agreements with 40 partner countries, including Canada, Chile, China, Mexico and Korea INDIA-EFTA TRADE: India's

exports to EFTA countries during 2022-23 stood at USD 1.92 billion against USD 1.74 billion in 2021-22. Imports aggregated at USD 16.74 billion during the last fiscal as compared to USD 25.5 billion in 2021-22, leaving a trade deficit of USD 14.8 bilwas USD 18.65 billion in 2022-23 as compared to USD 27.23 billion in 2021-22.

Switzerland is the largest trading partner of India followed by Switzerland is considered one of

the world's most innovative economies. It had been consistently ranked number one in the Global Innovation Index.

The bilateral trade between India and Switzerland stood at USD 17.14 billion (USD 1.34 billion exports and USD 15.79 billion imports) in the last fiscal. In 2022-23, India's trade deficit with Switzerland was USD 14.45 billion.

India's main imports from Switzerland include gold (USD 12.6 billion), machinery (USD 409 million), pharmaceuticals (USD 309 million), coking and steam coal (USD 380 million), optical instruments and orthopaedic appliances (USD 296 million), watches (USD 211.4 million), soybean oil (USD 202 million), and chocolates (USD 7 million).

Major exports from India include chemicals, gems and

jewellery, shops and boats,

machinery, certain types of textiles and apparels.
Switzerland is the largest source of gold imports for India, with about 41 per cent share during April-October this fiscal, followed by the UAE (about 13 per

cent) and South Africa (about 10 per cent). The precious metal accounts for over 5 per cent of the country's total imports. Switzerland has some of the

major pharma firms in the world and that include Novartis have a presence in India. India's generic drug industry is

estimated at about USD 25 billion and the country exports 50 per cent of its produce.

Γhe two-way trade between India and Norway was USD 1.5 billion in 2022-23. Similarly, the bilateral commerce between India and Iceland stood at USD

15.36 million in 2022-23. With Liechtenstein, India's bilat eral trade aggregated at USD 2.26 million in the last fiscal. Under free trade pacts, two trading partners significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them, besides easing norms to promote trade in services and

investments. FDI FROM EFTA: India has received about USD 10 billion foreign direct investments (FDI) from Switzerland between April 2000 and December 2023. It is the 12th largest investor in India. The FDI inflow was USD 721.52 million from Norway USD 29.26 million from Iceland

and USD 105.22 million from Liechtenstein during the period.

## "At its peak, this production is

#### TRUST GIVES 100 HOMES TO POOR FAMILIES

PALAKKAD (KERALA): Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust, established by realty firm Sobha Group founder PNC Menon, on Saturday handed over 100 homes free of cost to women-led underprivileged families. The Trust, established in 1994 by PNC Menon and Sobha Menon, runs various philanthropic projects, including the CSR programmes of Sobha Ltd

According to a statement issued by Sobha Ltd, the Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust has handed over its first set of 100 homes at no cost to the beneficiaries. The foundation stone was laid for another 120 homes. The Trust has committed to providing 1,000 homes to women from resource-limited families. These homes were given at an event, which was attended by Sobha Menon, Trustee, Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust and Ravi Menon, Chairman of Sobha Ltd

#### RAHUL JOHRI RESIGNS FROM ZEE ENTERTAINMENT

New Delhi: Zee Entertainment Enterprise Ltd on Saturday announced the resignation of Rahul Johri and changes in the revenue vertical of the broadcast business implemented by its MD & CEO Punit Goenka. Johri, who was President - Business of Zee Entertainment Enterprise Ltd (ZEEL), and heading revenue and monetisation, has resigned after a stint of over three years, according to a statement from the company. The company has accepted the resignation of Johri, it added. Besides, ZEEL also announced strategic changes in the revenue vertical of the broadcast business

# denies interim relief to IFF

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Tribunal has directed Swan Energy-IFFCO joint venture Triumph Offshore to hold a board meeting before April 4 to discuss issues raised by minority shareholder IFFCÓ regarding feasibility and viability of offering services to operate vessels. The NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) has set April 4 as the next date of hearing of a plea filed by IFFCO, seeking to restrain Triumph Offshore from passing any resolution without its approval and issuing any share/security to the lenders for paying loans. Triumph Offshore is a joint venture between fertiliser player IFFCO and Swan Energy Ltd (SEL) which is engaged in

onshore gas distribution terminal business. The joint venture was formed to set up a floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU). FSRU is a floating vessel having tanks for LNG storage. SEL has a 51 per cent stake and IFFCO owns 49 per cent in Triumph Offshore. Earlier this month, IFFCO

moved the Ahmedabad bench of the NCLT, seeking to restrain Triumph Offshore from passing any resolution without its approval and issuing any share/security to the lenders for paying loans.

While hearing the petition, the NCLT has directed Triumph Offshore to discuss the inclusion of IFFCO in the committees of the company, as per the Memorandum of Association (MOA) of the joint venture.

The Respondent No 1 (Triumph) is directed to convene a board meeting before the next hearing and discuss the issues raised regarding the feasibility and viability of offering services to operate vessels and the inclusion of applicants in the commit-

Association," the NCLT said in its latest order. However, the tribunal denied granting any interim relief to IFFCO, observing that it is also a director in the board of Triumph Offshore.

"The applicant (IFFCO) sought certain reliefs. This was objected by the respondent including the maintainability of the petition. No relief granted as the applicant is also a Director in the Board," the order said. IFFCO in its petition had alleged that Triumph Offshore is pre-paying tees as per Memorandum of the debt which may result in dilution of its shareholding in

the joint venture firm, which is

decremental to its interest. Triumph Offshore and SEL have already filed their reply over IFFCO's petition, and a two-

Thursday directed the fertiliser maker to file a rejoinder within 7 days over it. NCLT also directed listing the matter on April 4 for further arguments. In its petition, IFFCO also

member NCLT bench on

alleged that through a circular resolution dated January 15 this year Triumph Offshore reconstituted its audit committee and CSR committee without including IFFCO's nominee.

IFFCO has moved the NCLT under sections 241 and 242 of the Companies Act 2013, alleging oppression and mismanagement against Triumph Offshore, SEL and four directors of the JV

Triumph Offshore's board comprises three nominees from Swan Energy, two from IFFCO, and two independent directors.



#### International Women Day celebrated

New Delhi: Sycoriaan Matrimonial Services Limited, a leading matchmaking platform, celebrated International Women's Day in Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi. Sycoriaan Matrimonial Services

Limited has been dedicated to providing exceptional matrimonial services, helping individuals find their life partners and build lasting connections. With a commitment to excellence, the company has grown to become a trusted name in the industry, serving a diverse clientele.

# PRANAVI SHOOTS 67 TO OCCUPY T-5 SPOT

ndian golfers Pranavi Urs and Diksha Dagar shot fine ■rounds of 5-under and 3under to be placed Tied-5th and Tied-16th respectively on the first day of the Aramco Team Series at the Feather Sound

Country Club here. Coming off solid Top-10 finishes in Morocco in their previous outing, both the Indians were within striking distance of the leaders.

Pranavi, playing her rookie season, recorded a 5-under 67 but just one shot of the foursome pack of leaders at six-under.

Diksha, who began the day with a double bogey, picked up five birdies to finish at 3-under and was only three behind the leaders. Wales'

Wales' Chloe Williams, Switzerland's Kim Metraux, defending individual champion Carlota Ciganda of Spain and American Solheim Cup player Marina Alex is leading the field on six-underpar 66 each.

Team Roussin-Bouchard and Team Law are top of the pile in the team competition with a score of 18-under-par.

Pranavi, playing with Bronte Law, the former AIG Women's Open winner, Sophia Popov and amateur Jim Boddy, also put herself in line for a team



as teammates.

Along with their amateur, they shared the lead in team standings with Team Pauline Roussin-Bouchard, defending team champions, who had Celine Hebron, Meghan MacLaren and amateur LuJain Omar Khalil,

The team event will finish on the second day and if Pranavi and her team win, she will emulate Diksha, who had won in the Aramco Series London

two seasons ago.

Pranavi, winner of the Order of Merit on her home Tour in 2022 with five wins, starting on the 10th, parred her first three holes before stringing five birdies in a row and turned in 5-under 31. A sixth birdie on the first and vet another one on the fourth saw her rise to 7under and into sole lead.

came disappointment with a double bogey on the sixth, her 15th hole of the day. She ended at 5under and one behind the leaders.

Pranavi, who fired an opening round of 67 (-5), said: "It definitely feels great to get off to a hot start and I feel like I've been doing that quite often for the past four rounds now, but I just couldn't quite finish it.

Five-under was not bad and I will take it. I was really good off the tee today and that put me in good position to get good approaches, except for one which caused a double, but

hitting it good and putting has been good too."

She was rather consistent throughout the day, missing the fairway only three times, but on two of those occasions

she managed to par.
Also she missed the greens in regulation only twice and only once, on the fifth, it cost her dearly with double bogey. She needed 29 putts. Diksha found every fairway

but missed the greens in regulation on her last three holes, though she scrambled for pars each time. The start for a double was her only blemish. "I started with a double bogey and then I had a bad bounce and went into the bunker. I couldn't come on to the green. Then I four-putted. I didn't think about that too much. I staved calm and focused on every shot. I then gained very good momentum, and I had to fight for it. It was a good recovery and it turned out very well," Diksha said

"I'm going to focus on one shot at a time because it's going to be a different game due to the weather change. I'm going to ensure that I'm playing a good

Among the leaders, Wales' Williams went bogey-free, rolling in birdies on holes four, 10, 11 and 17 as well as a chipin eagle on the 14th.

# Khan becomes first Indian to qualify for NCAA track event final



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tational Games gold medal-National Games good mean.

list Parvej Khan on

Saturday became the first Indian to qualify for the final of a track event in the NCAA Championships of the United States, one of the most competitive collegiate competition in the world, as he made the grade in men's one mile event in

Khan clocked 3 minutes 57.126 seconds to finish third in the

one mile preliminary run and make it to the final in the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships.

19-year-old representing University of Florida as he earned a college scholarship there last year.

The 19-year-old Khan, who belongs to a farming family in Mewat region in Haryana, had won the 1500m gold in the 2022 National Games with a new personal best of 3.40.89 in Gandhinagar. One mile run though is not popular among Indian athletes and is not in the Olympic and Championships programme.

Champonships programme.

Three Indians — Tejaswin
Shankar (2018 and 2022 in
high jump), Mohinder Singh
Gill (triple jump) and Vikas
Gowda (2006 in discus throw)

have all won gold at the - have all won gold at the

NCAA championships.
"Pumped to see Parvez Khan
(ONLY (Indian flag) to make
@NCAATrackField finals for @GatorsTF in a track event EVER) if it's a slower race he is winning hands down! If I were coaching his competitor I'll tell them to run the first few laps like their life depends on it. He WILL hunt you down!," Shankar tweeted.

Khan won the 800m gold at the U-16 Nationals in Mangalagiri, Andhra Pradesh, in 2019, took bronze over the same distance at the Khelo India Youth Games (U-18) the next year before winning his first senior race — the 1500m at the National Open National Championships in Warrangal

in 2021. He bagged a 1500m silver National Inter-State Senior Athletics Championships in

Chennai in 2022 and won a gold over the same distance in National Open in Bengaluru in the same year.

## Hussamuddin bows out of World Olympic **Boxing Qualifier**

PTI ■ BUSTO ARSIZIO (ITALY)

World Championships bronze medallist Mohammed Hussamuddin made a disappointing return to competitive boxing after an injury lay-off, losing 0-4 to Ireland's Jude Gallagher in the men's 57kg clash at the 1st World Olympic Boxing Qualifier here.

Hussamuddin, had earlier received a first-round bye.
Competing for the first time since the 2023 World

Championships quarterfinals when he injured his left knee, Hussamudin took some time to settle in which allowed his opponent Birmingham CWG champion to take a lead with his technical prowess.

The youngster used speed and agility to his advantage, pocketing the first round 5-0. did try to cover lost ground in round two but his comeback became even more difficult after he was handed a onepoint deduction for dropping his head.

