



**OPINION 6**  
CHANGING CONTOURS OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**WORLD 8**  
GUTERRES DECRIES  
VIOLENCE IN MYANMAR

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX, NIFTY REBOUND AS  
RELIANCE, ITC SHARES RALLY

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## Modi highlights women leadership in startups



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the Startup Mahakumbh at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Wednesday

businesses and startups. He praised the youth for getting into new areas. The Prime Minister said the start-ups launched on the policy platforms are reaching new heights today. Indian startups have filed more than 12,000 patents, he said but added that still there are many who have not grasped the significance of going in for patents. Modi exhorted entrepreneurs and innovators to file for patents, given the fast pace at which the world is moving. Modi said there was a time when education meant getting a job, and Government job meant a person is settled. Backed by initiatives like Startup India and Standup India, the nation's youth has proven its mettle, he said. Modi also took potshots at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi saying some in politics need to be repeatedly launched, much unlike startups that move on to other avenues in case one venture does not work out. Without naming anyone, Modi said many people launch startups, while the number is much more in politics. Some "have to be launched repeatedly", he said. Modi exuded confidence of returning to power for a third term in a row and presenting a full Budget for the fiscal year starting April 1, 2024.

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**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said women were leading more than 45 per cent of Indian start-ups and simultaneously India's youth have chosen the path of being job creators and not job seekers. "From less than 100 startups in 2014, India now has 1.25 lakh registered startups, and 12 lakh

youth are directly associated with them. India today is the world's third largest startup ecosystem... We have over 100 unicorns," said the Prime Minister after inaugurating the start-up Mahakumbh at Bharat Mandapam on Wednesday. Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal, Union Ministers of State Anupriya Patel, and Som Prakash were present on the occasion among others.

"India is the third largest startup ecosystem with 1.25 lakh startups involving 12 lakh youth who are directly linked with them," he said. The Prime Minister asked the entrepreneurs to be vigilant about filing their patents quickly. Modi expressed delight that more than 45 per cent of start-ups in the country are women-led, be it education, agriculture or health. GeM portal has provided more than 20,000 crore rupees to



## Centre defends ECs appointment

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Defending the appointment of two new election commissioners (ECs) by a high-level selection panel that excluded the Chief Justice of India, the Centre on Wednesday said the independence of the poll body does not arise from the presence of a member of the judiciary in the selection committee and the pleas just seek to stir up a political controversy on "bare, unsupported and pernicious statements". The affidavit filed by the Legislative Department of the Ministry of Law and Justice before the Supreme Court, refuted the petitioners' claims of executive overreach and encroachment on the Election Commission's autonomy. Retired IAS officers Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu were appointed as the two ECs last week under the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election

Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Terms of Office) Act, 2023. The affidavit was in response to a batch of pleas, including those by Congress leader Jaya Thakur and the Association for Democratic Reforms, challenging the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Terms of Office) Act, 2023. "To indicate, as the petitioners suggest, that selection committees without judicial members, would invariably be biased is wholly incorrect. It is submitted that such an argument would read an implied limitation into the otherwise plenary power of Article 324(2), which is impermissible. "The Election Commissioners have been able to function neutrally and effectively even during the era of full executive discretion in appointment.

Continued on Page 2

## Pragati Maidan tunnel to be closed during night for repair work

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

After much uproar from commuters due to the perennial problem of intense traffic chaos within the 1.3 km long Pragati Maidan tunnel, the administration has finally taken action to rework and repair it. As a result, the tunnel will remain closed during night hours from 12 am to 6 am from April 18 for a month. The tunnel, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2022, will also remain closed for the entire day on March 24, March 31, and April 7. The advisory issued by the Delhi Traffic Police has advised the commuters to take alternative routes to reach their destination during these hours. Ring Road, Bhairon Road and Mathura road may be used as alternative routes, it said. "People who are going towards ISBT/railway stations/airports are advised to carefully plan their travel with sufficient time at hand," said the advisory. This comes after there was a delay in repairing the tunnel, which has been facing multiple closures due to waterlogging since last year's flood. Subsequently, after both the PWD and Larsen and Toubro (L&T), the company behind the tunnel's construction, filed lawsuits and counterclaims against each other regarding the 'irregularities' with the tunnel's construction, a five-member expert committee was formed due to a delay in the suggested total repair of the Pragati Maidan tunnel in Delhi.

Continued on Page 2

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# Governor seeks reports after TMC, BJP men clash

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Both Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose and the District Election Commission of India has sought reports from the district and State police hours after supporters of Union Minister Nishit Pramanik and Bengal Minister Udayan Guha clashed in their presence at Dinhat town in Cooch Behar district injuring a number of persons including the local Dy Superintendent of Police who tried to dissuade the two sides from fighting. The incident took place late on Tuesday evening when Pramanik a local BJP MP was returning from an election campaign. His cavalcade was allegedly attacked by TMC men who too were in the midst of a meeting en route. No one who promoted violence as a means of electioneering should be tolerated, the Governor said

asking the Director General of Police and the District Magistrate to send reports on the incident. "I am waiting for the reports for future action," Bose said. The ECI too asked for a detailed report on the incident from the Cooch Behar DM, sources in the district administration said adding the BJP had lodged complaints against 55 TMC workers for their alleged involvement in the incident. State minister Guha however said that the FIR had been lodged to apprehend and terrorise the TMC workers so as to prevent them from taking part in the campaign. The clashes sparked when Pramanik was reportedly returning from an election programme, sources said. The TMC workers who had assembled at Dinhat Bazar in another programme of Guha alleged pelted stones at Pramanik's cavalcade, saffron



workers said. Pramanik who instantly got off his car and stomped up to the alleged said, "they had attacked first ... it was a planned attack ... they first shouted abuses at us and then pelted stones ... we tried to steer clear of things initially and slipped past their assemblage but soon stones started landing on our vehicles ... even my vehicle was hit ... the cars in the tail of the cavalcade were damaged ... they even hurled bombs ... when I got goo my car to see what was happening they attacked me ... led by their minister ... they are doing so because they know that ground beneath their feet is slipping." Guha however retorted saying the BJP had planned the attack

to create a situation and allow the administration to arrest TMC workers. "It was a planned attack. They, with the help of central forces, got down from the convoy and started attacking the TMC workers and police with bamboo sticks and stones. ... They were shooting arrows at us ... many of us have been injured ... I can show you the arrows they had used in the attack inuring some of our men," he said adding "if the BJP is thinking that they will win the elections like this I will not let that happen and even at this age I will descend on the streets to defend my workers." Though North Bengal is comparatively peaceful than the South Bengal areas Cooch Behar is one specific point where elections are seldom violence-free. In 2021 four people had died in police firing following disturbance on the election day.

# TMC leader house raided by IT

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In yet another embarrassing situation for the Trinamool Congress which has already seen a number of its ministers and MLAs going to jail on charges of a plethora of scams — related to recruitment, ration distribution, chit fund etc — the Income Tax Department officials on Wednesday conducted search raids at the New Alipore residence of Swarup Biswas an influential Trinamool Congress leader and the brother of senior Bengal minister Arup Biswas known for his close proximity to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Residents of a businessman and a builder connected to Biswas was also raided by the I-T sleuths sources said adding they had landed at Biswas' homes pursuing the footprints of some suspicious financial transactions. Both Swarup and his wife Juin

Biswas a TMC spokesperson and a Kolkata Corporation councillor were quizzed by the I-T officials who recovered a number of documents from their house., sources said. Incidentally the Enforcement Directorate had last month issued summons to Arup Biswas in connection with a money laundering case worth Rs 1,900 crore. Earlier the ED had arrested senior Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee for his connection in the school teacher recruitment scam, his Cabinet colleague Jyotipriya Mallick in Rs 10,000 crore ration scam and a number of MLAs and senior officials including a serving vice chancellor of a State-run university shaking the very foundation of the TMC Government and allowing the Opposition parties particularly the BJP to gain a stronger toe-hold in the State politics. Meanwhile in an unrelated development TMC general

secretary Abhishek Banerjee — who on Tuesday earned a much needed reprieve from the Supreme Court against any summons from the ED till July — on Wednesday attacked the BJP for throwing search lights in other persons' houses and ignoring its own dark underbelly. Speaking at a rally at Basirhat on the recent Sandeshkhali incidents that have seen the arrest of local party don and Sheikh Shahjahan in alleged cases of land-grab and sexual assaults Banerjee said how the BJP were raising fingers at the TMC men but were not taking action against their own MPs. They were arresting people like Sheikh Shahjahan because "they want to weaken the TMC's organisational strength by misleading the people.... But are they sending the central agencies to houses of their own MPs who are involved in sexual assault of wrestlers," he asked.



# EC cracks whips, asks States to remove hoardings in 24 hours

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Cracking the whip, the Election Commission on Wednesday asked State Governments to take down all unauthorised political advertisements in form of graffiti, posters, cutouts, hoardings, banner flags from government, public and private properties and send a compliance report in the next 24 hours. In a letter to the Union Cabinet Secretary and chief secretaries of all states and union territories, the EC said that despite its letter issued on March 16 when the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha elections came into force, it has received complaints that such defacements have not been removed. The Congress had recently raised the issue with the poll panel. "All unauthorised political advertisements, in the form of wall writings, posters, papers or defacement in any other form, cutouts, hoardings, banner flags were ordered to be removed in a time bound manner from public spaces like railway stations, bus stands, airports, railway bridges, roadways, government buses, electric/telephone poles,

municipal/local bodies' building and a strict compliance in this was to be ensured," it reminded the governments. The Commission said it has taken a "serious note" of the non-compliance or partial-compliance of its instructions. It directed all state and union territory governments to "immediately remove all unauthorised political advertisements and ensure full compliance of its instructions". It sought a compliance report in this regard by 5 pm on Thursday. The EC has directed the Karnataka chief electoral officer to take immediate and appropriate action on the DMK's complaint about alleged model code violation by Union minister and BJP leader Shobha Karandlaje. The poll panel also sought a compliance report on the matter within 48 hours. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) has sought action against Karandlaje for alleging that a person from Tamil Nadu was responsible for the IED blast at the Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru on March 1. In its complaint to the Election Commission earlier in the day, the DMK said that the minister's statement generalised the people of Tamil Nadu as "extremists".