The 22-year-old Gallagher just kept his calm in the third round and did not allow Hussamuddin to attack, eventually winning the bout.

India fielded nine boxers in the competition of which only Nishant Dev (71kg) remains in the fray to seal a quota. He will be in action in the prequarterfinals late on Sunday.

India have already secured four quotas for Paris 2024 with Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti (54kg), Parveen Hooda (57kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) confirming their berths with impressive performances at the Asian Games.



# Woods to skip the Players Championship as Masters nears

Tiger Woods is not in the field for The Players The Championship next week, opening questions about whether or Woods had surgery to fuse his showing up at the Masters champion will play before Augusta National

The Players already is missing a bevy of big names from those who joined LIV Golf. Now it's missing the biggest draw in golf. There was not an immediate

reason why Woods chose not to play at the TPC Sawgrass, where he has won twice. He was not listed in the field that the PGA Tour released Friday. Even though injuries have severely limited his schedule, he would be eligible from his five-year exemption from winning the 2019 Masters. For Woods, his road to the

Masters could be the Seminole Pro-Member last week in Florida. He played 18 holes with PGA of America CEO Seth Waugh. Otherwise, his only competition this year was

24 holes at the Genesis Invitational, where Woods withdrew after six holes in the Players second round at Riviera with

> right ankle after the Masters last year and didn't return until the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas in December. He has said walking was no longer as big an issue, though he still got sore from other parts of his body. He has had five surgeries on his back.

> Even so, he was optimistic he could play once a month through the majors in 2024. He never committed to The Players, though it made sense for a once-a-month schedule the tour's premier championship on a course he has won twice.

The Valspar Championship is after The Players. Woods played there in 2018 and was runner-up, but he has never returned. The only other two tournaments remaining are the Houston Open, which he has never played, and the Texas

Open, which he last played on a sponsor exemption when he was 20 and just out of college in 1996.

Then again, he has a history of The most notable example was in 2022, when Woods played for the first time since crashing his car in Los Angeles and shattering bones in lower right leg. Woods finished 47th that

He also went five months without playing in 2010, after his personal life came crashing down around him when he was exposed for having multiple extramarital affairs. He opened with a 68 and tied for fourth, five shots behind Phil Mickelson.

Woods has never missed the cut at the Masters as a pro. The Players Championship still has a stacked field, starting with defending champion Scottie Scheffler. With Woods not playing, the last player currently in the field is Alexander Bjork.

### Teenager Yamal scores for Barcelona **AP** BARCELONA

Teenager Lamine Yamal curled in a second-half goal to grab Barcelona a 1-0 win over Mallorca at home, lifting the defending Spanish league champions into second place.

Yamals exquisite shot from just inside the corner of the area for the 73rd-minute goal on Friday salvaged an otherwise lackluster Barcelona from a second straight draw. It was the 16-year-old Yamal's sixth goal across all competitions in his first full season with Barcelona. He's set several milestones for his young age, such as the youngest player to debut and to score in the Spanish league, to score for Spain, and

to start in the Champions League.
"I was trying to keep their left back



occupied, but since they gave the space I went for my shot," Yamal said about his

Now we have to think about the Champions League, where we face one of the most important games of the season." Coach Xavi Hernández kept Robert Lewadowski on the bench until the final half hour, resting him before Tuesday's

Their first game in Italy ended 1-1. Barcelona moved two points ahead of Girona before it hosts Osasuna on Saturday. Leader Real Madrid is five points

Champions League match against Napoli to see which advances to the quarterfinals.

clear of Barcelona before hosting Celta Vigo on Sunday. The other standout player for Barcelona

was 17-year-old center back Pau Curbasí, who excelled again with his defending and

Mallorca goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic kept the game close. He saved a penalty taken by Ilkay Gundogan in the first half after Raphinha was fouled in the area by José Copete. Rajkovic also got just enough of a touch of a Yamal shot to push it onto his bar early in the second half.

## **Tennis skill** India will target 30 medals in showcased

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

The culmination of the 42nd The culmination of the PSPB Inter Unit Lawn Tennis Tournament, organised by Engineers India Limited witnessed a display of exceptional talent and fierce competition on the courts of New Delhi.

The tournament showcased

the pinnacle of tennis skill and sportsmanship, concluding with the following outstanding results with BPCL won the first position, OIL at second and ONGC stood at third place in the veteran team event contest. Prize Distribution ceremony held at DLTA RK Khanna stadium was graced by the presence of Smt. Vartika Shukla, CMD of Engineers India Limited (EIL), who personally bestowed trophies upon each team and medals to individual winners across various categories. Raj Kumar Dubey of the BPCL won the veterans open single while Dubey paired with Munish

Sharma won the doubles.

# Paris Paralympics: Jhajharia

**T**ndia will target 30 medals in Ithe upcoming Paris Paralympics, 11 more than the country won in the last Games Committee of India (PCI) president Devendra Jhajharia said on Saturday, just after he was elected to the top post.

India had won 19 medals (5 gold, 8 silver, 6 bronze) in the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021, including a javelin silver from Ihaiharia himself.

"Our target for Paris Paralympics (August 28 to September 8) is to win many more medals than the 19 we won in Tokyo. Iss baar, tees paar (will aim for 30-plus medals)," Ihajharia said.

This government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is giving a lot of emphasis to para sports and para athletes. We have done well in the 2016 Rio Paralympics and then we won 19 medals in Tokvo and we have shown that India is an up-andcoming country in para sports." A medal count of 30 may take



India to top-10.

Two-time Paralympics gold medallist Jhajharia was on Saturday elected unopposed as PCI president, succeeding another celebrated para athlete Deepa Malik.

The 42-year-old javelin thrower, who had won a gold medal each in the 2004 Athens and 2016 Rio Paralympics in the F46 disability category, was the only candidate in the fray for the top He said the mission of the new

dispensation under him will be "developing para sports in the 700 districts of the country".



#### Swiatek moves on at Indian Wells

AP INDIAN WELLS US)

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek moved on at the BNP Paribas Open with a 6-3, 6-0 victory over power-hitting Danielle Collins.

Swiatek improved to 15-2 this season and earned her fifth straight win over the 30-year-old American, who previously announced that she intends to retire after the season, on Friday. The two met in January in the second round of the Australian Open, with Swiatek winning 6-

3, 3-6, 6-4. This one was much easier. Swiatek, a four-time major champion, won 71.1% of her first-serve points, compared to Collins' 50%. Collins did herself no favors with unforced errors

and seven double-faults. Swiatek now faces either Linda Noskova or Camila Giorgi, who were playing later Friday night. Swiatek lost in the third round at Melbourne Park to the 19-

vear-old Noskova. In other women's action, Angelique Kerber battled back to beat Jelena Ostapenko 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 in a matchup of former Grand Slam champions. It was similar to Kerber's three-set win

in Cincinnati in 2021 before she became a mother and returned to action this year. Kerber, who reached the Indian Wells final in 2019, is a three-

time Grand Slam titlist. On the men's side, Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner

cruised to a 6-3, 6-0 win over Thanasi Kokkinakis to extend his winning streak to 16 matches. The third-ranked Sinner won 74.5% of his service points to run his all-time record against

Kokkinakis to 4-0. Andrey Rublev defeated Andy Murray 7-6 (3), 6-1, while Alejandro Tabilo, Alexander Zverev, Stefanos Tsitsipas and Alex de Minaur also won in straight sets.

# Gill set to become first referee of Indian descent

Sunny Singh Gill was standing at the proverbial career crossroads one year ago. He had the option to continue as a prison officer or concentrate on carrying forward his family's rich footballing legacy by chasing his ref-

ereeing dream. Cut to 2024, the 39-year-old will script history at Selhurst Park on Saturday when he becomes the first Indian-origin and British South Asian to referee in an English Premier League fixture (Crystal Palace vs Luton).

"This weekend I'll be proud to see Sunny Singh Gill taking to the pitch as the first South Asian to referee a Premier League match," said British PM Rishi Šunak, addressing an awards ceremony organised by the Asian Media Group (AMG) earlier

this week. "It is a reminder of the incredible contribution of South Asian people to our economy and our society. It's a reminder too of the values we share: hard work, family, education and enterprise. There is so much for us to

celebrate," he said. It will not be the first time that a

member of the trailblazing Gill family claims a slice of history though. Sunny's father Jarnail Singh was the first turbaned referee in the history of English League football (EFL). He officiated 150 matches between 2004 and 2010. "Football has always run in the

family," Sunny said. His brother Bhupinder was the first Sikh-Punjabi to serve as a Premier League assistant referee when he ran the line during the Southampton versus Nottingham Forest game last 'Me and my brother grew up loving

the game and like most young kids, we just wanted to play but in our household, it was a bit different because when we were going to primary school, we knew our dad was going out to referee on a weekend," he told EFL last year. There were times he was a fourth

official in the Premier League and our friends would say they saw him on Match of the Day! But it was not refereeing that he

dreamed of as a child. Like umpteen children in Britain, Sunny too football aspired professionally.



old we went to watch Arsenal play Everton, that was our first Premier League game," Sunny said.

"Dermot Gallager was the referee and dad was the fourth official. At that age you don't really think about being a referee. remember looking around

what I want'.

Highbury and watching Ian Wright for Arsenal thinking, wow, this is

underneath the goalposts and all I thought about was how amazing it would be to score a goal there, not give a penalty there or something!' He was scouted by Queens Park Rangers but was released soon after the trials at the club's youth academy. But his passion for football remained

It wasn't until watching his father referee a game between Wolves and

Sunny understood what his calling "After watching him walk out of the tunnel that day that's when I

Burnley in front of 35,000 fans that

thought, 'yeah, I want to be a referee'. I was a little bit older and more realistic and I knew what it was like to go through that matchday routine as a referee. At 17, Sunny took charge of his first Sunday League. But the teenager found it difficult to handle

footballers on the field and went on a five-year hiatus from officiating. "I got put off it. Part of it was because I wanted to play football with my friends, but also I was only 17 and refereeing was hard.

'Players behave in a certain way, I was young, perhaps a little bit immature and I didn't have the manmanagement skills to cope with

An encouraging chat with his father put him back on the path of refereeing

In April 2021, Sunny (fourth official) and Bhupinder (assistant) became the first pair of British South Asians to officiate in the same Championship match and in

first South Asian since his father to referee a Championship game. Alongside officiating in the EFL, Sunny also worked at Feltham Prison and Young Offender Institution. Fatigued, he eventually Offender gave up the latter to focus on

November last year, he became the

"It was tough, doing full-time shift work during the week then going off officiating at the weekends, you have to think how it will affect your life but I knew it was what I wanted to

training as a referee.

"I asked my family to just stick with me because I knew it would be worthwhile one day when I could have a professional career in football and I did. It hasn't been an easy journey for

dream Premier League dream and scale greater heights. "It's been a lot of hard work training away from the pitch, improving in every department with the help of

Sunny who now wants to realise his

the PGMOL and my coaches. "I now want to set more goals and fulfill my dream of becoming the first South Asian to referee in the Premier League.

Kuldeep Yadav. It was another

boom and bust knock that

Bairstow played in the series.

He exchanged a few words

with Shubman Gill stationed at

first slip and lost his concentration in the process.

Not confident of defending

against Ashwin and Co.,

England continued to use the long handle after lunch and

Ben Foakes went for a wild slog

sweep off Ashwin only to miss

the ball completely, giving

India's premier spinner his 36th five-wicket haul in Tests.

Bumrah's fiery spell in the

afternoon got him wickets of Tom Hartley and Mark Wood,

putting India on the cusp of a

In the morning, the visitors took less than 20 minutes to

failed miserably.

massive win.

# INDIA PROVIDE RUDE REALITY CHECK TO BAZBALL

Ravichandran Ashwin took a famous five-wicket haul in his 100th Test as India thrived on the impatience of England batters for an emphatic innings and 64-run victory in the final chapter of an action-packed five-match contest, handing the visitors their heaviest defeat in the 'Bazball' era.

With the series already in bag India were playing for crucial World Test Championship points and England made their job simpler by self-imploding on day three here.

England were bowled out for 195 towards the end of the afternoon session with Ashwin running through their reckless batting line-up to end with a match haul of nine wickets. Kuldeep Yadav was adjudged player of the match though for a haul of seven wickets, including the fifer in the first

"When you win a Test like this, everything has to fall in

place...The way bowlers took responsibility was pleasing to see," said an elated India captain Rohit Sharma.

Joe Root was the lone ranger for his team and batted beautifully for his 84 off 128 balls. He was the last batter to be dismissed.

England's second innings moved at a rather frenetic pace as the batters went on the offensive in their bid to survive against the Indian spinners but failed yet again.

The game appeared to be going only one way when India took a huge 259-run first innings lead in the morning session by posting 477 all out in response to England's 218 on day one. Ahead of the final game of their long tour, Stokes had dismissed theories of the

departure lounge syndrome but with the way his batters performed, it seemed they were in a hurry to get back

'We have been outplayed by the better team of the series...When you look at the

Hence, his earnings from Test cricket alone would stand at Rs

Add to it, he has an annual

retainership of Rs seven crore

per season, which takes his

This obviously excludes his

match fees for playing ODIs (Rs 8 lakh per game) and T20Is (Rs

4 lakh per game) in a season.

The BCCI, in its explainer, has

taken an average of nine Tests in

a season. If someone has played less than 50 per cent of the games (4 or less in this case), then he will only get a standard,

match fee of Rs 15 lakh (for

being in playing XI) and half that

However, the moment he plays

between 50 to 75 per cent of the

games (five to six in case the base

be an additional match fee

incentive of Rs 30 lakh per

So a player, who has played six

Tests in a season, would get Rs 90 lakh as existing match fee (Rs

15x6) and incentive of Rs 1.8

crore (Rs 30x6), which takes his

match fee plus incentives to Rs

"REWARD" NOT "INCEN-

TIVE": Head coach Rahul

Dravid welcomed the move

from BCCI and termed it as a

reward for playing the toughest

"Hope money is not going to be the incentive to play Test crick-

et. It is nice to see that it is a

recognition that it is a hard for-

mat. Nice that BCCI is recognis-

ing that. It is a reward not an

incentive," Dravid said at the end

of the 4-1 Test triumph over

England in Dharamsala

**CALLS** 

2.70 crore

**DRAVID** 

amount for reserves.

earnings to Rs 13 crore.



series as a whole, in those small moments we haven't been able to keep it going," he admitted at the end of a humbling outing. The attack at all costs approach clearly did not work for them in India and the debacle has given them plenty to ponder before the start of the English

For India, the series was a remarkable considering they had the likes of Virat Kohli and Mohammed Shami unavailable throughout. The youngsters, led

absence to give the team

management more options for

At 41, Anderson becomes first

pacer to take 700 Test wickets

The writing was on the wall after Ashwin ran through England's self destructing toporder to leave them reeling at 103 for five at lunch. Yashasvi Jaiswal, grabbed the opportunities in the seniors'

England skipper Ben Stokes cut a sorry figure after falling to Ashwin at the stroke of lunch with a straighter one.

With Rohit not taking the field due to a stiff back, Bumrah led the side in the middle besides opening the bowling alongside Ashwin.

Ashwin once again got the better of England opener Ben Duckett (2). The southpaw, who had struggled to defend against Ashwin in the previous

games, charged down the wicket for a counter-attacking hit but was nowhere near the pitch of the ball, resulting in a bowled dismissal.

Ashwin had a leg slip in place for Zak Crawley (0) with the pitch offering a fair amount of turn and bounce.

The England opener got an inside edge on to the pads and deflected straight into the hands of Sarfaraz Khan at leg-

slip Ollie Pope (19), who is a tentative starter, was Ashwin's third victim. It was an error in judgement again from an England batter as he went for an audacious sweep off a delivery that went straight with the arm and was also on the shorter side. Jonny Baristow (39 off 31), also

playing his 100th Test like Ashwin, joined Joe Root in the middle and went on the offensive from the word go. Playing with the spin, Bairstow hammered three thundering sixes off Ashwin on the on-side

before being adjudged lbw off

wrap up India's innings with veteran James Anderson finally getting to the 700wicket mark. Young off-spinner Shoaib

Bashir had Jasprit Bumrah stumped for his second fivewicket haul in his debut series



# BCCI triples per match incentive to ₹45 lakh for playing red ball format

six crore.

iving up to its promise of giv-Ling highest priority to Test cricket, the BCCI has decided to give an incentive of Rs 45 lakh per game to all those who would play 75 per cent or more of the scheduled red-ball games in a particular season, Board secretary Jay Shah said on Saturday. A Test player, who appears in a possible 10 Tests in a season will be richer by a whopping Rs 4.50 crore as incentive apart from a possible Rs 1.5 crore (15 lakh per game) in usual match fee.

The top cricketers also get an assured retainer fee from their annual central contracts.

"I am pleased to announce the initiation of the 'Test Cricket Incentive Scheme' for Senior Men, a step aimed at providing our esteemed athletes," Shah stated on 'X'.

"Commencing from the 2022-23 season, the 'Test Cricket Incentive Scheme' will serve as an additional reward structure on top of the existing match fee for Test matches, set at Rs 15 lakh," he further stated. The incentives will be retrospective and would factor in players, who were part of Test cricket during the 2022-23 season.

HOW THE MATH WORKS: To put things in perspective, one can take the example of Indian skipper Rohit Sharma, who has appeared in all 10 Tests (World Test Championship final, 2 vs West Indies, 2 vs SA, 5 vs England) during the 2023-24

Rohit will get Rs 1.5 core (Rs 15 lakhx10) in usual match fee and for giving priority to Test cricket, he will get another Rs 4.5

England veteran James Anderson added another glorious chapter to his remarkable tale of longevity when he became the first pacer and third bowler to take 700 Test wickets here on Saturday.

Anderson reached the milestone in his 187th Test by removing India's Kuldeep Yadav caught behind on day three of the fifth Test here. He three of the fifth Test here. He

edge. The 41-year-old was on 699 overnight dismissing Shubman Gill with

lured the Indian tail-ender into

a drive and induced the outside

a beauty on day one. The only other pacer to have taken 600 Test wickets or more is his former teammate Stuart Broad, who retired last year with 604 in the bag. Sri Lankan spin great Muttiah

 $R^{ohit\,Sharma's\,captaincy\,was\,rather\,understat-} \\ R^{ohit\,Sharma's\,captaincy\,was\,rather\,understat-} \\ R^{ohit\,Sharma's$ 

ed to see the players identify themselves with the

Under Rohit, India never made tall claims even

once but silently and categorically nullified the vis-

itors' much-talked-about 'Bazball' and grabbed the

"I'm privileged to work with a lovely team. I'm

learning from them all the time. Rohit has been

fantastic to work with. I think he's a terrific leader,

and the guys gravitate towards him phenomenal-

ly, which is fantastic to see," said Dravid told broad-

Dravid said India's series win was dotted by sev-

eral shining moments but acknowledged that the

return of Ravichandran Ashwin from a person-

al emergency underlined the character of this out-

"I'd just say Ashwin coming back to the team after

what he went through (as the stand-out moment).

Ash wanting to come back and contribute to the

team... I think, for me, it signified what this team

is about and what the character of this team is.

"I think that was just for me, probably the standout moment of the series. It really gladdens your

heart as a coach to the kind of environment that

Mumbaikar's leadership principles

five-match series 4-1.

casters after the match.



Muralidaran has 800 scalps to his game, the most in Tests, followed by the late Shane Warne (708)

India spin great Anil Kumble is fourth in the all time list with 619 wickets in 132 Tests. India could only add four runs to their overnight tally to end up at 477, gaining a 259-run

first innings lead. Anderson remains at the top of his game, both physically and

towards terrific leader Rohit: Dravid

Fantastic to see players gravitate

skill-wise having made his international debut back in

England skipper Ben Stokes had spoken highly of illustrious teammate ahead of England's final Test on the long tour of India.

"Jimmy coming up to 700 wickets, it's phenomenal to think about, especially as a seam bowler. Amazing career to date, and I can't see him stopping. I have played with Jimmy for a long time and I've never seen him as physically fit

as he does right now.
"Being 41, showing that hunger and desire to get better every single day is testament to his attitude and commitment to the game," said Stokes.

Besides close to 200 Tests Anderson has played 194 ODIs and 19 T20s. He is 13 short of completing 1000 wickets in international cricket

#### I know what it is like to lose to Indian B Team: Paine

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tim Paine absolutely loves watching bitter rivals England lose any series but the former Australia captain knows what it is like to be beaten by an Indian 'B' team in Test cricket. No one knows what it feels like to lose to an second-string Indian side better than Paine, who was the Australian captain during 2020-21 Border-Gavaskar Trophy, where India claimed a famous 2-1 series win away from home. Devoid of then captain Virat

Kohli, who flew back home after the first Test, Rohit Sharma, who was ruled out of the first two games, pacers Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav who were out with injuries, and no Ravichandran Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah, who were unavailable for the final Test in Gabba, Ajinkya Rahane led a pack of spirited youngsters to hand India a memorable series

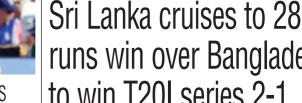
"I know what it's like to be beaten by an Indian B team. us on our home soil.

"But yes, some huge names out for India, which should have certainly helped the English," said speaking to another former Australia captain Brad Haddin on the 'Around the Wicket' podcast.

Playing without the likes of Kohli, Shami, KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant, India inflicted a 4-1 series defeat on England after winning the Dharamsala Test by an innings and 64 runs on Saturday.

It is England's first series loss Brandon under coach McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes

"I thoroughly enjoy watching England play the game, I love the way they are going about it. I love watching them lose. Don't get me wrong but they are entertaining and exciting," Paine added.



# runs win over Bangladesh to win T20I series 2-1



**AP** ■ SYLHET (BANGLADESH)

Opener Kusal Mendis hit a brilliant 86 and pacer Nuwan Thushara added a career-best 5-20 including a hat trick as Sri Lanka cruised to a 28-run victory over Bangladesh in the final T20 International to win the series 2-1 on Saturday.

Sri Lanka won the first match by three runs, but Bangladesh levelled with an eight-wicket victory Mendis' 55-ball knock that

included six fours and as many sixes single-handedly drove the side to 174-6 and then Thushara, playing his first game in the series, ripped through top-order in a swing bowling display.
"This is our last series before

confidence from this," Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga said.

"It's Thushara's first game this series, he bowled really well," he added. "This is a good series win for us and just think our bowling attack was too good for them.

Rishad Hossain hit seven sixes, the highest by a Bangladesh batter in this format in an innings, for his 30-ball 53 as Bangladesh recovered from 32-6 to be all out for 146 in 19.4 overs. Thushara, the replacement of

injured Matheesha Pathirana, took four wickets in his two overs including a hat trick to ruin Bangladesh's hope to seal its first-ever T20I series victory against Sri Lanka. Dhananjaya de Silva broke through with the wicket of Liton Das (7) and then in the

next over, Thushara joined the party. He removed Najmul Hossain (1) and Towhid Shanto Hridoy by rattling their stump before trapping Mahmudullah for leg-before. Mahmudullah reviewed in vain as Thushara became the fourth Sri Lankan bowler to achieve a hat trick in this format.

In his next over, Thushara got the better of Soumya Sarkar, then Hasanranga dismissed Jaker Ali (4) to leave Bangladesh 32-6.

'We have to be careful going forward how we play in the first six overs," Shanto said. "If you look at all three matches, we played some good cricket. Especially the way Rishad, Taskin (Ahmed) and Mahedi (Hasan) batted, really happy for them.'

Earlier, when Bangladesh put Sri Lanka into bat first for the third time in a row in the series, Kusal Mendis led the charge with the second-best 19 not out coming from Dasun Shanaka.

Fast bowler Taskin Ahmed, who claimed 2-25, broke through with the wicket of De Silva.