# Former BJP Minister Lal joins Congress

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former BJP Minister and Chairman Dogra Swabhimani Sangathan Choudhary Lal Singh, who was shunted out of the Mehbooba Mufti-led Council of Ministers on 13 April 2018 during the investigation of Rasana murder and rape case, on Wednesday returned to the Congress fold after a gap of 10 long years. Singh rejoined the party in the presence of senior Congress leader Pawan Khera and Bharat Solanki, AICC in-charge J&K at AICC headquarters in New Delhi. Lal Singh's homecoming in the Congress party created a furor. It is also going to test the unity within the INDIA bloc in Jammu and Kashmir. Both the Kashmir-based mainstream

political parties namely the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party may not welcome the decision of the Congress party. Chief Spokesman of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party Salman Nizami said the Congress party has been exposed as they are now going to support supporters of rapists in the elections. "BJP had removed Lal Singh for supporting rapists, it's shameful that Priyanka & Rahul Gandhi who led marches for the victim, have welcomed him into Congress. The Congress is exposed for its ideology by using supporters of rapists in elections. Women's rights champions who speak out against rape must step forward and speak up now!" Nizami posted on X (earlier Twitter)



Welcoming Lal Singh in the party Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee Chief Vikar Rasool Wani posted a message on X saying, "Welcome to Congress family Sher-E-Jammu Ch Lal Singh". JKPC Spokesman Ravinder Sharma said JKPC welcomes the decision of Congress high command to rejoin firebrand Dogra leader,

former JK Minister & two times MP Ch Lal Singh into the party. His entry will further strengthen the party. Lal Singh, known as the firebrand leader, is likely to be fielded by the Congress party against the MoS PMO Dr Jitendra Singh from the Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat. Lal Singh remained a two-time MP from the same

seat in 2004 and 2009. In 2019 Lal Singh stood at number 4 in the tally of votes from the same Lok Sabha seat. He contested as Dogra Swabhimani Sangathan's candidate. He quit the Congress party and joined the BJP after Ghulam Nabi Azad was given the mandate to contest against Dr Jitendra Singh in 2014. Later, Lal Singh contested the 2014 Assembly polls from the Basohli Assembly seat and became a minister in the Mufti Mohd Sayeed-led alliance government. Singh was recently arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in November 2023 in connection with a case against an educational trust run by his wife Kanta Andotra under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).



# Keep focus on LS polls in Delhi, Lovely asks workers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress President Arvinder Singh Lovely convened a meeting of the District presidents and District observers on Wednesday, asking them to focus their total attention on the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections in the national capital, without sparing any effort. Former Delhi Minister asked his party leader to pick at least 20 energetic Congress workers to rejuvenate the party at the booth-level. He asked them to split into groups of five workers each, aimed at exposing the failures and inaction of the BJP MPs in the past five years, before the people. Hitting out on the BJP for changing its probables for elections in Delhi, he said, "BJP changes its MPs every five years for not doing any work in their constituencies, which affects the development of their constituencies, and this should be exposed before the people, and motivate them to elect the three Congress candidates and the Indian Alliance candidates so that Delhi's development works are not impeded." Congress intends to bring out three separate manifestos for each of its three Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, in addition to having a common agenda for the elections with the alliance partner AAP.

# Azad working hard to stitch alliance for LS polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former Congress party troubleshooter and master strategist, Ghulam Nabi Azad, at present chairman of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) is working hard behind the curtains to stitch a pre-poll alliance with like-minded political parties in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls in Jammu and Kashmir. As per the latest political grapevine, Ghulam Nabi Azad is keen on consolidating his foothold in both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir with the help of like-minded political parties to give a tough fight to their political opponents. Azad launched his political party in September 2022 after leaving the Congress party.

Since then he has been holding public meetings to garner people's support based on his past performance as Chief Minister. Lending credibility to the rumor mill, the chief spokesman of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP), Salman Nizami Tuesday revealed that discussions with similar-minded parties for an alliance in the upcoming elections are still in the initial stages. He also indicated that the final decision regarding this matter would be made in the forthcoming days by DPAP chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad. In Kashmir valley, a senior leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party also made a similar statement claiming their party was also ready to collaborate with other like-minded

parties for the welfare of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Speaking to a news agency, JKAPNI party General Secretary Rafi Mir said, "We will invite all the like-minded parties and contest the elections together. This is just a start. We expect few people will approach us and we will also approach people". However, the Altaf Bukhari-led JKAP has firmly ruled out any alliance with the BJP at present, citing ideological differences. "The party has empowered the president to take the discussions forward. I think it will be given a shape in a day or two", Rafi Mir further added. Mir also mentioned right now talks with the BJP are difficult. "We will see in the time to come. We want to fight on our strength right now".

# Health Ministry seeks report on Moosewala mother IVF treatment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has asked the Punjab Government to provide a report on the In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) treatment undergone by late Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala's 58-year-old mother, Charan Kaur, indicating it to be the violation of the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021, which sets an age limit of 21-50 years for women availing ART services. The Ministry's directive aligns with Section 21 of the ART (Regulations) Act, 2021, outlining the duties of ART clinics and banks, which include performing

procedures on individuals within specified age ranges. S K Ranjan, Director, Union Health Ministry's direction comes days after Balkaur Singh and Charan Kaur, welcomed a baby boy that has sparked discussions around late-age pregnancy and associated risks. In a heartfelt Facebook post, Balkaur Singh expressed his distress over the inquiry, asserting his readiness to provide all necessary legal documents. Responding to the situation, the AAP Punjab unit shifted responsibility to the central government, highlighting CM Bhagwant Mann's respect for Punjab's sentiments and urging people to rely on factual information.

# Modi highlights...

From Page 1

Modi said his efforts have always been to unshackle and unleash a sector's potential, unlike the practices of the past where the Government's approach was to hold back. "Today, Indian startups are showing good work in frontiers like space. Already, our startups are launching space shuttles in such a short time," he added. The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction over the growth of the startup ecosystem in the country due

to the right policies. He recalled the initial reluctance and indifference towards the concept of startup in society. Underlining the impetus provided by Digital India to start-ups, the Prime Minister said it is a huge inspiration and suggested colleges take it up as a case study. The Prime Minister asked the startups to give back to the society by supporting individuals and institutions to come up in the startup sector. He asked them to visit incubation centers, schools and colleges and share their

insights with the students. He narrated his experiences of involving the youth by throwing open the Government problem statements for solutions through hackathons. He said many good solutions were adopted in the governance and a hackathon culture for finding solutions became established in the government. He asked businesses and MSMEs to follow suit. He asked Mahakumbh to come out with actionable points.

# Pragati Maidan tunnel to be closed ...

From Page 1

The committee consists of members from the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), Central Public Works Department (CPWD), and Public Works Department (PWD). They will address the flaws and inspect the report from the construction company L&T, which was directed to conduct immediate repairs of the structure. Part of the Pragati Maidan Integrated Transit Corridor Project, the tunnel was intended to ease connectivity between central Delhi and the eastern parts of the city, as well as Noida and Ghaziabad. However, it experiences significant traffic congestion each day, posing problems for everyday travellers.

# Climate change is set to threaten South Asia freshwater sources: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Climate change-induced rising temperatures and erratic monsoons is set to threaten South Asia's crucial freshwater sources — the Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH) — that feed the 10 largest river systems in Asia, including the Ganges, Indus, and Brahmaputra which sustains over 600 million people, according to a new report by ICIMOD. While rapid industrialization, urbanization, and intensive agriculture along with pollution from sewage and industrial waste have already degraded health of the majority of the identified rivers which are lifeline for India too,

climate change is all set to compound these challenges, leading to more frequent and severe flooding and droughts, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups including women, people with disabilities and marginalised communities, the report added. Similarly, the Indus river — a lifeline for more than 268 million people across Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and China — is under unprecedented stress due to climate change. Rising temperatures, erratic monsoons and environmental degradation are pushing the basin towards a crisis point. The scale of climate change impacts in

the Indus basin is overwhelming, undermining food security, livelihoods and water security, while in the Brahmaputra basin, climate change — coupled with dams and development work — is poised to escalate flooding and droughts, particularly in its lower basin. Glacial melt rates are expected to rise, impacting water availability across the region. While currently there are no major water diversions in the basin, upstream dam construction and climate change projections are likely to reduce dry season flows in downstream areas, affecting millions of lives, the report has painted grim picture.

# Centre defends ECs appointment

From Page 1

"As a high constitutional office, the Chief Election Commissioner enjoys protection that are in-built into the Constitution, and which enable them to act impartially," it said, adding that the allegations of disingenuous motive and premeditation on the part of the Government are wholly without basis. The Ministry of Law and Justice pointed out that even before the enactment of the

CEC Act, for 73 years from 1950 till 2023, the appointment of the Election Commissioners was being made by the executive exclusively. The Centre also argued that the deliberations of the high level committee under CEC Act which preceded the appointment of these officers, were collaborative. "It is submitted that the case of the petitioners is premised on one fundamental fallacy that the independence can only be maintained in any

authority when the selection committee is of a particular formulation. It must be noted that the independence of the Election Commission, or any other organisation or authority, does not arise from and is not attributable to the presence of a judicial member in the selection committee," the affidavit said. Refuting the petitioners' claim that no list of probable appointees was shared with the Opposition, the Centre

submitted that the names of short-listed persons were made available to Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on March 13, 2024, after the Search Committee had finalised six names for recommendation. "No objection whatsoever has been raised about the fitness eligibility or competence of any of the persons named in the list to serve as Election Commissioner. There are no allegations against the

Election Commissioners appointed are also made. Instead a political controversy is sought to be created only on the basis of bare, unsupported and pernicious statements about certain vague and unspecified motives behind the appointment," the Central Government submitted. "It is, therefore, wholly wrong, misleading and malicious to suggest that the third member of the Selection Committee was

given the shortlisted names as an act of premeditation on the mind of the two members of the Executive as all the members received the list simultaneously. Furthermore, the list of dates clearly brings out the fact that profiles of all eligible persons were shared with the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha on March 13, 2024. "It may be noted that the persons finally appointed were from the list so shared. This belies the claim of the petitioners that no list was shared in advance of the meeting," the affidavit said. The Centre contended that a

political controversy has been sought to be created only on the basis of "bare, unsupported and pernicious" statements about certain vague and unspecified motives behind the appointment. It said the credentials of those finally appointed as election commissioners have at no point been called into question and no objection whatsoever has been raised about the fitness, eligibility or competence of any of the persons named in the list to serve as election commissioner. "Where no question has been raised about the

qualifications of candidates to hold a constitutional post nor has any material been brought on record to show that the candidates are unfit for office, no prima facie case can be said to have been made out. On that ground alone, the application for stay ought to be dismissed," the affidavit said. The two election officers were appointed in the wake of the March 9 resignation of Election Officer Arun Goel. Goel's abrupt resignation had left only Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on the ECI in the run-up to the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.