Kusal put on 34 with Kamindu Mendis (12) and 59 with Hasaranga (15) to lay the platform.

Taskin took the crucial wicket of Kusal to deny him the century. His dismissal also sparked a mini-collapse,

denying Sri Lanka a chance to take its total past 200. The teams will also play three One-Day Internationals and

two Test matches to conclude the tour.

If Mumbai have found multiple

heroes from Nos 1 to 11 to sail

through, the two-time winners

Vidarbha, whose twin title wins

#### RANJI TROPHY FINAL

improvement in Kuldeep.

handy runs lower down the order.

Ashwin had to leave for Chennai because of a fam-

ily emergency on the second day of the Rajkot Test,

but the veteran off-spinner rejoined the action on

There have been talks about the doors of the

Indian team being shut now for players like Ishan

Kishan and Shreyas Iyer after they defied the BCCI

Rohit and I are selecting playing 11. Sometimes

even I don't know who is contracted and who is

not. So, no one is out of the mix as far as we are

concerned," Dravid later said in the post-match

Kuldeep Yadav twinkled radiantly with his left-

arm wrist spin besides chipping in with some

Dravid was chuffed to see the wholesome

the fourth day of the third Test.

diktat to play in Ranji Trophy.

press conference.

But Dravid did not buy into that

#### Mumbai eye 42nd title but Vidarbha to pose tough challenge Thakur have hit important hunmaiden ton across formats to

ed by an astute captain in Led by an astute captum ... Ajinkya Rahane, Mumbai will look to maintain their hegemony on Ranji Trophy with a 42nd title but a gutsy and bat-tle-hardened Vidarbha won't make it easy for the legacy champions in the much-anticipated final starting here tomor-

In Mumbai, coming second best is never an option and nothing short of a title would satisfy the connoisseurs of Mumbai cricket sitting in the Garware pavilion of the Wankhede Stadium.

Someone, who engineered India's greatest overseas series career has seen a sharp slump and right now he is not even in national reckoning.

Sample this. Even a specialist pacer Mohit Avasthi (192) has scored more runs compared to Rahane (134) who has had a dismal average of 13.4 throughout the tournament.

However Rahane's leadership skills have proven to be second to none as the old warhorse used his resources pretty well to take the team to its 48th summit clash.

He couldn't avail the services of an injured Suryakumar Yadav. Sarfaraz Khan wasn't available after being picked for India A

win in Australia three winters back, Rahane's international and subsequently for the Test series. Shreyas Iyer avoided a few games on pretext of injury. Prithvi Shaw (5 games), having

that had been created," said Dravid

recovered from injury only was available towards the business end. Shivam Dube, Shardul Thakur also played half of the

games. But in Mumbai, it is the team that plays and they have known how to win Ranji Trophy even when a Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar, Dilip Vengsarkar weren't available and the tradition has continued.

Vidarbha, who brought their 'A' Even though his individual form game forward on key moments. deserted him, Rahane and his Umesh Yaday, a man with 150 men found their way through all plus Test wickets, with a brand challenges en route to the final new ball can still ask probing this year. They meet their match questions to Mumbai's semi-



The spotlight will be on middleorder batter Shreyas Iyer, who had just lost his BCCI Annual Contracts for giving precedence to cash-rich IPL over domestic cricket. A hundred in Ranji Trophy final would certainly give him a lot of confidence. Mumbai's batters have not piled up runs in large numbers like those from their opponents through this season to make the

final, but their lower-middle order has stood up to the occasion and delivered in crunch situations. The likes of wicketkeeper-batter

Hardik Tamore (252 runs), who has floated from top to lower order while making significant contributions in the last two knockout games, combined with the brilliance of Tanush Kotian (481), Shams Mulani (290) and Tushar Deshpande (168) have all delivered whenever the chips have been down. Dube and

dreds in knock-out games. India U-19 star Musheer Khan has given a fine exhibition of himself proving to be the gel that holds the batting line-up together, Mumbai present a strong challenge for the Vidarbha side. The hosts have pushed through barriers each time in the knock-

ing a stunning late blow to oust Baroda in the quarterfinal riding on centuries from Kotian and Deshpande at Nos 10 and 11 for a historic show. Also, in the semifinal, there was another incredible late fight-

back from Mumbai when Tamil

Nadu reduced them to 106 for

seven with Thakur striking his

out stage, with Mumbai deliver-

lead the way

came not too long ago in 2017-18 and 2018-19, have managed to put on consistent performances across departments to make their way into the summit class of India's premier domestic tournament. With Karun Nair (616 runs at 41.06) leading the way, Dhruv Shorey (549 runs at 36.6), Akshay Wadkar (530 runs at 37.85), Atharva Taide (529 runs at 44.08) and Yash Rathod (456 runs at 57) have spruced up Vidarbha's batting to shine bright this season.

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New Delhi, March 10, 2024

# a the pioneer of the

"My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right"



MODI'S LEADERSHIP

# PATH TO RENEWAL

**KK SRIVASTAVA** delves into Jungian psychology's influence on Modi's leadership, unveiling its role in societal renewal and global impact for a prosperous future

emocracy is a psychological institution as much as it is a political, social, economic, or cultural one. It necessitates the assimilation of human psychology, and one way to comply with this requirement is to delve into the past, particularly the past of the country in question. There are two classes of people for whom meeting this requirement is mandatory: first, political leaders. For any leader, the past serves as a valuable teacher; understanding it provides clarity regarding their vision and mission, enabling them to handle collective human psychology efficiently and effectively for the greater welfare of all. Second, writers. Let me begin with a writer who speaks of India: "India is old and India continues." This sentiment is expressed in the book "India: A Wounded Civilization", a title that reflects the anguish of a young writer — VS Naipaul's

One might recall the TV serial "Ek Din Ek Jeevan", hosted by the eminent media personality Tavleen Singh, in which she used to converse with well-known personalities. In one of these programmes, VS Naipaul, when confronted with a parting question from her, "What is it about India that draws you?" said, "Well, I suppose my religion is... is... being Indian. But that's my background, and I just have to explore it in various ways..." Furthermore, in 2004, when he was a Nobel laureate, Naipaul visited the Bharatiya Janata Party headquarters in Delhi, and people saw in this visit a symbol of ideological moorings.

Much more amplification about his enquiry into India, i.e., "the residue of old history" as he calls it in his novel "Magic Seeds", is available in some of his indispensable books. In "Literary Occasions: A collection of Naipaul's essays," he reiterates, "We were an immigrant Asian community in a small plantation island in the New World. To me, India seemed very far away, mythical, but we were still full of the instincts of people of the Gangetic plain... The Ramayana was the essential Hindu story... and even with the divine machinery, the matter was very human... the epic was like a moral education for all of us."

Naipaul's ancestors left India in the late eighteenth century, and he was born almost five decades later, in Trinidad in 1932. He visited India for the first time in 1962, roughly eighty years after his forefathers left the country. He did not have a personal, direct memory of his religion and culture as they existed in India. Naipaul continues in "Literary Occasions", "The two Indias were separate. The political India, of the freedom movement, had its great names... The other, more personal India was quite hidden; it vanished when memories faded. It wasn't an India we could read about... It was to this personal India... that I went when the time came." But Naipaul was aware of the limitations that lay beneath the unconscious place of human memories. So, he admits in another novel, A Way in the World, "I can give you that historical bird's-eye view. But I cannot really explain the mystery of inheritance... We can go back and back, forever; we go back all of us to the very beginning; in our blood and bone and brain, we carry the memories of thousands of beings... We cannot understand all the traits we have inherited. Sometimes we can be strangers to ourselves."

What could be the explicable reasons for Naipaul's pursuit of India, his culture, and religion? To answer this question, let me turn to Carl Gustav Jung, one of the most significant psychiatrists of the last century, and some of his concepts: "the collective unconscious", "inner self-experience," "wholeness", and "shadow". Out of the two layers of the mind — conscious and unconscious — Jung splits the unconscious into the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The personal unconscious implies contents that were previously conscious but have become dormant, forgotten, or repressed. On the contrary, the collective unconscious is home to all accumulated historical, collective memories, and experiences of humanity. It refers to the pattern of deep unconscious instincts held collectively by human beings, which are retained in what Jung calls archetypes. Archetypes connote ancestral, inherited experiences that are collectively registered in the human brain, manifesting as the collective unconscious. Jung believed that in addition to one's personal unconscious, each individual also has a collective unconsciousness. Naipaul's repeated return to his country had deep roots in his personal and collective unconscious. When he talks about "the instincts of people of the Gangetic plain" or "We cannot understand all the traits we have inherited", instincts here refer to the Jungian collective unconscious."

Jung believes that the collective unconscious plays an enormous role in both personal and cultural growth. He says a person's destiny is "the result of the collaboration between the conscious and the unconscious". Individually, access to the collective unconscious leads to personal growth and the integration of various aspects of the self. As a group, the collective unconscious influences the development of

culture, symbols, and rituals. By understanding and exploring the collective unconscious, individuals and societies gain insights into their own past, identities, and the broader human experience. The collective unconscious influences every aspect of our lives, especially the emotional ones.

While Jung talks about "inner self-experience", he stipulates that everything within the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, necessitating the integration of the collective unconscious, which implies taking cognisance of the world and adapting to it. Individuals achieve "wholeness" when things repressed within the collective unconscious become available to the conscious self. Full development of the self is not attained by individuals who live out their lives in the safe confines of luxury. Only those who achieve selfhood attain wholeness and fulfillment. Let us, in the light of Jungian literature, dwell upon the relationship between democracy, leadership, and people's hidden strengths. Carl Jung, underscoring the value psychological factors have in a genuinely functioning democracy, writes in his book, "Essays on Contemporary Events", "True democracy is a highly psychological institution which takes account of human nature as it is and makes allowances for the necessity of conflict within its own national boundaries." Jung also speaks of the "shadow side of the self". In the shadow, there are many undeveloped strengths. Jung says, "Most of the shadow is solid gold." And he adds, "It is surely better to know your

worst enemy is right there in your own heart." This concept has been utilised by theorists dealing with models of leadership, leading to the concept of integral leadership, which can cope with issues amid complexity. An integral leader has a larger vision of the welfare of all, including global issues. Servant Leadership is a vital requirement for such leadership, where the leader becomes a servant of the whole. This leads me to the arena of leadership, particularly in the context of India.

Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi considers himself

a "Pradhan Sevak", whose visionary qualities have enabled the creation of platforms for synergistic and systematic solutions to emerge in various areas: be it economic, social, cultural, motivational, or international. This includes the abolition of Article 370, handling issues in the northeast region, tackling the menace of black money, focusing on investment strategies, reaching out to marginalised strata of society, digitisation, managing the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath, and equally importantly, awakening old cultural ethos and values.

cultural ethos and values. Prime Minister Modi has realised that the enemy is not only external but also within us. The best leaders are endowed with the capability to confront the unacknowledged or semi-acknowledged aspects of the collective unconscious and address them effectively. Such leaders are best suited to lead the transformation of historically inherited, complex problems like the ones mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Undoubtedly, Prime Minister Modi is such a leader. When Jung asserts, "Most of the shadow is solid gold," he suggests that the rejected material bequeathed to the shadow is a strength we possess, but we neither know we have it nor do we accept it. When a leader like Narendra Modi, through ĥis creative leadership, enables people to harvest the shadow, he helps them reclaim those disowned, forgotten strengths. He enables people to achieve Jungian 'wholeness.' This is enormously empowering, as people free and develop additional gifts and strengths sequestered within the collective unconscious. Not only has Prime Minister Modi gained insight into the collective unconscious of people, but he has also managed the collective outpouring with charismatic competencies. When Jung asks, "Where are the superior minds capable of reflection today?", he essentially searches for great leaders capable of successfully establishing a "collaboration between the conscious and the unconscious." This also activates catharsis, which serves as an antidote. I think of the following example. In the very first episode of the programme "Mann Ki Baat", after saying, "We have forgotten ourselves. We have become hopeless," Prime Minister Narendra Modi began a voyage into the collective unconscious by recounting what Swami Vivekananda used to say "Once, a lioness with her two cubs spotted a flock of sheep. She chased the flock with one cub accompanying her and the other left behind. The cub left behind was reared by a mother sheep. Growing up among the sheep, he started speaking the language of sheep and

adapted to their ways of life. When the fully grown cub

reunited with his brother, who had been left behind, he

was shocked to hear him speak like a sheep. 'What are

IN THE INTRICATE TAPESTRY OF LEADERSHIP, PRIME
MINISTER NARENDRA MODI EMERGES AS A MASTER
WEAVER, SKILFULLY INTERTWINING JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY
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LABYRINTH OF INDIA'S COMPLEX HISTORY AND CULTURAL
IDENTITY, MODI'S LEADERSHIP BECOMES A BEACON OF HOPE,
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AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE

you doing, brother? You are a lion," he said. But the brother left behind refused to believe, 'No, I am a sheep; I speak like a sheep. I was brought up by them.' The lion took his brother to a well, and both of them saw their reflection in the water. As soon as the lion saw the similarity of their faces, his selfesteem awakened, and he realised his true nature." Having narrated this, the Prime Minister said, "My fellow countrymen, we, the 125 crore Indians, have tremendous strength and capabilities. We need to understand ourselves, carry our self-respect, and move forward in life to be successful, which will make our country a winning and successful nation."

This is how Prime Minister Modi's "superior mind, capable of reflection," began the exploration into the collective unconscious, thereby stirring, through such motivating speeches, a mass movement. In the first episode itself, glimpses of addressing the collective unconscious and catharsis are noticed, both intended to bring about positive change in individuals' and collective lives. Such leadership has the effect of integrating compensatory moves of the unconscious into consciousness in an individual. This integration of unconscious contents by individuals leads to a greater understanding and knowledge of self and society. This is a very important psychological contribution of Prime Minister Modi to the strengthening of Indian democracy and making India's contribution to world affairs unique. Now, India's voice at the international level is not

only heard but also respected. Last but not least, let me briefly address the restoration of cultural issues.

Let me turn to yet another highly celebrated book of Jung: The Undiscovered Self, where he explains his vision about the relationship between religion and the unconscious thus, "...the unconscious is the only accessible source of religious experience. This is certainly not to say that what we call unconscious is identical with god or is set up in his place. It is a medium from which the religious experience seems to flow." The Jungian view has relevance in the context of what ensued after independence in 1947.

Somnath temple was renovated, and Hindus were overwhelmed with a sense of pride. History was badly in need of correction, and the renovation of Somnath temple introduced this correction. Similar discussions to rebuild the Ram temple at Avodhva could have taken place, and historical wrongs corrected. But then politics assumed a different colour. The policy of appeasement became fashionable. Instances like the removal of the idol of Lord Ram or the halting of the rath train in Bihar or further ordering of police firing on car sevaks, in which many were killed, deeply wounded the collective unconscious of Hindus. The idea of "India: A Wounded Civilization" had sunk deep into the collective unconscious. Hindus deserve full praise and honour for their magnanimous and accommodating attitude in the face of adversaries and the ignominy caused to them

due to appeasement policies. Addressing

collective agony began when Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, and his unceasing meditation on historical ironies (for example, Article 370), in any field, has singularly contributed to not only dismantling what went wrong earlier but also timely correction of many such wrongs. Restoring cultural heritage to the country has been one of the most important contributions of Prime Minister Modi. The construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya after five centuries of struggle and suffering, along with the Pran Pratishtha ceremony of the Ram Temple, is a moment of catharsis not only for Hindus but also for all right-thinking individuals. Catharsis has served as a cure, relieving people of the psychological burden of accumulated agony and anguish. India is now a psychologically much more mature country, as people have unwavering confidence in their leader Narendra Modi; they feel they are in safe hands, and thus they are psychologically much more secure and

The best way to conclude this article is to reproduce some lines from Narendra Modi's poem "Dawn of Wonder" from his book of poems "A Journey": Now there is no story of sorrow or grief, No mourning, no more to torment. The storm has gone far away, And amid the sky's huge spread, Thorny crises forever banished, As dazzling hopes are born and set free. A brave dawn, time for glee. We keep the faith of 'Ram' in our hearts, There is no occasion for melancholy. A brave dawn, a time to be free. These lyrical musings constitute a sure guarantee from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for more prosperous and brighter times ahead, not only for India but also for the world. It is not just India; even the globe

Minister after the 2024 national elections.

(The writer is former Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General. He is a poet, writer and columnist. He writes for The Pioneer, The Daily Guardian and Brazilian Literary Magazine SIBILA. Views expressed here are his personal views)

requires Narendra Modi as the Prime

# A fresh look at two Asian Tigers

Ramachandaran looks past the current stalemate in relations to suggest that the "two tigers" on "one mountain" (meaning Asia) should try to get along via better economic relations, says SATARUPA BHATTACHARJYA

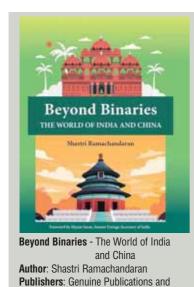
hastri Ramachandaran's Beyond Binaries - The World of India and is a broad China brushstroke of topics, from Chinese domestic events such as the fall of the former Communist Party official Bo Xilai, the earlier one-child policy and traditional Chinese medicine to the Indian government's handling of a visa application of a Uyghur activist wanted in China.

The book is an ambitious attempt for the long period it covers. The Indian journalist offers snapshots of major goings-on in one of the world's complex relationships over 2008-22 and seeks to shed light on decisionmaking within the Indian establishment, especially of the

Sino-Indian relations worsened after clashes in the Galwan River valley killed soldiers from both sides in 2020, disturbing the border peace managed since the 1962 war, barring an incident of bloodshed in 1975.

The book's strength lies in its title. It is often through a binary lens of right and wrong or rich and poor that at least a section of the population in India and China seems to form an understanding of each other's country. At times, some media-promoted and thinktank-assisted views influence the international understanding of the India-China relationship.

Written in an easy-to-read manner the nearly 300-page book includes Ramachandaran's articles and places the material on India-China relations in a chronological order. It adds to the limited number of nonfiction books related to China published by Indians who have lived and worked there over different durations.



sunday magazine the pioneer

agenda

"India has the advantage of being able to choose what is appropriate from the Chinese experience. China has much to profit from partnering with India. It would be serving it own interest by exporting infrastructure projects, setting up manufacturing units and finding a new market of over 1 billion for its companies, projects, products and services. The outcome, to use a phrase the

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thrust between the two countries, the mutual "win-win" that the proposes unrealistic. Ramachandaran looks past the current stalemate in relations to suggest that the "two tigers" on "one mountain" (meaning Asia)

Chinese love, would be a 'win-win'

for both," Ramachandaran writes.

But in the absence of political

economic relations. "China has no option, in the prevalent international climate, but to come to terms with India

should try to get along via better

and create conditions for the two countries to pursue reconciliation in their mutual interest. India, for its part, should deal with China in ways that are more effective. One tried and tested approach that may succeed is for India to deal with China exactly as the US does, and not as Washington advises, wants or pushes New Delhi to do.

"The business of China, like that of America, is business." India's trade deficit with China was \$83.2 billion last year, underscoring the asymmetry of the economic relationship. The author does not downplay the China challenge India faces in its own backyard. He presents a string of major news developments in South Asia in the recent years to highlight the competition for intense influence.

The book's most interesting sections are perhaps on the functioning of the Chinese media. The vast majority of media on the mainland are either controlled or funded by the party-state in China. So, what's it like "to be an expatriate journalist in China", Ramachandaran himself asks. His answer is derived from his own experience, having done stints at English-language Chinese media

His impressions of city life in Beijing and Shanghai - the glitzy malls with "a dazzling explosion of brands" -- lend a soft touch to the bevy of serious issues being discussed. Then there is a travelogue-like description of Tibet's natural beauty and monastic architecture.

The book's theme "binaries" could have been explored further.

The reviewer is an Indian journalist, with a decadelong China experience.

#### WHAT IT IS TO BE AN EXPATRIATE JOURNALIST IN CHINA

#### **EXCERPTS** FROM THE BOOK

orking as a journalist in China's newspapers can be an eye-opening and engaging experience, revealing potential and unforeseen possibilities. Such work, more often than not, is with the state media. To make the most of the situation, it is necessary to leave behind a lifetime's preconceptions and prejudices. For all the media restrictions in China, remain unexplored possibilities and spaces. The boundaries can be pushed a bit further, and tested. You never know how far you can go unless

My life as an expatriate journalist in Beijing began with *China Daily*-the country's first and oldest English daily. It is the official, government newspaper published by the State Council Information Office of China (SCIO), a department of the Information Ministry. The editorin-chief (EiC) is said to enjoy the rank of vice premier, with all the powers of that office barring the one that allows issue of visas. In his first circle of power are deputy editors-in-chief, though the designation could be anything.

Title, authority, power, functions and responsibility are not necessarily matched as we know them to be in India, in the world of Anglo-American journalism or in the Continent. Beneath this layer are a large number of assistants to the EiC, and the day and night editors.

A notch above, but below the first

on the day/night editors and the assistants.

These ubiquitous assistants are the eyes and ears of the EiC and, perhaps, of the government, the party and the state, too. Some view them as competent editors and tested journalists who should not be trifled with merely because of their unflattering designation and unassuming disposition. Others see these assistants, at best, as factotums; and, at worst, as sheepdogs, who keep the flock, including expats (also called 'foreign experts'), from 'straying'; or, falling prey to journalistic practices for which *China Daily* has little use. Doubtless, among the assistants, are good and bad

your computer during the working day or night. They don't miss a trick. Rare is the expat who can give them the slip. They have at their command loyalist expats who do their every bidding, against their own countrymen. Servitude to these assistants is the

surest way to survive and succeed-as 'successful' expats, including from India, learned early on. These expats jealously guard their position by keeping out other countrymen of theirs, unless these newcomers are willing to become as, if not more, abject as them in their 'performance'. The expat's journalistic competence does not decide his or her place and role in China Daily. Yet this paper provides the best package of pay and perquisites and looks after its

rung, are editors who keep an eye If you are free of notions of journalism acquired elsewhere, carry out every wish of the Chinese bosses (assistants to the EiC) as your command and feel pleased and privileged to perform like a flea-then you can collect a tidy sum and live it up. Nobody will tell you to your face that you suck; that you are a sly and sleazy lowlife; and that your 'success' (as a survivor) is because you, as the factotum's pup, are a trusty doormat. The fault lies not in those at the helm of China Daily-who are preoccupied with so much elsebut those lower down: the expats at the bottom, who rank low and stoop lower though they draw a higher pay than the Chinese at

guys.

The assistants keep track of everything-including what you have written, edited, done on have written, edited, done on have less than China Daily. Yet, pays less than *China Daily*. Yet, Xinhua is the acme of achievement for the Chinese, and the expat here is a contented soul with the job not straining his self-respect. Xinhua's brand of journalism may be alien, but s/he gladly does a job (editing text/copy, which does not call for his kind of journalistic values or judgment) to the institution's satisfaction.

The expat has no complaint against Xinhua's culture (as an organisation, not as a media/ journalism entity). The hours are shorter, there is more leave, a paid annual holiday, good cafeterias and, as a US journalist said, no pressure to "perform like a flea". There is enough time for other pursuits-research, writing books, learning Chinese, exploring China and all things Chinese and such-and a great personal and family life. Xinhua may be an institution of state, but unlike other media biggies, it is a rule-maker. The pay is a shade lower than in China Daily, from where many expats moved to Global Times. They feel the pay cut is well worth the shift. Often praised as the Fox News of China, Global Times is young, and has a robust journalistic air about it. The editors are visible, accessible, hands-on and in close daily working contact with the staff. It may be subject to the same limitations as China Daily and other Chinese media outlets, but it does not let the restrictions and opacity kill the buzz about the place.