# Court asks Kejriwal: Why are you not appearing before ED?

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court asked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday why he is not appearing before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning in an excise policy-linked money-laundering case, as it sought the agency's stand on the AAP leader's plea challenging the summonses issued against him. "Why don't you appear on receiving the summonses? What is preventing you not to attend?" asked the bench headed by Justice Suresh Kumar Kait.

The bench, also comprising Justice Manoj Jain, noted that the first summonses were issued in October last year and said before anything else, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader is a citizen of the country. Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing the

petitioner in the matter, said his client would appear before the ED but protection from coercive action is required because of the agency's "clear intent" to apprehend him when elections are around the corner.

Delhi Cabinet Minister Atishi on Wednesday said the ED was not waiting for the court's decision and sending summonses to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in excise policy case, and asked the agency to respect the legal procedure. Atishi said, "The ED is sending multiple summonses. The replies to the summonses sent by Kejriwal questioning their legality have not elicited any response. ED opposed."

Kejriwal's application in the high court. They demanded dismissal of application but the high court has sought their response," she said. "We are asking about the legality of these

summons. ED has not replied till now. ED went to the Rouse Avenue court against Kejriwal. Yet, it is not waiting for the court's decision. We want to tell ED — please respect the legal procedure," Atishi said.

Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva reacted to the hearing and said that it is time for Kejriwal to stop making excuses and cooperate with the ED and other investigative agencies. Questioning his credibility, Sachdeva said, "If Arvind Kejriwal is truthful, then why is he evading the investigation? He should cooperate with the investigation, and the way AAP leaders have been misleading on the ED summonses, all their voices have been silenced by today's court directives." He said that it is well-known that there has been a scam in the new liquor



policy and also in the Jal Board in Delhi, and Kejriwal will have to answer for it. Earlier, Kejriwal has moved the court in the wake of the latest summonses, the ninth issued by the ED, asking him to appear before it on Thursday (March 21). The AAP leader has repeatedly refused to appear before the agency, calling the summonses illegal.

The court said arrest on the "first or second day" is not the "normal practice" as an investigating agency first records the reasons to do so, if grounds are made out. Citing the arrests of AAP leaders Sanjay Singh and Manish Sisodia in the matter, the senior lawyer, however, claimed that a "new style" of functioning is in place now. "I will appear. I will answer the

questionnaire, but there is a protection that is required. I am not avoiding it. I am not running away from you. I will come myself but I need protection, no coercive steps," Singhvi said.

"I am not a common criminal. Where can I run? Can anyone have roots in the society more than me?" he asked the bench. Singhvi also contended that the ED has asked Kejriwal to

appear before it, without even clarifying if he is an accused or a suspect or witness in the matter. The court said he would get to know his status if he appears pursuant to the summonses and also asked why has he not taken appropriate legal action if he is anticipating arrest. "You received the first summonses on October 30. We have seen your reply and you have given several reasons, including that Diwali festivities are around the corner. And now, we are on to the next festival, elections. So this would go on," the court said. "Before anything else, you are a citizen of the country, the summonses is by name," it added.

The ED said the petition of the AAP national convenor, which also challenges certain provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), was not

maintainable and opposed the issuance of a formal notice. The bench granted two weeks to the agency to file its reply on this aspect. Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing in the court on behalf of the ED, said the issue of constitutional validity of PMLA provisions has already been settled by the Supreme Court and there cannot be any stay when there is a presumption with respect to such validity. Singhvi said the petition raises several issues, including whether a political party is covered by the anti-money laundering law.

In the petition, Kejriwal has contended that an arbitrary procedure under the PMLA is being employed to create a non-level-playing field for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls to "skew the electoral process in favour of the ruling party at the Centre".

## LG slams CM over Delhi becoming most polluted Capital in world

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena launched a scathing attack on the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday after the national Capital made headlines again for being the most polluted Capital in the world again, saying 'any self-respecting leader would have owned up the responsibility for the same' and the much talked about "Delhi model" is shrouded in a haze of smog.

Saxena said, "I am writing to draw your attention to the disturbing national headlines today - 'Delhi - The World's Most Polluted - Foulest Capital Again.'" This dubious distinction is a matter of national shame and collective concern."

Reacting on the LG's letter, the AAP said the Language is rude, curt and bordering on abusive. We strongly condemn the use of such a despicable language by the LG.

Taking a potshot at the ruling AAP government, he said, "I am sure that this report card of nine years of your government is not one which you would be proud of. The much talked about "Delhi model" is shrouded in a haze of smog."

The LG highlighted the rising pollution in the winters, stating that there are a plethora of news reports and articles which underscore the lackadaisical approach of the city government to address air quality. "Any self-respecting leader would have owned up the responsibility for the same and would have taken concrete steps to address this concern by taking definitive steps and bold measures. Sadly, you choose to do neither and make it an exercise of polemics, which ultimately turns into a political slugfest, with one authority blaming the other, even as citizens suffer silently," he said.

Saxena also hit out at Kejriwal for not just avoiding the grave issue, but also tarnishing the image of the country's capital as many



foreigners and tourists live in the city. He said, "I am forced to underline once again that Delhi houses all foreign missions and the diplomats present here, apart from being personally affected by the air pollution, would also be, I am sure, highlighting the same in their dispatches to their respective nations."

He also pointed out the issue of pollution of Yamuna river, while comparing the river to 'an open sewer'. LG said, "Delhi not only has the worst air quality, but also has one of the most polluted rivers in the world. Yamuna has turned into an open sewer. It is distressing to see that you choose to ignore the gravity of the issue, and indulge merely in slogans of false promises year after year."

Blaming the AAP government for not improving the quality of life of slum dwellers, he wrote "Millions of poor people of the city, who are living in subhuman conditions in JJ clusters and unauthorised colonies have no recourse to justice. I have been visiting some of these areas and have witnessed hellish living conditions."

I find it bewildering that when I raise an issue of this nature, the Minister in charge passes it on to the Chief Secretary with directions to fix problems that have piled up because of about a decade of inaction on part of the GNCTD, within a week. It only highlights the utter lack of seriousness to address basic services for those who live on the margins of society."

## Sadhguru recovering well after emergency brain surgery: Hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev underwent an emergency brain surgery at a private hospital here after suffering "life-threatening" bleeding in the skull and is now recovering well.

"The surgery was carried out on March 17 to remove bleeding in the skull. Sadhguru was weaned off the ventilator post-surgery," a statement from Indraprastha Apollo Hospital said, adding he has shown "steady progress" and his "vital parameters have improved".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday spoke to spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, who has undergone a brain surgery, and



wished him a speedy recovery. Spiritual leader Vasudev underwent an emergency brain surgery at a private hospital in the national capital after suffering "life-threatening"

bleeding in the skull and is now recovering well. "Spoke to @SadhguruJV Ji and wished him good health and a speedy recovery," Modi said in a post on X.

Sadhguru also posted a video on his Instagram page from his hospital bed. "The Apollo hospital neurosurgeons cut through my skull to try and find something, but found nothing — totally empty. So they gave up and patched it up. Here I am in Delhi with the patched-up skull but a damaged brain," he said in a lighter vein. Several celebrities posted messages on social media wishing him a speedy recovery.

The 66-year-old spiritual guru is the founder of the Isha Foundation and has launched campaigns like 'Save

Soil' and 'Rally for Rivers' for environment conservation.

Vinit Suri, the hospital's senior consultant neurologist who led the team of doctors that attended to Sadhguru, said he had faced a "life-threatening situation".

"He has actually done extremely well, much beyond our expectation... He is now extremely well, he is back to his normal self... All his brain, body vital parameters are normal," Suri said. He had been suffering from severe headaches for the last four weeks. Despite the severity of the pain, he continued with his normal daily schedule and social activities and even conducted the Maha Shivaratri function on March 8, the hospital statement said.

## Atishi asks chief secretary to personally monitor redress of all water, sewage grievances

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Water Minister Atishi on Wednesday directed Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to personally monitor the redress of all water and sewage-related grievances with the departments and officers concerned. Kumar has also been directed to coordinate with the Delhi Jal Board and the Urban Development and the Finance departments to ensure that water and sewerage systems keep functioning optimally.

Atishi said in an official order that many grievances

regarding sewer overflow, water contamination, water pipeline leakage and water shortage are repeatedly coming from various parts of Delhi. Such grievances have repeatedly been raised by MLAs in the assembly, Atishi said in the order and added that water and sewer management are critical civic utilities that cannot be put on hold because the Model Code of Conduct for the Lok Sabha elections has been imposed, it said.

"Therefore, to ensure that water and sewer systems keep functioning optimally, the chief secretary shall be



responsible for overseeing the functioning of water supply, sewerage systems and ensuring the redressal of any grievances regarding the same," the order stated. All files on water and sewerage related issues that

move among the Delhi Jal Board and the Urban Development and the Finance departments will be sent through the chief secretary so that he can personally monitor those, according to the order. She also directed that Chief Secretary Kumar "shall personally monitor the redressal of all water and sewerage-related grievances with the concerned departments and officers".

"The chief secretary shall ensure that an adequate number of water tankers are available for all parts of Delhi, as per the requirements of summer months," it said.

## Traffic cops help transport liver 16 km in 18 minutes

New Delhi: The Delhi Traffic Police facilitated the transportation of a cadaveric liver successfully through a dedicated 16 km green corridor in only 18 minutes on Tuesday.

The cadaveric liver was transported from IGI Airport to the Akash Healthcare Super Speciality Hospital in Dwarka, New Delhi with the utmost urgency in a collaborative effort between healthcare institutions, law enforcement agencies, and transportation authorities. A green corridor of about 16 km was planned in this regard. SR

## Sexual assault case: Minister urges LG to take stern action against college Professor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Wednesday urged the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to take urgent and stern action against the Professor of Baba Saheb Ambedkar Medical college, in Delhi's Rohini area, accused of sexually assaulting a 22-year-old MBBS student, while accusing the Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar of 'defending the culprits by lame excuses.' Bharadwaj emphasised the safety and security of girl students in a medical college. He further questioned the Health Secretary SB Deepak Kumar for not reporting a sexual harassment incident, and the Chief Secretary for defending him. Expressing his disappointment for inaction in the matter, he said, "shocked to see the CS is trying to defend the culprits by lame excuses."