I had a terrific time in Global Times. Most expats tend to assume censorship restrictions even where they do not exist. Expat colleagues told me that the signed editorial comment space was strictly for the Chinese to articulate what the bosses order. That may be true nine out of ten times, but there's the one-tenth chance at which you can take a shot. I did and was surprised that they welcomed my piece-on a topic at the centre of Chinese politics. I had pulled no punches, but the editors who keep an eagle eye against transgressions, said I was not critical enough-the subject called for sharper criticism. Expats are so keen on their byline and, at the same time, wanting to please that most of them end up writing superficial, touristy and 'lifestyle' pieces. Rare is the expat who has not written about negotiating his

**BY SHYAM SARAN,** Former Foreign Secretary of India

Despite the fact that of writings on Chinese relating these to his own China is the most foreign policy and its deep familiarity with the no important current challenge

modernity over the past four decades. There is a plethora

security orientation, but for India and is likely to these lack depth because the remain so for the foreseeable overall context of the future, there is a surprising country's history and culture purposely use the phrase lack of well-researched and the nature of its polity, is China "challenge" rather the country, its history and Ramachandaran culture, the temperament of achieved through its people and the drivers of collection of writings the remarkable between 2008 and 2022-transformation that has Beyond Binaries: The World taken place in the country in of India and China-is to its frenetic dash to offer a uniquely Indian perspective on China in its different dimensions and

less impressive changes that have taken place in India during the same period. I much that India may learn from the Chinese experience in charting its own trajectory, avoiding its mistakes but benefiting from its notable successes. Despite the current tensions in the

India-China relationship, author has done well to draw the author keeps his focus on the opportunities which of the India-China story. collaborate in a number of recounting mutually beneficial ways. "threat", because there is and management methods could turbo-charge India's own quest for world-class infrastructure. The scale of the market India offers, and a scale that is rapidly expanding, could be a significant opportunity for Chinese companies. The

attention to this brighter side exist for the two countries to I found the author's studies of India and China, the experiences working in Chinese capital and its Chinese media some of the book. He presents a much economic weight is still more nuanced, a much more expanding. China is the varied picture of China, one second-largest economy in that tempers the image of a the world, India is already monolith that is current the today. This is a diverse projected to reach the status country and behind the uniformity that its Leninist state aspires to, the Chinese

people often refuse to fall in coming years is important line, even if they pretend to. fifth-largest and of being the third largest fairly soon. How their relationship evolves over the

not only for the two There are few comparative countries but for the rest of world. Shastri despite the obvious Ramachandaran must be parallelisms. They are the complimented for offering a obvious Ramachandaran must be two most populous countries deeper and more balanced modernity is changing their societies, the aspirations of their people and the world view of their leaders. These are civilisational states and continue to provide the prism through which they

perceive and interact with the world around them, shaping it in ways that are not yet clear. Thanks to the author we have a clearer picture of the emerging contours. This is a book that policy analysis and policy

(This article is the Foreword to Shastri Ramachandaran's book, Beyond Binaries: The World of India and China, published by Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi. January 2024).

#### **By Kumar Chellappan**

rhen Bharat Ratna LK Advani, the former deputy
Prime Minister, was
requested by Chennai based Center
for Policy Studies in 2003 to write the foreword for the pathbreaking volume Religious Demography of India, he quoted Augustus Comte, the French philosopher and sociologist who had said that Demography is Destiny. Advani, while explaining the theory of Comte, said that growth and decline of populations and changes in the relative balance between various groups in a population play a crucial role in the rise and fall of nations and even civilizations. "That's why active and alert societies, especially of the modern times, keep a keen eye on the changing demographic trends within themselves as well as everywhere else in the world," Advani wrote in his foreword. The former statesman, once rated as

the natural successor to Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister, is known for his sharp observations and erudition. He was speaking from hands-on experience as well as world history. India, once a 100 per cent Hindu nation, was plundered, looted and subjected to some of the worst genocides by Islamic and European invaders. The last three to four centuries saw the Hindu population coming down in India even as the share of Muslim and Christian populations making giant strides. Despite their best efforts, the Islamist invaders and Christian colonizers could convert hardly 30 per cent of the native population to their religions and beliefs. Though India is a free democracy, efforts by

# A mission to dismantle India

Though India is a free democracy, efforts by the agents of Abrahamic religions are still on to "cleanse" the country of Sanatana Dharma, a way of life which has sustained the sub-continent till now

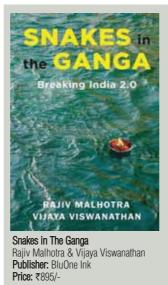
the agents of Abrahamic religions are still on to "cleanse" the country a pathbreaking book authored by of Sanatana Dharma, a way of life which has sustained the subcontinent till now. The turmoil in North-East and Kashmir, are proof of the on going efforts by the proselytizers to balkanize India and they are abeted and aided by the extreme left wing radicals (Maoists). Besides armaments and persuasions, these religions resort to all kinds of measures to plant crosses and build mosques across

Strangely enough, these anti-national elements are portrayed as angels by the left-leaning and secular intellectuals and media for whom everything against India is a hot commodity. There is no need to elaborate about the international consortium of seminar-cocktail network, the agenda of which is nothing other than spreading canards against India throughout the world. Their one and only mission is to dismantle India.

A massive operation is underway across India by the cabal of secularliberal intellectuals employing all methods for dismantling India. It is in this context I came across the term Wokeism. For a person spending the sunset years in a rural area in Kerala's Perumbavoor, Wokeism was an alien term and it

a pathbreaking book authored by US based Indologist Rajiv Malhotra and Vijaya Viswanathan I heard more about this phenomenon. Prof R Vaidyanathan, former professor of finance, IIM, Bangalore had been cautioning the people of the country through his speeches and writings about the mission to dismantle India since a long time, Prof Vaidyanathan in his foreword to Snakes in the Ganga gave an idea about Critical Race Theory (another name for Wokeism) and this has been elaborated with facts by Rajiv Malhotra in the book. The Communists, the Jihadis and

the Maoists/ Extreme Left Wing ideologists had tried to destroy democracy as it is practiced in India. They do not like to see a progressed India and are obsessed with creating anarchy throughout the sub- continent. If the initial phase of post-independent India was influenced by the Lefts as well as evangelists, new forces joined the mission to speed up the process of demolishing the concept of India. The art and literary world was usurped by Communist agents and evangelists. The influence wielded by them despite the change of government at the Centre in 2014 is unbelievable. The Sahitya Academy awards are given to the trumpet



blowers of the Lefts as well as the proselytizers. The Sahitya Academy organizational structure can never be touched by the present day Government and only writers sponsored by the CPI(M) walk away with the annual honors, The Academy awards are reserved for those who abuse the Sanatan Dharma as well as the age-old Indian knowledge system. Isnt it surprising to note that the likes of Perumal Murugan, Hareesh,

Bennyamin and K P Ramanunni walk away with the Academy awards though their works do not come anywhere near the classical works of the pre-independence

In earlier days, we saw countries getting disappeared from the face of the earth and new nations coming into existence once they are occupied by colonialists. The military alone decided the fate of the occupied land. Now, physical might of the occupiers are supplemented by the demolition of the occupied area's heritage, history, tradition and civilization. Once you wipe out the history of the annexed land and indoctrinate the inhabitants that they are an uncivilized and uncouth lot of illiterates, the occupied forces could drive the last nail on its coffin. Scholars like Rajiv Malhotra and Vaidyanathan exhort the population of India to be warry of the efforts by forces inimical to India through their writings and

speeches.
The soldiers guarding the borders of the nation are doing their job with dedication and devotion. But they are helpless in guarding the time-tested culture, heritage and tradition of the great country. The modus operandi employed by anti-

India forces are myriad and

innovative. Universities in USA and Europe have devised strategies to subvert the great Indian culture. The easiest way to make us look like fools is by vanquishing the superiority enjoyed by India in arts, culture and heritage. Wendy Doniger, a US based historian wrote "Hindus-An Alternative History" belittling everything India. Dinanath Batra, based in Gujarat, sought documentary proof for the claims made by Doniger. The publisher chose the easy way out by withdrawing the book from the market lest they knew they would be slapped with charges under the Indian Penal Code. Though this happened in 2011, Doniger's comrades blame the Modi Government and RSS for the withdrawal of the book.

These are all part of Wokeism and readers get a panoramic view of the reality from the two books Snakes In The Ganga and Woke Inc(authored by Vivek Ramaswamy). While India was always the target pf attack by forces which have Harvard University as epicenter, Woke Inc is the first of its kind book on what is happening in corporate and academic USA. Yes, US is a target of the Dismantling US forces. Vivek Ramaswamy, who

authored this book before he made

it known that he would be running

for the 2024 Presidential race, has done a stunning work by articulating the happenings in the USA and that too with examples. Himself a member if the Corporate USA, Ramaswamy was taken aback by the greed and evil designs of a cartel of forces which want to

subjugate the US.
Indians who are worried about the future of India should understand the style of operation of the anti-India forces. Though the British had launched the mission to bury India once and for ever much earlier, it reached its zenith in March 1945 with the appointment of Louis Mountbatten as the last viceroy of undivided India. His credentials? In his previous avatar, he had "successfully" vivisected Indonesia and handed over the same to Portugal and Netherlands. He also demolished the War Memorial of Indian National Army at Singapore with the intention of liquidating the memories of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose from the face of the earth. ((Jammu Kashmir: Dilemma of Accession by Radha Rajan). The time has come for nationalists

to be aware of these happenings. It is really sad that our cultural icons are either ignorant or keep quiet about these details. In an interaction with Tapasya, a socio cultural organization launched by RSS leader M A Krishnan, I asked the delegates (all office bearers of the outfit) whether they are aware of the book "Me, A Bharateeya" authored by K K Mohammed, the archaeologist who was a member of the team that discovered the existence of Lord Rama Temple at Ayodhya. None of them was aware of the existence of such a book. These are the guardians of our



# **Grim outlook for Russia-Ukraine conflict**

R ussia's invasion of Ukraine completed two years last week even as the world is witnessing it silently. This conflict is affecting not only Europe and Eurasia but the entire world. However, there is no sign of hope for now. If recent history is the correct

guide, one must remember that Russia's assault on Ukraine began a decade ago when Russia occupied Crimea, the southern peninsula of Ukraine, in 2014. Initially, when the conflict began, the Russian operation was a reconnaissance in force, preceded by the rapid destruction of Ukrainian forces and their armed installations.

However, neither Putin nor Zelenskyy could gauge that this war would last so long. Many, like US General Mark Milley, prophesied that Ukraine might fall within three days, but for the past two years, the country has survived and fought bravely against the advancing Russian Army.

Now the question arises: can NATO and the US help Ukraine win the war against Russia? So far, NATO has scrambled to pull out all its resources to give a tough fight to Russia, though there are differences among its own

All member states have

already offered their weapons, expert support, money, and other supplies to Kiev to fight Moscow. On the other hand, Putin stands alone, though countries many supporting Russia in stealth. So far, Russia has been punished with the most severe economic sanctions ever imposed on a major world power after the Second

World War.

By now, Russia has been completely excluded from global financial transactions. Moreover, about 222 billion pounds of its central bank assets have already been frozen. At the same time, Russia has also imposed sanctions and restrictions on many Western agencies and high-profile personalities.

According to estimates from



plummeted by 7 per cent compared to the pre-war days. Some experts on Russian politics suggest that after 35 years since the fall of the historic Berlin Wall, one of the remnants of the Cold War in Europe, Russia is facing an economic crisis that may push the erstwhile superpower into unprecedented situation worse than its neighbours, like Estonia, Latvia, Poland,

and Hungary. Only Putin and his inner circle know how they are managing the current crisis. Despite presenting a united front against Moscow, NATO and the US remain divided or rather, they are wavering together — on the issue of Ukraine's entry into the security bloc. This has complicated their complete financial and military support for this battered country to date. Currently, the European Union has voted for a \$54 billion multi-year assistance package to Ukraine, and individual support from

Fund, Russia's GDP has UK, France, and Germany is assured to Zelenskyy.