The Health Minister on Monday demanded Kumar to take severe action against the Professor accused of sexually assaulting a medical student. He also directed immediate action against the Principal & HOD for their reprehensible act of pressuring students to withdraw their complaint.

"The Chief Secretary is justifying Health Secretary for not disclosing this incident of sexual assault to the Minister, despite clear instructions by the Health Minister to the Secretary (Health) to report such incidents promptly. The victims had to finally approach police in individual capacity when the Vigilance



Department & Health Department failed to take timely action," he said. He also claimed that the Internal Complaints Committee was dragging the matter and did not submit its report in one and a half months.

BJP MLA Vijender Gupta also wrote to the LG, urging Saxena to intervene in the matter and ensure justice. "This incident not only constitutes a severe violation of the students' rights and safety but also represents a significant failure on the part of the institution and the Delhi government to take adequate action against the perpetrator. The silence and inaction by the AAP Government surrounding this incident have resulted in increased distress for the victims and their families, highlighting an urgent need for intervention," said Gupta. The incident took place on January 31 where the student levelled allegations against her professor of sexual harassment during a viva examination. An FIR under sections 354A (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), and 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered against the accused.

## Court junks man plea seeking custody of Ukrainian child

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has dismissed a plea moved by a former husband challenging a family court order which rejected his guardianship petition seeking custody of his 5 year old minor child, a citizen of Ukraine.

In the case of Akhilesh Kumar Gupta v. Ms Gupta Snizhana Grygorivna & Ors, the family court order, which rejected the guardianship petition filed by the father Akhilesh Kumar Gupta on the grounds of lack of territorial jurisdiction, was upheld by a division Bench of Justices Rajiv Shakkher and Amit Bansal. A division bench of Justice Rajiv Shakkher and Justice Amit Bansal said that it is in the best interest of the child, notwithstanding the

hostilities in other parts of the country, to remain in the company of the mother and his sibling, also citizens of Ukraine, as it will provide a safe environment to the minor.

Gupta and his ex-wife Gupta Snizhana Grygorivna were married and got divorced in Ukraine, and that their two children were also born in that country, the order stated.

The court said that the father had brought the child to India in violation of a Ukrainian court's order and that he cannot be permitted to take advantage of his own wrong. Gupta had come to the High Court challenging the family court order. "Even on merits, we do not think that it would be in the best interest of the minor child, who is currently five years old, to be separated from his

mother (respondent no.1) and his elder sister, who are living in Vinnytsia, Ukraine. The Family Court while passing the impugned judgment had interacted with the minor child on 17th November, 2023, who had expressed his desire to go back to Ukraine with the respondent no.1 and stated that he did not wish to speak to the appellant and his family members," the judgment stated.

The court said that it would not be in the best interest of the minor child to remain in India, separated from his mother and sister. The Bench also said that its views are in line with Article 9(1) and Article 10(2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As per Article 9(1), where parents are living separately, a decision has to be

made as to the child's place of residence. According to Clause (2) of Article 10, the state parties are required to respect the right of the child and his/her parents to leave any country, including their own, and to enter their own country.

"Consistent with the aforementioned articles, we are of the opinion that the usual place of residence of the child is Vinnytsia, Ukraine."

"The child, as noted hereinabove, seeks to remain in the company of the respondent/mother. The respondent/mother and the child, who are citizens of Ukraine, wish to return to their country. The appellant has been given rights of visitation by the concerned Ukrainian authorities. Therefore, in our view, it is in the best interest of the child, notwithstanding the

hostilities in other parts of the country, to remain in the company of the respondent/mother and his siblings as it provides the child, in the given circumstances, a safe environment."

On the issue of the situation in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, the Court said that the Indian government's advisories asking Indian nationals to leave the country will not be applicable to the mother and her minor son, since they are citizens of that country.

"Accordingly, taking a holistic view of the matter, we are not inclined to interfere with the impugned judgment. The present appeal is dismissed. Resultantly, the respondent no.1 shall be free to leave India with the minor child," the Court ordered.

## City petrol pumps to soon scan licence plates for PUC status

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has launched a pilot project to implement a digital solution for the issue of drivers not having a valid Pollution Under Control Certificate (PUC) for scanning vehicle licence plates at the petrol pumps by cameras. Subsequently, the Delhi Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation (DTIDC) has floated a tender and invited bidders to suggest digital solutions to check the validity of the PUC of vehicles coming to the petrol pumps. The approximate cost of the project is Rs 6 crore.

"The bidder must possess the

capability to deliver a digital solution aimed at mitigating pollution within the city of Delhi. This involves implementing an application that integrates with existing cameras situated at petrol pumps," said an official. The system will be designed to scan the licence plates of the vehicles upon entry to a petrol pump. The selected company will be required to integrate the digital solution with the eChallan.Parivahan.Gov.In portal.

Upon failing to have a valid PUC, the attendant at the petrol pump will apprise the vehicle owner to get the PUC renewed. The vehicle owner

will also get the information of the same through a screen installed by the bidder at the petrol pump.

Explaining the functioning of the system, the official said, "The system will again check PUC status after three hours and in case of expiry of PUC, the system will generate a challan at eChallan.Parivahan.Gov.In." According to the documents prepared by the DTIDC for the implementation of the project, the system will be able to verify the validity of PUC by cross-referencing the details of the vehicle from the database it will have access to.

## 15 new jammers to block 4G signals to be installed at Tihar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Fifteen new jammers will be installed at six new locations to block 4G signals, effectively preventing the inmates from using mobile phones from inside the jail by Asia's largest prison Tihar. The officials on Tuesday said, "The project, which costs about Rs 11.5 crore, will help in jamming the signals of all kinds of phones having 2G, 3G and 4G networks in the jail." The reason attributed to the development is the use of brand new phones with 4G technology by the inmates. According to officials, making threat and extortion calls were also very common from inside the jails. Among them is the jailed conman

Sukesh Chandrashekhar, who was caught using the branded phones with 4G technologies. A senior Tihar Jail official said these 15 jammers will be the addition to three currently installed Towers of Harmonious Call Blocking (THCB) systems, a kind of technology that discontinues the call as soon as it begins. "15 new static towers of jammers, which work in noise technology, will completely prohibit the inmates from using phones in the prisons," the officer said. The work of installation of these towers began two months ago and is expected to be completed this month. Another officer said these jammers are getting installed at high security prisons which

houses in six out of nine jails of Tihar. Currently, Delhi has 19,000 inmates, against the capacity of 10,000 inmates in all three jails — Tihar, Mandoli and Rohini. "The present jammers, which could block 2G and 3G signals, are outdated. Therefore, the upgradation of jamming technology and installation of towers that could block the 4G signals was much needed," the officer said. In the past few years, the jailed gangsters making video calls and putting videos of their cell on social media are also found to be happening from inside the jails. The officer added that to prevent the use of mobile phones, the jail administration keeps conducting raids and does surprise checks.



# Nominations for first phase of LS polls begin

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The nomination process for 102 Parliamentary constituencies spread across 21 States and Union Territories, where polling would be held in the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections on April 19, began on Wednesday with the issuance of a notification by the Election Commission (EC). The Commission said March 28 will be the last date for filing nominations for Bihar and March 27 for Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir, Lakshadweep, and Puducherry. Of the 102 constituencies that will see voting, 39 are in Tamil Nadu, 12 in Rajasthan, 8 in Uttar Pradesh, 6 in Madhya Pradesh, 5 each in Uttarakhand, Assam and Maharashtra, 4 in Bihar, 3 in West Bengal, 2 each in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, and 1 each in

Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir, Lakshadweep, and Puducherry. The last date for filing nomination papers is March 27. However, due to a festival, March 28 is the last date for filing nominations for the Lok Sabha seats in Bihar going to polls in the first phase. Voting in four out of 40 seats in Bihar will be held in the first phase. Nomination papers will be scrutinised on March 28. For Bihar, it would be done on March 30. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 20 while for Bihar, it is April 2. "June 6, the date before which the election shall be completed in all the above-mentioned parliamentary constituencies," the notification read. The final of the seven phase Lok Sabha polls is scheduled for June 1, with counting of votes slotted for June 4. Prime Minister Modi-led BJP is seeking a record third term and has kept a 370 seats target for the party in the upcoming polls and 400 for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The BJP has already released its two lists of candidates,



comprising 265 names, including those of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. BJP's challenger, Congress party is contesting the 2024 Lok Sabha polls as part of the INDIA bloc of Opposition parties. Like this time, the Lok Sabha elections in 2019 too were held in seven phases with voting in Uttar Pradesh held in all phases. In the first phase, the BJP won six of eight seats that went to polls in this phase. BSP got two seats (Bijnore and Saharanpur) RLD chief Ajit Singh lost from Muzaffarnagar and his son Jayant Chaudhury from Baghpat. In Itanagar, the state election office issued separate gazette notifications for holding

# Modi congratulates Putin on his reelection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday held telephonic talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky and asserted that dialogue and diplomacy were the way forward to end the ongoing conflict between the two countries. In his talks with Putin, Modi congratulated him for winning a fifth term in office and asserting that dialogue and diplomacy were the way forward in resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Modi's call to Putin came two days after the Russian leader won the presidential election by a landslide, a victory questioned by the US and its allies. "Spoke with President Putin and congratulated him on his re-election as the President of the Russian Federation. We agreed to work together to further deepen and expand India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership in the years ahead," PM Modi said on X. According to a Kremlin readout on the conversation, Putin wished Modi "for the successful conduct of the upcoming parliamentary elections in India". Modi is among the few international leaders who have greeted Putin on his re-election. In the telephonic talks, Modi and Putin reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional and global issues, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here in a statement. While discussing the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Modi reiterated India's consistent position in favour of dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward, it said, adding that the two leaders agreed to remain in touch. Congratulating Putin on his re-election, Modi conveyed his best wishes for peace, progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Russia, it said. The two leaders agreed to



make concerted efforts towards further strengthening the strategic partnership between the two countries in the years to come. According to the Kremlin statement, both sides noted with satisfaction that mutually beneficial ties in trade, economic and investment fields and in the areas of energy and transport are progressively and dynamically developing in line with a particularly privileged strategic partnership. "An exchange of views was also held on a number of issues on the international agenda, in particular in the context of the situation around Ukraine," the Kremlin statement said. "The mood for further coordination between Russia and India in multilateral formats, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, was confirmed," it added. "The conversation took place in a warm and friendly manner. Vladimir Putin, in turn, wished Narendra Modi successful conduct of the upcoming parliamentary elections in India," the Kremlin statement said. Putin recorded a landslide victory in Russia's election, cementing his already tight grip on power. The result on Monday showed that the three other candidates who ran — but had not openly challenged Putin — won 4.31, 3.85 and 3.20 per cent of the vote.

# NIA attaches properties of two accused in killing of Sandhu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has attached several immovable properties belonging to two accused involved in the killing of Shaurya Chakra awardee Balwinder Singh Sandhu by agents of the banned Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF) in Punjab, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday. Acting on the orders of a special NIA court in SAS Nagar (Mohali), the anti-terror agency has attached a

property measuring 9 marla in village Peeran Bagh and another measuring 2 Kanal 07 sarsai in village Salimpur Arian, both registered in the name of accused Gurwinder Singh alias Baba of Gurdaspur district, it said. In addition, a land measuring 2 kanal and 10 marla in village Jeobala, registered in the name of Harbhinder Singh alias Pinder alias Dhillon of district Tarn Taran, has been attached, according to the statement. The attachment action was undertaken on Tuesday, it added. The NIA's

investigation revealed that Harbhinder Singh, along with an associate, had helped accused Inderjit Singh in the reconnaissance of the residence of Balwinder Singh Sandhu with the purpose of eliminating him as part of a conspiracy by KLF cadres based in India and abroad. Gurwinder Singh alias Baba, in association with Sukhmeet Pal Singh alias Sukh Bhikariwal, was involved in supplying weapons which were used in the murder, the NIA said. Sukhmeet Pal Singh is a

close associate of 'designated individual terrorist' Lakhbir Singh Rode, it added. Both Harbhinder Singh and Gurwinder Singh were charge-sheeted by the NIA in December 2021. A supplementary charge sheet was filed against Gurwinder Singh on January 2, 2023 with additional charges. The case was originally registered at Bhikhiwind police station in Tarn Taran on October 16, 2020. It was taken over by the NIA on January 26, 2021.



Lok Sabha MP Danish Ali joins Congress in the presence of Congress leader Pawan Khara and Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

# Danish, Pappu join Congress



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several prominent politicians including suspended BSP leader and Lok Sabha MP Danish Ali, five time former MP Pappu Yadav joined the Congress on Wednesday. Yadav also announced the merger of his political outfit Jan Adhikar Party. Also a BJP MLA from Jharkhand Jai Prakash Bhai Patel joined the Congress vowed to strengthen the INDIA Bloc. A former five-time MP from Bihar, Yadav is the husband of Congress Rajya Sabha MP Ranjeet Ranjan and is known for having influence in Seemanchal area of the eastern state. He was accompanied by his son Sarthak Ranjan and other party leaders as he announced his decision at the AICC headquarters. Yadav said the Congress leadership gave him respect and he was joining the party's fight against "dictatorship" in the country to help save democracy and the Constitution. "The honour that the entire Congress family has given is enough for us. Both Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra have given us a lot of love. "If anyone has won the hearts of people in India, it is Rahul Gandhi and people love him. He has also raised the concerns of OBCs by raising the issue of holding a caste census. To save this country and its democracy and protect the Constitution, there was no other way except joining Rahul Gandhi's fight against a dictator," he said. Mohan Prakash, in-charge of Congress affairs in Bihar, was also present.

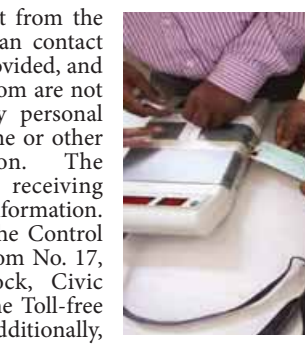
those forces fighting to get 'nyay' (justice) for the poor and oppressed sections of society, and the choice is very clear," Ali said, asserting that time has come to decide where one stands. "If we have to fight with divisive forces, then one has to strengthen the Congress under the leadership of Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi," he said. Ali, who is the sitting MP from Amroha in Uttar Pradesh, was suspended by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) for anti-party activities. He is set to contest the Lok Sabha polls from the Amroha constituency on a Congress ticket. Ali was earlier with the Janata Dal (Secular) and had been the former Rajya Sabha MP from Karnataka. Yadav said the Congress leadership gave him respect and he was joining the party's fight against "dictatorship" in the country to help save democracy and the Constitution. "The honour that the entire Congress family has given is enough for us. Both Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra have given us a lot of love. "If anyone has won the hearts of people in India, it is Rahul Gandhi and people love him. He has also raised the concerns of OBCs by raising the issue of holding a caste census. To save this country and its democracy and protect the Constitution, there was no other way except joining Rahul Gandhi's fight against a dictator," he said. Mohan Prakash, in-charge of Congress affairs in Bihar, was also present.

# IT sets up toll free number, control room ahead of LS polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to ensure the integrity and fairness of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the Income Tax Department, Delhi Government has taken proactive measures such as establishing a 24x7 Control Room at Civic Centre and at the same time issued a Toll-free Number where any person can report any suspicious movement or distribution of cash, bullion, and other valuables to influence the polls.

According to a statement from the Government, residents can contact the Toll-Free Number provided, and callers to the Control Room are not required to disclose any personal details, such as their name or other identifying information. The primary focus is on receiving credible and actionable information. The contact details for the Control Room are as follows: Room No. 17, Ground Floor, C-Block, Civic Centre, New Delhi, or the Toll-free number 1800112300. Additionally,



landline numbers 011-23232312/31/67/76 and a toll-free mobile number 9868168682 are available for communication. The Control Room will remain operational throughout the entire period of the Model Code of Conduct in Delhi, starting from the announcement of General Elections 2024 until their conclusion in the city. It is emphasized that residents can contact the Toll-Free Number anonymously, without revealing personal details, as long as the

information provided is credible and actionable. "Residents can contact the Toll-Free Number anonymously, without disclosing personal details. The only requirement is that the information provided is credible and actionable. The Control Room will remain operational throughout the period of the Model Code of Conduct in Delhi, from the announcement of General Elections 2024 until their conclusion in the city," it added.

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# India test fires first desi 1,500 HP engine for main battle tanks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a boost to self-reliance in defence manufacturing, scientists on Wednesday carried out the maiden test-firing of India's first indigenously made 1,500 Horsepower (HP) engine for main battle tanks. Giving details here, defence ministry officials said Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane presided over the maiden test-firing at BEML's Engine division in Mysuru complex. The achievement heralds a new era in the country's defence capabilities, showcasing the technological prowess and commitment to self-reliance

in defence technologies. The 1500 HP engine represents a paradigm shift in military propulsion systems, possessing cutting-edge features such as high power-to-weight ratio, operability in extreme conditions including high altitudes, sub-zero temperatures, and desert environments. Equipped with advanced technologies, the engine stands on par with the most advanced engines globally. Inaugurating the Test Cell, the Defence Secretary described the achievement as a transformative moment which will enhance the capabilities of the Armed Forces. CMD of BEML

Shantanu Roy stated that the accomplishment solidifies BEML's position as a key contributor to defence production in the country, underscoring its commitment to serving the nation's needs in this critical sector. The first test-firing of the 1500 HP engine signifies the completion of Generation One, focusing on technology stabilisation. Generation Two will see BEML producing engines for various trials at Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment, a DRDO laboratory, and their integration into actual vehicles for user testing.

# Keeping accused in custody without trial akin to detention: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping an accused in custody without trial is akin to detention which hampers liberty, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while deprecating the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) practice of filing supplementary chargesheets in money laundering cases to defeat the accused right of getting default bail. A bench of Justices Sanjay Khanna and Dipankar Datta took exception to the ED filing four supplementary chargesheets, the latest on

March 1, 2024, in a money laundering case arising from alleged illegal mining in Jharkhand. The top court was hearing the default bail plea of Prem Prakash, an alleged associate of former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren. Prakash was arrested in August, 2022 after raids during which two AK-47 rifles, 60 live rounds and two magazines were claimed to have been found at his home in Ranchi. He was booked for the offences of money laundering and under the Arms Act.

# MoU to provide new technology to farmers inked

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has signed an initial pact with agro-chemical firm Dhanuka Agritech Ltd for providing new technology to farmers and also promoting natural farming. According to an official statement, ICAR and Dhanuka Agritech have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Tuesday. ICAR Deputy Director General (Agricultural Extension) US Gautam and Dhanuka Agritech Chairman RG Aggarwal signed this MoU on behalf of respective organisations. Gautam said the objective of this agreement is to utilise the efficiency of both institutions to deliver new technology to farmers, according to the statement. He said there are more than 14.5 crore farmers across the country, out of which most of the farmers have small land holdings. Dhanuka Agritech will provide training related to agricultural production to these small farmers by associating with the central institutes, ATARIs (Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute) and KVKs (Krishi Vigyan Kendras).

# Congress remains committed to protecting Ladakh: Kharge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday alleged that the Modi Government has put the country's territorial integrity and national security at risk in dealing with China and is also "attacking the Constitutional rights of our own citizens of Ladakh". Kharge asserted that the Congress remains committed

to protecting Ladakh and securing national interests at the borders. "Modi Ki Chinese Guarantee! In Ladakh, there is a strong wave of public support, with unified calls for protection for tribal communities under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. "But like all other guarantees — 'Modi Ki Guarantee' to assure Constitutional rights to the people of Ladakh remains a colossal betrayal. It

is nothing but fake and Chinese in nature," the Congress chief said on microblogging site X. His remarks come amid climate activist Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike in support of statehood and constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Union Territory of Ladakh. Wangchuk, a renowned education reformist, has been on 'climate fast' in Leh since



March 6, a day after talks between the joint representatives of Leh-based Apex body and Kargil

Democratic Alliance (KDA) heading an agitation in support of four-point demands and the central government hit a deadlock. The Sixth Schedule contains provisions related to the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram through autonomous district councils. Kharge alleged that the Modi government wants to exploit the eco-sensitive Himalayan

glaciers of Ladakh and benefit its "crony friends". "PM Modi's CLEAN CHIT to China after Galwan Valley, post the sacrifice of our 20 bravehearts, has emboldened the expansionist nature of China at our strategic borders (sic). "On one hand, Modi government has put our territorial integrity and national security at risk, and on the other hand, it is attacking the Constitutional

Rights of our own citizens of Ladakh," the Congress chief claimed in his post. On the eastern Ladakh standoff, he said despite "at least 19 rounds of one-on-one talks between PM Modi and his Chinese counterpart since 2014, Modi government has failed to ensure status quo ante before 2020". He claimed that China continues to occupy Indian territory at Depsang Plains, Hot Springs and Gogra regions.