However, opinion in the US Congress is divided on the country's overseas engagement, especially in wars, conflicts, and other sensitive missions. Thus, a \$60 billion package for Ukraine has been stalled in Congress. It is wellunderstood that US security agencies and experts are now focusing their attention on the Israel-Hamas Taiwan, and its continued border row with Mexico, through which millions of migrants cross over to the country from poor and disadvantaged countries in Central and South America.

Another problem diverting the attention of major Ukraine backers, especially the US, from the current onslaught is the ongoing Israel-Hamas war that started on October 7, 2023.

The US is seriously engaged in this conflict in West Asia. The manner in which Israel is advancing and destroying the International Monetary powerful members like the Palestinian territories and

civilians in the name of rooting out Hamas militants is shocking. Even Washington is appalled by the civilian casualties that have occurred so far. However, the Israeli government, under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, shows no signs of

relenting, as it is determined

to vanquish Hamas and its

firepower. This situation is disturbing and is causing more unrest and civilian casualties in all Palestinian territories. Consequently, this crisis is making it increasingly difficult for Biden to focus more on Putin and his

advances in Ukraine. The recent Munich Security Conference (MSC), a yearly gathering of politicians, diplomats, military brass, and intelligence chiefs Germany, was alerted by the faltering advances of Kiev and the tactical gains made by Moscow. With the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from the eastern city of Avdiivka, NATO and its allies are quickly considering all

alternatives to prevent

aggressive Russian military action on the battlefield. Meanwhile, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg warned that Europe can't deter Russia without US help.

He said, "I welcome all efforts by Canada and European allies, but the most important single decision is a decision of the US to agree to a package of support, because of the magnitude and the military capabilities of the US. We are dependent on the US...it is vital."

This is a trying time as the US and some major global powers like India are all approaching their national elections. Most importantly, the chances of Donald Trump returning to the White House for a second term are causing mounting disquiet among NATO members.

Because Trump, with all his rhetoric, "Make America Great Again," and a possible review of overseas funding to many top global agencies including NATO, might be an unimaginable disaster for Ukraine and its allies in Europe.

The battle between the two neighbours is still raging, with no end in sight. Neither Zelenskyy nor Putin is blinking, even though they may be sending signals for negotiation; the demands and conditions set by both sides are not acceptable to either. The bottom line is clear-both Ukraine and Russia want to continue the chaos at the cost of their own people and resources!

Moscow's wall of aggression may only fall when the US and its NATO allies join the war. This is a near-impossible task for now because everyone wants to avoid a large-scale military confrontation with Russia. The result of such aggression would be disastrous and would impact both sides.

By the end of March last year, after completing one year of the Ukraine offensive, Putin met with his high Security Council. He told the Council that Russia has a "unique historical mission," and his elite and powerful policymakers were well aware and of this mission.

The Kremlin then adopted a new "foreign policy doctrine" that identified the US as the "main source of threat to Russian security". This war has given Putin enough opportunity to gather a wide spectrum of Russian people against the West, particularly targeting America.

This week, the Kremlin warned that a Russia-NATO conflict would be inevitable if European members of the organisation start sending their troops to the Ukrainian battlefield.

At the beginning of this week, French President Emmanuel Macron opened the door for European nations to send their forces to Ukraine, though there was no consensus on the issue so far. At the moment, the European allies of Ukraine are only in favour of delivering more munitions to the war-ravaged nation, but the UK Ministry of Defence has clearly stated that it has no plans to send its troops to Ukraine, a similar stance expressed by Germany, Poland, the Czech

Republic, and finally by

Stoltenberg as well. This indeed is a great relief for the entire region, as such steps would immediately

trigger a big war on the

Russia's tactics, strategy, and

continent.

action since the beginning of the war have undergone several changes. During these two years of war, Moscow has replaced its generals, Defence Ministers, and ground commanders both to spring more surprise actions, stay in the course for the long haul, and finally for bringing home the image of war heroes who have been on the frontline. Putin is sharp, action-oriented, and aggressive. His goal is to reclaim the glory of the Russian Empire. But this war, by now, is largely marked by attrition. Both sides are looking for an immediate solution to end the war, but the way they are advancing is

Today, the real concern in Europe is that the continent is once again militarised like never before. The Trans-Atlantic security framework, NATO, is not facing any potential threat for now. Rather, it is emboldened by the joining of two new members to the network, Finland and Sweden, which has extended NATO's border with Russia.

making any peace deal near

impossible.

What is worrying is that the EU and NATO are solely dependent on the security guarantee of the US. they Otherwise, Russian vulnerable to aggression. This is an advantage for Putin, but this time around, Ukraine and Europe have once again come

together against Russia. It is a bad time. Trouble is just beginning. The Kremlin needs to understand that there is a limit to war and violence in Ukraine. Putin cannot take over the whole of Ukraine even if he wants to. Crimes and atrocities committed by the armed forces from both sides must come to an end. It is time to talk and practice peace!

(The writer is currently President of the Global Research Foundation)

**Neither Putin nor** Zelenskyy could gauge that this war would last so long. Many, like the US **General Mark** Milley, prophesied that Ukraine might fall within three days, but for the past two years, the country has survived and fought bravely against the advancing Russian Army. Now the question arises: Can NATO and the **US** help Ukraine win the war against Russia? So far, NATO has scrambled to pull out all its resources to give a tough fight to Russia, but there are differences among its own



members

MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE -

# Congress faces insurmountable challenges

Kharge's critique of Modi's personal quarantee for welfare scheme implementation is baseless. While taxpayers money can be misused, Modi's assurance ensures their proper use and delivery to deserving recipients, safeguarding against fraud and ensuring effective utilisation



**BK SINGH** 

Karnataka Assembly election handsomely, the Congress party is on the back foot regarding their prospects in the forthcoming Lok Sabha poll. Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra took a six-day break on February 25 after reaching Agra in Uttar Pradesh. He resumed it after his return from Cambridge and has been continuing towards the western part of the country, with the journey set to conclude in Mumbai. The Yatra has already covered the northeastern States, Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, where Rahul addressed supporters, making personal attacks on PM Modi, questioning him about the state of the economy, unemployment, inflation, hate, and spreading institutions.

Besides the JMM and the RJD supporting the Yatra in Jharkhand and Bihar, the only other INDIA Bloc member who joined it was the SP's Akhilesh Yadav, albeit only at Agra during its last leg of the Uttar Pradesh tour. Rahul took another day off from the Yatra and participated in the where RJD leaders again targeted PM Modi.

Karnataka organised the "Constitution and National

Pre-poll surveys suggest Bengaluru on February 24-that despite winning the 25. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah invited academician Nitasha Kaul, a faculty member at the University of Westminster, United Kingdom, as a delegate for the convention. She is known for her anti-India propaganda. Kaul has roots in India and is an OCI cardholder. Of course, the Government of India had issued a preventive lookout circular against her. Her proseparatist and anti-India role is evident from her written testimony to the US House of Representatives committee two months after the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. She called the Indian Parliament's action undemocratic for the people of Kashmir. In her addresses and writings, she refers to it as "Indianadministered Kashmir". undermining democratic Moreover, she justifies

terrorism there as an armed struggle for freedom and consistently denies the genocide of Kashmiri pundits. Pakistan's ISI has constantly amplified her statements and writings and used them against India. She was rightfully deported from Bengaluru airport.

The denial of entry to an INDIA Bloc rally at Patna, Indian-origin professor at the airport has triggered a political slugfest. The Congress has criticised it, citing concerns over individuals' rights and the Unity Convention 2024" in autonomy of the state. They

have further questioned the state of democracy in India, respect for constitutional values, and freedom of speech. In contrast, the BJP criticised Congress's move to invite an anti-India propagandist for the convention and further supporting sympathisers of the "tukde tukde" gang. I leave it to the readers to judge whether we should waste the State's funds and invite proseparatist supporters for any convention anywhere in

The convention was attended by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, among others. While speaking at the valedictory function, Kharge attacked the BJP and PM Modi, saying that there are efforts to amend the Constitution to suit the saffron party. He added that people should stand together and fight it out during the Lok Sabha election, and also warned that if the people do not fight it, we will soon see a dictatorial regime.

"In public, Modi speaks of protecting the constitution and its spirit, but his government uses agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to target opposition voices," Kharge said. Karnataka CM also urged the people to defeat BJP in forthcoming elections, lest the constitution, social justice, and equality in society would be compromised. The convention was not held

the Lok Sabha 2024 polls for the INDIA Bloc. The bloc is Dal (United) has already moved out of it and joined the share seats with other constituents of the INDIA Bloc; the AAP and the Congress have not announced seat sharing for 13 seats in Punjab. When constituents of the bloc are in has disarray and pre-poll surveys suggest a massive mandate in favor of the BJP-led NDA, the Congress has to use all tactics and spread false narratives against a government in office for ten years. The proincumbency wave in favour of the ruling party has made the Opposition rattled and hide behind such meaningless conventions. is there proincumbency? India is the

fastest-growing developing economy, and post-COVID, amid the Russian invasion in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war, the country stands as the only bright spot in the world economy. Under the ten years of BJP rule, we have progressed from being part of the "fragile five" and the 11th largest economy to becoming the 5th largest. Modi's guarantee is that we will rise to the third largest economy in his third term. To compare this with the Opposition's vision, it should

to save the Constitution but be noted that the UPA's was an election campaign for Finance Minister in 2013-14 had projected that we would reach this position in a 30no longer united, as the Janata year period, i.e., by 2044. Civil and digital infrastructures have flourished during the NDA. The TMC is refusing to NDA's ten-year tenure, showing greater speed and scale compared to the UPA's decade in power. This has undoubtedly contributed to better economic growth. The use of digital infrastructure facilitated social connectivity and put an end to the era of leakages from government funds intended for beneficiaries. When there was a need to

develop infrastructure and boost the economy, 2G and 3G scams were perpetrated. Similarly, when efforts were made to modernise infrastructure for the country, the Commonwealth Games scam was orchestrated. And when we aimed to strengthen defense infrastructure, submarine and helicopter scams occurred. Members of the INDIA Bloc are decrying the actions of the ED and CBI, labelling them as vendetta politics, while turning a blind eye to large

Chhattisgarh,

recruitment in West Bengal,

telecom sports cash seizures, breakdowns of cash counting machines, and compelling evidence pointing to scams such as the liquor scandal in Delhi, the annually to each of the 11.68 Mahadev App scam in teachers' crore families in the country,

and the land-for-job scam of dedication to the RJD. Modi is fulfilling his marginalised and deprived have looted the country

accountable. Our progress in creating infrastructure for the transition to renewable energy is advancing at a pace faster than what was committed to in the Paris Climate Accord of 2015. Additionally, when considering the electrification of the entire country, it must be acknowledged that reaching remote villages poses significant challenges, particularly in extending transmission lines to every household. While we may have completed about 90 per cent of the electrification job before 2014, the remaining 10 per cent presents the most formidable obstacles. Nevertheless, the government has now successfully electrified all villages and households across the nation. Moreover, without any discrimination based on caste, creed, or religion, the government is steadfast in its commitment to providing piped water to all citizens. Similarly, initiatives such as the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, which offers health coverage of up to ₹5 lakh annually per family, and the Kisan Samman Yojana, providing ₹6000 in cash support

exemplify the government's

duty by holding those who communities. Other schemes include providing free rations to 800 million beneficiaries for the next five years and constructing four crore houses for impoverished families. These efforts underscore the government's commitment to social justice and equality. Farmers, as providers of food

(Annadata), are being supported by government schemes aimed transforming them into energy providers (Urjadata) through the installation of solar panels on farmlands, as well as into fertilizer providers (Urvarakdata) through the composting of biodegradable waste. If this is not social justice and equality, then what is? Congress chief Kharge's

criticism regarding how Modi can personally guarantee the implementation of welfare schemes funded by taxpayers' money is unwarranted. Taxpayers' money could indeed be misappropriated for fraudulent activities, but Modi's guarantee ensures the proper utilisation of funds, the implementation of welfare schemes, and their delivery to deserving families.