# Arrangements in full swing for Ram Navami in Ayodhya

PTI ■ AYODHYA (UP)

Expecting the biggest-ever inflow of devotees on the occasion of Ram Navami festival, the Uttar Pradesh Government and Ayodhya district administration have started making arrangements to cater to the expected rush of devotees.

It will be the first occasion of the festival after construction of the temple. Ram Navami, the festival to celebrate the birth of Lord Ram, will be celebrated on April 17, the ninth day of the shukla paksha in the Chaitra month of the Hindu calendar.

Coordination meetings are being held between the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust and the district administration focusing

on the challenges of controlling and serving the pilgrims, who will start arriving in Ayodhya three days before the festival and will stay here for two to three days after the festival.

According to officials, they are working to ensure the safety, service and comfort of the devotees during Ram Navami festival.

"The points on which the administration is working include how to manage the actual numbers of the inflow of expected devotees, maintaining the unhurled and safe entry and exit at the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple," an official said adding that the trust is considering to have multiple entry and exit points for devotees at the temple to avoid any stampede kind of situation.



Arrangements for round the clock availability of medical facilities and medical emergencies by keeping extra beds available at government health institutions and also at private hospitals have been made, Anil Mishra, a trustee of the Ram temple trust, said adding that a huge crowd is expected in Ayodhya before and after Ram Navami.

"A plan is being prepared after brainstorming on all the issues ranging from security arrangements to providing easy darshan to the devotees and ensuring that they do not face any kind of problem," he said.

He said that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath himself is monitoring every aspect of the arrangements and at the

same time, the trust is also planning for the best possible management for all the visitors.

Celebrations of Ram Navami will begin with a prayer to the Sun early in the morning. In the middle, when Lord Ram is believed to have been born, a special prayer will be performed, a trust member said.

People will sing devotional songs in praise of Lord Ram and rock his images in a cradle to celebrate his birth. Rathayatra or chariot processions of Lord Ram, his wife Sita, brother Lakshman and Lord Hanuman will be organised from many temples, he said, adding that people will gather in large numbers on the banks of the sacred river Sarayu for a holy dip.

## LS polls: Home voting facility for senior citizens, differently abled voters

PTI ■ JAIPUR

For the first time in Rajasthan during the Lok Sabha elections, the home voting facility is being extended to senior citizens above 85 years of age and differently-abled voters with over 40 per cent disability.

According to an official statement, presently, the registration of eligible voters willing for home voting is being done by the Booth Level Officers (BLO) and this process will continue till March 26 for the first phase of Lok Sabha polling in the state.

Chief Electoral Officer Praveen Gupta said that the Election Commission of India (ECI) has taken this initiative of inclusive elections. This innovation of home voting was successfully implemented in

Rajasthan recently during the Assembly elections 2023. During this, approximately 99 per cent of the 61,022 eligible registered voters availed the facility of voting from their homes. Now, this facility is being extended during the Lok Sabha elections 2024.

Gupta said this facility is optional. As per instructions of the ECI, lists of eligible home voters are updated till the names of the candidates for the Lok Sabha constituencies are finalised by the BLOs.

Thereafter, door-to-door voting is done through postal ballot. For the first phase of Lok Sabha voting, presently, the BLOs are going door-to-door and providing information regarding home voting. To avail the facility, eligible voters have to apply through Form 12-D to the BLO. This

registration process has already started for the first phase of voting and will continue till March 26. Gupta said that after registration of voters opting for the home voting facility, their lists would be made available to all recognised political parties and candidates by April 1. The formation of special polling teams, their training and other processes will be completed by April 4.

The polling for home voting will start from April 5 and continue till April 14 in the presence of representatives of political parties, candidates and election observers. If for some reason, the voter is not available or could not vote in the first round, the polling teams would make a second visit for home voting between April 15 and 16.

## CPM Chaudhury appointed LoP in Tripura Assembly

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Senior CPI(M) MLA Jitendra Chaudhury was on Wednesday appointed the leader of the opposition in the Tripura assembly, Speaker Biswabandhu Sen said.

Tipra Motha, which emerged as the main opposition in last year's assembly elections, joined the BJP-led government in the state earlier this month. As a result, Tipra Motha MLA Animesh Debbarma resigned as the leader of the opposition and became a minister.

"As per constitutional provision, Jitendra Chaudhury who has been discharging his duty as the leader of the CPI(M) legislature party over the last one year has been made the leader of the opposition as the Tipra Motha is no longer an opposition party,"

the speaker said.

After Tipra Motha joined the government, the CPI(M)-led Left Front wrote to the speaker, urging him to appoint Chaudhury as the leader of the opposition.

After the appointment, Chaudhury, who is also the CPI(M) state secretary, said, "Technically, I was not the leader of opposition but tried my best to oppose the anti-people policies of the BJP-led government inside and outside the assembly. Now, my job will be to support the government if the works or programmes are good, or else I will raise my voice for the interest of the people."

In the 2023 elections, BJP won 32 seats, its ally IPFT secured one seat, the Tipra Motha bagged 13 seats and the CPI(M) won 10 seats.

**SRF LIMITED**  
Regd. Office: The Galleria, DLF Mayur Vihar, Unit No. 236 & 237, 2nd Floor, Mayur Vihar Phase, Noida Link Road, Mayur Vihar Phase I Extn, Delhi-110091  
Corporate Office: Block-C, Sector 45, Gurugram, Haryana-122 003  
Tel. No (Regd office) : (+91-11) 49482870; Fax : (+91-11) 49482900  
E-mail: cs@srf.com; Website: www.srf.com; CIN: L18101DL1970PLC005197

**NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given that Share Certificates pertaining to shares of the Company detailed below have been reported lost and request(s) for issue of duplicate Certificates in lieu thereof have been received by the Company :-

Sl. No.	Folio No.	Name of the Share Holder / Legal Heir (Claimant)	Cert-No.	Dist-No.	Lost Shares
1	SRF0114270	GOPAL KUMAR AGARWAL	120825	5124287-336	50
			412221-25	17907238-351	114
			561221-25	25927030-143	114
			90130717	2816054-63	50
			90130717	3619161-82	50
			90130717	3662860-77	50
2	SRF0141661	A P VIJAYENDRA BABU	1129524	309839090-43089	4000
			125639	6037882-914	33
3	V 0000998	VAKIL CHAND JAIN	349767	16720951-83	33
			1125345	308247666-929	264
4	SRF0049701	SARASWATHI A M	1129769	309926010-7609	1600
			143589	5791608-25	18
5	S 0000907	SAROJ PRATAPRAY SHAH	90038026-28	7524834-953	120
			90172706-07	13027770-869	100
			93258673	18598365-400	36
			136906	5625733-50	18
			329399-401	16301336-448	150
			478399-401	24321128-277	150
6	P 0000380	PRATAPRAY NANALAL SHAH	90031663-65	7300946-65	120
			90167535-36	12812680-779	100
			93258674	18584431-66	36
			375925-27	17144801-57	57
			524925-27	25164593-649	57
			1128411	309439826-40681	856
7	SRF0038479	ARVIND MESWANI	90080908-10	9384450-549	100
			BHORALL MESWANI	524925-27	25164593-649
			1128411	309439826-40681	856

Any person having any claim/objection in respect of the above requests should lodge such claim/objection with the company at its Corporate Office within 15 days of the publication of this notice, failing which the company will consider to give effect to the above requests.

Public is hereby cautioned against dealing with the aforesaid share certificates.

for SRF LIMITED  
Sd/-  
**RAJAT LAKHANPAL**  
Sr. VP (Corporate Compliance) & Company Secretary

Place: Gurugram  
Date: 20-03-2024



## CM Himanta thanks Tata for semiconductor facility in Assam

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the upcoming Rs 27,000-crore Tata semiconductor facility will put the state on the world semiconductor map and transform the economic landscape of eastern India.

Sarma called on Tata Sons Emeritus Chairman Ratan Tata and chairman N Chandrasekaran in Mumbai and thanked them for setting up the semiconductor facility whose foundation stone was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently.

"On behalf of the people of Assam, today in Mumbai I conveyed our heartfelt gratitude to Shri @RN'Tata2000 and Shri N Chandrasekharan for displaying remarkable conviction and faith in our State to execute this mega game changing investment", he posted on X.

## SSC withdraws exam results for Manipur

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Staff Selection Commission (SSC), which conducts recruitment for central government ministries, has withdrawn exam results for Manipur after data of one phase was inadvertently missed out.

The commission had on March 15 declared the final result of Constable (general duty) in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), Secretariat Security Force (SSF), Rifleman (general duty) in Assam Rifles and Sepoy in Narcotics Control Bureau Examination, 2022, for the state of Manipur. Due to the law and order situation in Manipur, the



physical and medical tests in respect of the candidates belonging to the state were conducted in multiple phases, the SSC said in a notice. While processing the result dated March 15, 2024, the data pertaining to one phase was inadvertently missed out, it added.

"In view of the above, the result published on 15.03.2024 is treated as withdrawn. The revised final result in respect of Manipur incorporating the complete data of the candidates will be published shortly," reads the SSC's notice dated March 18.

The SSC is one of the largest

recruiting agencies of the government with its main mandate being recruitment to all Group B (non-gazetted) and Group C (non-technical) posts in various central ministries and departments.

Manipur BJP MLA Rajkumar Imo Singh in a post on X said the chief secretary (CS) has been asked to take up the matter with the central government officials.

"Is it a genuine mistake or deep infiltration in the system, especially in places where we aren't able to reach on a general basis? But the state government is fighting against such infiltrators. CS was instructed to take up the matter with central officials and ensure its rectification. "It isn't going to be easy but we all have to stand united for the cause of our state," said Singh, a three-term sitting MLA, in the post on Tuesday night.

**INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK**  
Rohini Branch (1506), 101-110, 1st floor  
RG complex, Sector 08, New Delhi 110085

**ANNEXURE - I**  
Demand notice to Borrowers / Mortgagees/Guarantors  
Under Sub-section (2) of section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, 2002  
Date: 15.11.2023

**TO**  
SI Borrower [Name & full address]  
No [Indicate in bracket if borrower is also mortgagor]  
1 Radhay Sham (Borrower)  
House No.970, Gali No. 64, Lekhnagar, Trinagar, Delhi-110035

Dear Sirs,  
Re: Your Credit facilities with Indian Overseas Bank, Rohini Branch  
1. You, the above named borrowers of our bank have availed the following credit facilities from our Rohini Branch:  
The details of credit facilities with outstanding dues are as under:

Sl. No.	Nature of facility	Limit	Rates of Interest (including overdue interest) & rests	Total dues* as on 31.10.2023 (in Rs.)
1	RPUSH	Rs. 800000/-	9.15	Rs. 676154.20/-

2. The details of securities in favour of the Bank for the aforesaid credit facilities are:

Nature of security (Hypothecation / Mortgage etc.)	Particulars of securities [Full description with location, four boundaries, measurement on four sides total extent and name of owner to be given]
1. Hypothecation	MARUTI SUZUKI GRAND VITARA BREZZA - VDI AMT MODEL CAR Reg. No. DL8CAU4168 Chassis No. MA3NYFB1SJE395072 Engine No. D13A-5662755 Color: Pearl Arctic White Vehicle registered in the name of Mr. Radhay Sham

\*The Bank reserves its right to proceed under SARFAESI Act against the eligible securities and as regards the agricultural land security Nos. 6 above through other available legal course of action.

3. Consequent upon defaults committed by the above named borrowers in payment of the principal debt / interest as per agreed terms, your loan account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset on 31.10.2023 as per Reserve Bank of India guidelines and directives. Despite our reminders for regularization of your account, you have not repaid the overdue loans including interest thereon.

4. Since you the above named borrowers referred under SI Nos 1 & Nil have failed to meet the liabilities in respect of the credit facilities duly secured by various securities mentioned above and upon classification of your account as a Non-Performing Asset, we hereby recall our advances to SI Nos 1, 2 & 3 of you and give you notice under sub-section (2) of section 13 of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and call upon you to pay in full and discharge your liabilities to the bank aggregating to Rs. 676154.20/- as detailed in para 1 above, with further interest @ 15 % compounded with monthly rests as agreed, from the date mentioned above, within 60 days from the date of receipt of this notice.

5. Please note that in law the borrowers and guarantors are jointly and severally liable to repay the dues with further interest and charges etc.

6. Please note that interest will continue to accrue at the rates and rests as agreed for each credit facility until full repayment.

7. Your attention is also invited to sub-section (13) of section 13 of the said Act in terms of which you are restrained from transferring/alienating/shifting any of the secured assets referred to above by way of sale, lease or otherwise, without obtaining our prior written consent. Please also note that non-compliance / contravention of the provisions contained in the said Act or Rules made thereunder, is an offence which is punishable with imprisonment and/or fine as provided under section 29 of the Act.

8. We also put all of you on notice that if the account is not regularized/ repaid within the stipulated time and in case of the Bank classifying you as a willful defaulter as per RBI Guidelines, the Bank reserves its rights to publish your photograph in newspaper(s) with your name, address, details of default, dues etc., in accordance with RBI Guidelines besides initiating all recourses available to the Bank for recovery.

9. We also advise you that this demand notice is without prejudice to and shall not be construed as waiver of any other rights or remedies which we have for recovery of the above said dues as well as our right to make further demands in respect of sums due and payable by you.

10. Further, attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Yours faithfully,  
Authorized Officer

**INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK**  
Rohini Branch (1506), 101-110, 1st floor  
RG complex, Sector 08, New Delhi 110085

**ANNEXURE - I**  
Demand notice to Borrowers / Mortgagees/Guarantors  
Under Sub-section (2) of section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, 2002  
Date: 15.11.2023

**TO**  
SI Borrower [Name & full address]  
No [Indicate in bracket if borrower is also mortgagor]  
1 Radhay Sham (Borrower)  
House No.970, Gali No. 64, Lekhnagar, Trinagar, Delhi-110035

Dear Sirs,  
Re: Your Credit facilities with Indian Overseas Bank, Rohini Branch  
1. You, the above named borrowers of our bank have availed the following credit facilities from our Rohini Branch:  
The details of credit facilities with outstanding dues are as under:

Sl. No.	Nature of facility	Limit	Rates of Interest (including overdue interest) & rests	Total dues* as on 31.10.2023 (in Rs.)
1	RPUSH	Rs. 720000/-	9.15	Rs. 600092.00/-

2. The details of securities in favour of the Bank for the aforesaid credit facilities are:

Nature of security (Hypothecation / Mortgage etc.)	Particulars of securities [Full description with location, four boundaries, measurement on four sides total extent and name of owner to be given]
1. Hypothecation	Hypothecation of vehicle purchase out of bank finance MARUTI SWIFT-VDI AMT MODEL CAR Reg. No. DL8CAT7143 Chassis No. MBHCZC03SJB118539 Engine No. D13A-3225817 Color: Pearl Arctic White Vehicle registered in the name of Mr. Radhay Sham

\*The Bank reserves its right to proceed under SARFAESI Act against the eligible securities and as regards the agricultural land security Nos. 6 above through other available legal course of action.

3. Consequent upon defaults committed by the above named borrowers in payment of the principal debt / interest as per agreed terms, your loan account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset on 31.10.2023 as per Reserve Bank of India guidelines and directives. Despite our reminders for regularization of your account, you have not repaid the overdue loans including interest thereon.

4. Since you the above named borrowers referred under SI Nos 1 & Nil have failed to meet the liabilities in respect of the credit facilities duly secured by various securities mentioned above and upon classification of your account as a Non-Performing Asset, we hereby recall our advances to SI Nos 1, 2 & 3 of you and give you notice under sub-section (2) of section 13 of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and call upon you to pay in full and discharge your liabilities to the bank aggregating to Rs. 600092.00/- as detailed in para 1 above, with further interest @ 15 % compounded with monthly rests as agreed, from the date mentioned above, within 60 days from the date of receipt of this notice.

5. Please note that in law the borrowers and guarantors are jointly and severally liable to repay the dues with further interest and charges etc.

6. Please note that interest will continue to accrue at the rates and rests as agreed for each credit facility until full repayment.

7. Your attention is also invited to sub-section (13) of section 13 of the said Act in terms of which you are restrained from transferring/alienating/shifting any of the secured assets referred to above by way of sale, lease or otherwise, without obtaining our prior written consent. Please also note that non-compliance / contravention of the provisions contained in the said Act or Rules made thereunder, is an offence which is punishable with imprisonment and/or fine as provided under section 29 of the Act.

8. We also put all of you on notice that if the account is not regularized/ repaid within the stipulated time and in case of the Bank classifying you as a willful defaulter as per RBI Guidelines, the Bank reserves its rights to publish your photograph in newspaper(s) with your name, address, details of default, dues etc., in accordance with RBI Guidelines besides initiating all recourses available to the Bank for recovery.

9. We also advise you that this demand notice is without prejudice to and shall not be construed as waiver of any other rights or remedies which we have for recovery of the above said dues as well as our right to make further demands in respect of sums due and payable by you.

10. Further, attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Yours faithfully,  
Authorized Officer

**PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE**  
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited shal Tower Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road  
Karol Bagh New Delhi- 110005.

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Physical Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Vandana Sinha/ Kamlesh Kaur Sinha/ LBDEL0003217779	House No. RZ F 1/49, 1st Floor Mahavir Enclave Delhi- 110068/ March 19, 2024	March 09, 2023 Rs. 34,05,158/-	Delhi/Ncr

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

Date : March 21, 2024  
Place : Delhi/ Ncr  
Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**BPTP Parklands Pride Limited**  
Registered Office : OT-30, Third Floor, Next Door, Parklands, Sector -76, Faridabad, Haryana-121004  
Phone No.: 0120-4492-650 website: www.bptp.com

This Public notice is being issued in compliance with Memo No. LC-890-D-JE(MK)-2024/9538 dated 14.03.2024 issued by Director Town & Country Planning, Haryana Chandigarh ("DTCP").

**Whereas**, BPTP Parklands Pride Limited (earlier known as New Age Town Planners Pvt. Ltd.) and others are in the process of developing the residential plotted colony namely "Pride" on the land measuring 152.973 acres situated in Sector 77 and 78, Faridabad, Haryana as per terms of license nos. 30 of 2010 dated 01.04.2010 and 12 of 2012 dated 22.02.2012 granted by DTCP along with consolidated Layout Plan. Now, DTCP has issued the Letter of Intent (LOI) vide its memo no. LC-890-D-JE(MK)-2024/9538 dated 14.03.2024 for grant of licence for setting up of residential plotted colony over an additional area measuring 3.8375 acres situated in Sector-77, Faridabad, Haryana in addition to aforesaid licenses, whereby the existing earlier approved layout plan of the colony stands revised.

**And whereas**, DTCP has also issued a Provisional Layout Plan for a collective area measuring 156.8105 acres (152.973 acres + 3.8375 acres) after merging the additional area with the existing licensed area. The planned development of 0.75 acres has been changed and the undetermined usage of 0.62 acres has been converted into the planned development area. There is no change in the green area of the colony.

**And whereas**, several individuals/allottees have made bookings/entered into purchase agreements for allotment of plots/shops/properties in the residential colony "Pride".

**And whereas**, the earlier approved layout plan bearing drawing no. DGTCP-3304 dated 03.08.2012 for the said colony is now proposed to be revised without any change in the area of the plot(s) wherein any third-party rights have been created or where plots have been allotted, thus the existing development works have not been impacted.

**And whereas**, the office of Director, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh has directed us to seek objections from allottees of the "Pride" colony in accordance with Policy dated 25.01.2021 against the revision of Layout Plan as a pre-condition for allowing such revision in the Layout Plan.

Accordingly, vide this public notice objections are hereby invited from the allottees on the proposed revision of the Layout Plan of the said colony. A copy of the earlier approved Layout Plan bearing drawing no. DGTCP-3304 dated 03.08.2012 and the revised Layout Plan approved "in-principle" vide memo no. LC-890-D-JE(MK)-2024/9538 dated 14.03.2024 along with the drawing is available for perusal on our official website i.e. www.bptp.com. The said Layout Plan can also be perused at the Registered Office of the undersigned as well as in the office of Senior Town Planner (STP), HSPV Complex, Sector-12, Faridabad, Haryana.