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



























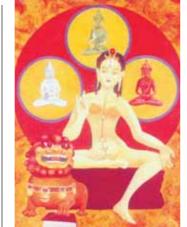




#### ARIES March 21-April 19

Currently, life is progressing favorably, with a significant aspiration coming true, enhancing harmony at home. Celebrate this joyfully, but be aware of a tendency to guard against deep emotions to avoid pain. Midweek brings a chance for closer family bonds and a period ripe with blessings, urging you to embrace fulfillment and peace. Address any family discord to rebuild harmony. By week's end, expect a meaningful reward, prompting spiritual and charitable actions. Your generosity not only secures your well-being but also allows you to share your abundance with others, fostering a cycle of giving and contentment. This period is also a reminder to open your heart to the beauty of simple moments and the strength found in unity, guiding you towards a path of emotional and spiritual

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Mauve Lucky day Monday



#### **LEO** July 23-Aug 22

Life is set for a rollercoaster of changes, swapping good phases with challenging ones and vice versa. Financial or business worries may surface, prompting self-doubt, yet you'll find solace in optimism, awaiting outcomes with patience. Expect shifts in work, home, and relationships, marking a period of significant upheaval yet offering a chance for renewal. Embrace these transitions to foster personal freedom and a positive mental state. The urge to connect with others or succeed in new ventures will be strong. Your actions and decisions will critically influence your path forward. With your vibrant, trustworthy nature, and a mix of ambition and humor, you navigate through life's ups and downs, making a memorable impact in both professional and social arenas.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Turquoise Lucky day Thursday



#### **SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

You embody strength, mastering your emotions to unlock nearly limitless possibilities. This week, you navigate a delicate balance between authority and feelings, learning that true control comes from inner discipline. Your ability to steer your own course sets a strong example, making you a reliable source of guidance for those around you. Your insights are valued because you maintain a clear perspective, allowing logic to guide your decisions without being swayed by emotions. As the week closes, you find yourself ignited by a sudden burst of inspiration, leading you towards innovative pursuits. This creative awakening may coincide with the arrival of uplifting news or a joyful family addition, marking the beginning of an exciting

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Teal Lucky day Thursday



#### **TAURUS** April 20-May 20

The week unfolds with the challenge of harmonizing various demands, fostering teamwork, and advancing with a balanced approach. Trust in your capabilities and tackle obstacles headon, equipped with everything necessary to achieve your objectives. Reflect on past experiences of managing multiple responsibilities-friends, work, family, finances, and personal well-being—and recall how you've navigated the timing of action versus pause. Midweek, stay vigilant against misleading pursuits. Be cautious of potential safety hazards at home or work, including the risk of fire, or the possibility of an accident. It's a time for careful inspection and prevention. By the week's close, a sense of fulfillment and contentment emerges. Expect significant financial gains, with investments or business endeavors yielding rewarding outcomes, marking a period of both material and personal achievement.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Magenta Lucky day Wednesday



#### VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

You are on the path to achieving lasting financial stability and material prosperity, with an improvement in your financial situation on the horizon. Unexpected gains possibly through gifts or inheritance, alongside significant personal commitments, are likely. It's essential to adopt a practical approach during this time. The key to success lies in dedication and hard work, rather than indulging in daydreams. To enhance focus and productivity, consider incorporating practices like yoga and meditation into your routine, and be open to adopting new perspectives. As the week concludes, you'll find yourself in a position of leadership and authority, guiding others with confidence and a steady hand. Your ability to lead by example, offer guidance, and ensure stability will make you a respected figure, passing on your knowledge to future generations.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Coral Lucky day Sunday



#### CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

A significant shift is on the horizon, presenting opportunities for favorable outcomes in legal matters or decisions. This period marks a fresh start, allowing you to move forward free from previous obligations and concerns. It's an invitation to leave past challenges behind and embrace a new beginning with optimism. The trials and competitions that once seemed daunting are now behind you, paving the way for a moment of triumph and relief. Recognition for your dedication and effort may soon arrive, affirming your path and efforts. This phase reassures you that your direction has been correct, encouraging you to proceed with confidence and enthusiasm. Your ambitions and diligent work are nearing fruition, promising acknowledgment and celebration from those around you.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Brown Lucky day Saturday



#### **GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week, individuals are filled with desires for prosperity, aesthetic satisfaction, tranquility, a harmonious household, and the well-being of their offspring, aspiring to attain these goals simultaneously. In pursuit of these ambitions, there's a risk of overlooking various obligations, highlighting the importance of finding equilibrium in your endeavors. It's crucial to ground your aspirations in reality, prioritize practicality, and take actionable steps towards making your visions tangible. Adopting a pragmatic stance and utilizing available resources efficiently is advised against getting lost in wishful thinking. As the week progresses, opportunities for financial growth and professional advancement present themselves, including promising business connections, projects, or employment prospects that are likely to be advantageous. However, by the week's end, there's a tendency to prioritize the needs of others over your own, potentially leading to feelings of self-sacrifice.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Marigold Lucky day Saturday



#### LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week heralds a period brimming with opportunities for significant achievements in all facets of life. You find yourself in a robust state, both physically and financially, demonstrating exceptional proficiency in your professional realm. Your comprehensive understanding and application of your career skills are recognized, leading to the assignment of a pivotal project that promises skill enhancement and personal growth. Your determination and resolve are at their peak, enabling you to tackle ambitious goals with ease. This is an opportune time for strengthening friendships, as your confidence and clarity dispel any doubts. Your dedication and resilience serve as a powerful inspiration to your children, positioning you as a commendable role model. They admire your achievements and are guided by the strength of your character, showing you respect and admiration throughout the week

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Lavender Lucky day Saturday



#### **AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

Your ability to communicate effectively captivates everyone, leveraging your eloquence to make an impact. With a foundation of wisdom and confidence, you harness these attributes positively. The moment has arrived to transform your dreams into tangible goals and your ideas into concrete actions, turning aspirations into real-world successes. Should you encounter setbacks, this phase offers a chance to pivot those experiences into victories. Unexpected opportunities for new beginnings might surface, such as forming new connections, welcoming new life, or discovering deeper joy in existing relationships, highlighting moments of emotional renewal. Your empathetic and caring nature naturally seeks harmony, and while your creative and artistic inclinations flourish, they also bring about fluctuating moods, tied to your deep connection with the emotional and spiritual realms.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Mustard Lucky day Friday



#### **CANCER** June 21-July 22

You are entering a period marked by deepening connections, where feelings of closeness and affection are set to flourish. Embrace this time by listening to your intuition and aligning with your inner desires. This phase is ripe for experiencing the joy of new or unconditional love whether it manifests as a significant romantic development a commitment, or the joy of a new beginning. Alongside these developments, you may find yourself engaging more passionately in competitive activities, striving for personal bests. However, challenges in the form of disagreements or intense rivalries could surface, urging the need for compromise and understanding. Striving for equilibrium is key—acknowledge differing perspectives and work towards unity and peace. In doing so, you'll find that harmony can be achieved, even in the face of adversity.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour Indigo Lucky day Tuesday



personified

#### SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you find yourself in a position of both financial gain and emotional satisfaction. Your innate ability to offer support and healing makes you a beacon of comfort for those around you. Your pure heart and appealing essence draw others towards you, enhanced by your deep understanding of human nature and motivations. There's an emerging focus on sharing your riches, embracing both tangible assets and intangible wisdom, with future generations. This sharing could manifest through various means, emphasizing the lasting impact of visdom and guidance. As the week concludes, you experience a profound joy stemming from deep, meaningful connections. The bonds you share with others deepen, promising stability and mutual growth. This period marks a celebration of love and the strengthening of partnerships, highlighting the importance of emotional foundations.

**\_ucky number** 2 | **Lucky colour** Lavender Lucky day Friday

Lord Shiva – Existence



#### PISCES Feb 19-March 20

You're entering a period of genuine joy and fulfillment, having successfully navigated through previous challenges and rivalries. This phase marks the celebration of your achievements, with your efforts gaining widespread appreciation. Whether the acknowledgment is grand or understated, it will undoubtedly be present. This moment also serves as an affirmation that you're moving in the correct direction, though the journey ahead remains extensive. Embark on this path with optimism and assurance. It's also a time to practice financial prudence, ensuring that your expenditures are well-considered and aligned with your long-term objectives. Additionally, embrace the opportunity for personal growth and learning that comes with this new chapter. Let your experiences sharpen your wisdom and guide your decisions, paving the way for continued success and stability.

ucky number 14 | Lucky colour White

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e have just celebrated Mahashivratri this week. For someone not keen about following a specific belief system, the occasion, however, raises a question. Vedanta conceptualises God as formless and attribute-less. Yet we offer prayers to a form-god such as Shiva. Are they not contraindicative? And why is Shiva one of the most sought after? There is no conflict. True, Vedanta hypothesises existence of a formless and attribute-less eternal reality, which spontaneously manifested into a world of names and forms with all its enormity and diversity. It, however, could not have been one stroke event. The process excited by the primal source progressively evolved - step by step - into a very intricate but an orderly system. The system as such includes the primal source, manifest world, and lot of intervening dynamisms propelled by play and interplay of primal energies further aided by differentiated energies evolving in the process. it is important to be aware of such a complex system in place to figure out where and how we fit into this exhaustive game plan. We may then be able to sail through such an intricate

living order, known for throwing fresh challenges every moment along with opportunities it unfolds. The irony, however, is that given the

varying levels of intelligence, and lingual diversity, it is difficult to bring such intricate knowledge within mental comprehension of all. And mere academic awareness would not be enough. The idea needs to be reflected again and again to get firmly registered in the inner realms of mind. Following which, it will spontaneously reflect in our usual conduct. Our Rishis and Munis found an easy answer in symbolic imageries that can find immediate appeal and emotional connect. To lay importance to these imageries, they were accorded the status of deity (form-God). Meditation with focus on these deities helps inculcate values identified with them. It is in this spirit that each deity carries educative inputs offering lessons in different aspects of human conduct. Hence the relevance of offering prayer to form-Gods. Of all the deities, the concept underly-

ing Lord Shiva is the most profound.

For, it not simply offers a look at the

unified picture of the world process,

covering both the seen and unseen sides. Also, it offers lesson in how to relate to the world around. See how beautifully, vital truths relating to worldly existence has been portrayed through two imageries of Lord Shiva. First, Lord Shiva seated in meditative posture on Mount Kailasha, and second with his entourage. Read together, it comes out that Lord Shiva is 'Existence

Personified'. For, the pictures put together cover the primal source, the manifest, intervening dynamisms between the two, and the conduct rules of life on earth plane. In the first imagery Lord Shiva is shown

with lunar crescent over His head. He is perceived almost bare bodied, with just the private part covered with tiger skin. His poison fed blue neck is encircled by venomous snake. River Ganges flows down His hair locks. He is perceived holding a trident in one arm, Damru (double headed hand drum) in another, rosary in the third, and the 4th palm in blessing mode. Lord Shiva's meditative posture symbolises reflecting within on the run of the life cycle. As the rosary keeps going round and round, so does life cycle keeps moving in succession. Different beads of the rosary imply varied existences on the run. The blessing mode implies that all existences draw succour out of his inexhaustible poten-

Mount Kailasha, said to be the place of abode of Lord Shiva, is one of the high peaks in the Himalayan range to which lot of perennial rivers are sourced. Contextually, however, only the river

Ganges alone emerging out of Shiva's hairlock has been named for the sake of understanding. Being one of the highest peaks, it is closest to the cosmic world, simultaneously having all round view of life down below. Lord Shiva, with lunar crescent over the head, read together with his place of abode, the Himalayan range having in store perennial rivers, is symbolic of eternity, infin-

The presence of lunar crescent symbolizes the convergence of all nature driven forces. For, Moon's luminosity is drawn out of the Sun, as well as all the planets and stars up above in the sky. But before all light drawn thus, flows down the line, Moon does its own stamping by turning them into an amiable form, to facilitate creation of form-existences on earth plane. The obvious implication is that Moon symbolises convergence of all nature driven energy streams.

The issue continues......

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