Any existing allottee of the "Pride" colony having any objection to the revised Layout Plan may file his/her objection in the office of Senior Town Planner, HSPV Complex, Sector-12, Faridabad, Haryana within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it shall be assumed that there are no objections to the said revised Layout Plan of the colony.

Place: Faridabad  
Date: 21.03.2024  
Rohit Mohan  
For BPTP Parklands Pride Limited

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Ktm. Komal Sharma W/o Mr. Ajay Prasad Sharma is the owner of A FRESHOLD RESIDENTIAL HOUSE BUILT ON Plot No. 74/1, area measuring 59.52 sq. mtr. out of khasra no. 266, situated at New Garden Enclave, revenue Village - Manaudipur, Mainpur, Tehsil & Dist. Ghaziabad U.P. vide Registered Gift Deed Dated 18.01.2024. Sub-Registered at Ghaziabad. Doc No. 623 Vide Volume No. 16395 Book No. 1 Page No. 87/108 Dated 18.01.2024 and same same mortgaging the said property with SMFG INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LTD. if anybody has any charge/interest in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. Mrs. Prasenita Lata, Advocate SG Associates (Law Firm) FF 18, Lotus Pore Plaza Vignita Khad Hindrapuram, Ghaziabad UP. Email: sgassociates@gmail.com. Ph: 791117264, 632006057

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Amandeep Kaur Sembhi W/o Gaurav Sharma R/o B-4, Sector-30, VTC-Noida, P-Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh -201303 have changed my name from Amandeep Kaur to Amandeep Kaur Sembhi for all future purposes.

PD(31)C

**THANKSGIVING**

Thank you holly spirit for all the blessings.Celine.

PD(31)C





www.dailypioneer.com

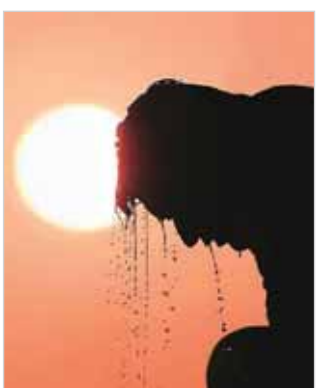
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PAPER WITH PASSION

## World on the verge

Climate crisis escalates as UN declares 2014-2023 the hottest decade ever, 2023 the hottest year on record

The past decade has been a stark wake-up call for the world as the United Nations (UN) records reveal that the world is moving towards an environmental crisis. From 2014 to 2023, the planet experienced unprecedented heatwaves, melting ice caps, and extreme weather events, marking it as the hottest decade ever recorded. Furthermore, 2023 emerged as the hottest year on record. The data compiled by the UN paints a grim picture of rising temperatures across the globe. Each year from 2014 to 2023 consistently ranked among the hottest on record, with 2023 surpassing all previous records. The consequences of these rising temperatures are manifold. Extreme weather events, including hurricanes, droughts, and wildfires, have become more frequent and severe, wreaking havoc on ecosystems and human settlements alike. The worst part is that it would have a direct impact on the life of the people especially in the developing countries where climate shift directly affects agriculture activity and related sustenance issues.



Life as we know it, would change drastically. Greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, have driven the planet towards this perilous state.

Despite repeated warnings from scientists and environmental experts, global efforts to curb emissions have fallen short of what is required to mitigate climate change effectively. Political inertia and vested interests have often hindered meaningful action on climate change. The lack of consensus among nations, coupled with reluctance from powerful industrial lobbies, has impeded progress in enacting robust climate policies. The UN's findings serve as a clarion call for immediate and concerted action on a global scale. First and foremost, rapid decarbonisation of the global economy is imperative. This entails transitioning away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. Investments in clean technology and sustainable infrastructure are crucial for achieving this transition. Furthermore, international cooperation is essential to address climate change effectively. The Paris Agreement, despite its limitations, provides a framework for countries to set emission reduction targets and collaborate on adaptation efforts. However, greater ambition and commitment are needed from all nations to meet the agreement's goals and limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The global community must actively pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) about climate change, with a deadline set for 2030. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on climate change, Goal 13, emphasises urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. We cannot wish away climate change. A concrete action is required on the part of the governments and the individuals. Every person in every country would be adversely affected by climate change. It is now or never. The time for action is now, lest we condemn future generations to inherit a planet on the brink of catastrophe.

Life as we know it, would change drastically. Greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, have driven the planet towards this perilous state. Despite repeated warnings from scientists and environmental experts, global efforts to curb emissions have fallen short of what is required to mitigate climate change effectively. Political inertia and vested interests have often hindered meaningful action on climate change. The lack of consensus among nations, coupled with reluctance from powerful industrial lobbies, has impeded progress in enacting robust climate policies. The UN's findings serve as a clarion call for immediate and concerted action on a global scale. First and foremost, rapid decarbonisation of the global economy is imperative. This entails transitioning away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. Investments in clean technology and sustainable infrastructure are crucial for achieving this transition. Furthermore, international cooperation is essential to address climate change effectively. The Paris Agreement, despite its limitations, provides a framework for countries to set emission reduction targets and collaborate on adaptation efforts. However, greater ambition and commitment are needed from all nations to meet the agreement's goals and limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The global community must actively pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) about climate change, with a deadline set for 2030. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on climate change, Goal 13, emphasises urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. We cannot wish away climate change. A concrete action is required on the part of the governments and the individuals. Every person in every country would be adversely affected by climate change. It is now or never. The time for action is now, lest we condemn future generations to inherit a planet on the brink of catastrophe.

### PICTALK



Students pose for photos during a voter awareness campaign ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Chennai

# Changing contours of international relations



SUDHIR HINDWAN

In a world fraught with geopolitical tensions and environmental concerns, the imperative for collaborative diplomacy has never been more pressing

In today's global arena, myriad challenges ranging from geopolitical conflicts like the Russia-Ukraine tensions to the pervasive threat of transnational terrorism, and the assertive global ambitions of China, underscore the complex landscape we navigate. Amidst these pressing concerns, environmental issues have ascended to the zenith of international politics. Notably, the recent ruling by the Administrative Court in France, imposing a substantial fine of nearly 19.78 million Euros for failing to curb pollution, underscores the burgeoning emphasis on climate change policies. Conversely, nations such as Germany and the UK have intensified their efforts to combat environmental degradation, recognizing its profound ramifications for public health and global economies. Entities like the European Environmental Agency and the World Health Organization persistently advocate for urgent action on climate change in the post-Kyoto Protocol era.



Challenges persist unabated, including burgeoning populations, dependence on fossil fuels, and the phased decommissioning of nuclear power plants across Europe. Nonetheless, effective measures like stringent production regulations and robust waste management systems have exhibited promise in alleviating environmental hazards. Across Asia, countries grapple with issues like soil contamination and industrial pollution, necessitating concerted endeavors to tackle water and air quality concerns. Despite these challenges, recent economic negotiations have catalyzed cooperation among nations, fostering trade, economic partnerships, and mechanisms for investment protection. Endeavors to bolster collaboration across regions like Asia, the Pacific, and Africa underscore a commitment to addressing shared challenges collectively. Leaders such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and EU officials Ursula Von Der Leyen and Charles Michel merit recognition for their visionary stewardship in nurturing diplomatic ties and fortifying global security. A pivotal issue on the agenda

revolves around the relaxation of intellectual property rights concerning vaccines to expedite global vaccination campaigns. A burgeoning consensus on curtailing climate change and advancing renewable energy sources reflects a collective dedication to sustainable development. Landmark agreements like the 2019 Japan-EU deal exemplify significant strides toward this common objective. Relations between India and the EU have flourished, marked by substantial increases in trade volumes, particularly with nations like Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. The EU's Civil Protection System's support during the COVID-19 pandemic has further cemented ties and paved the way for enhanced cooperation. Diplomatic gestures from leaders in Belgium, Spain, and France underscore the depth of relations between India and the EU. While trade and investment have served as bridges to overcome differences, challenges persist, including issues related to market access and foreign direct investment. Collaborative efforts in areas such as nuclear energy and sustainable development signal alignment on environmental concerns. Sustained negotia-



IN ADDITION TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, FOSTERING INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE GROWTH IS PARAMOUNT IN ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF GLOBAL INSTABILITY AND CONFLICT

tions could yield mechanisms to counter terrorism, cyber threats, and bolster maritime security. In times of crisis, a collaborative approach rooted in equity and solidarity emerges as indispensable, underscoring the significance of international cooperation. Investing in education, healthcare, and technology stands as imperative for global development and resilience. Nations must adeptly navigate evolving geopolitical dynamics, prioritising mutual prosperity and stability through robust multilateralism. Raymond Aron's astute observations on international relations resonate strongly, illuminating the shifting contours of global politics. A strategic vision founded on cooperation and resilience is indispensable to navigate the intricacies of an increasingly complex world. Embracing innovation and integration empowers nations to confront challenges collectively. It is imperative to acknowledge the interconnectedness of nations and the shared responsibility to address pressing issues. The urgency of climate change demands bold and concerted action on a global scale. It transcends political borders, socioeconomic dispar-

ities, and cultural differences, necessitating a united front in combating its deleterious effects. Moreover, the imperative to address environmental concerns extends beyond policy frameworks and governmental initiatives. It requires the active engagement of civil society, businesses, academia, and grassroots movements. Initiatives such as youth-led climate strikes, corporate sustainability pledges, and community-driven conservation projects exemplify the diverse array of efforts needed to tackle environmental challenges comprehensively. Fostering inclusive and equitable growth is paramount in addressing the root causes of global instability and conflict. Furthermore, the role of technology and innovation cannot be overlooked in shaping the future trajectory of global affairs. Embracing a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and knowledge-sharing is essential in harnessing the transformative potential of technology for the collective good. The time for action is now, and the stakes could not be higher. (The author, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award, is a professor and an expert on strategic affairs; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### OFFICERS WITH POLITICAL LEANINGS

Sir — The Election Commission transferring the officials is a subject of debate and discussion all over the country. One fails to understand how the government has been functioning with such officials known for political leanings. Service rules do not permit employees of government service to function in favour of any political organisation. Whenever the government changes officials are reshuffled based on their political commitments. This makes it clear that officials are normal humans and they are not prohibited morally from being supportive of some political party or the other. The shabby incident in the Mayoral election in Chandigarh displays the depth of officials' attitude towards their service rules and commitment to discharge their duties in an impartial manner sticking to the rule of law. Political parties crying foul against such transfers also stand exposed for having nourished such officials all along. In the present context, the argument that the E.C. is acting to the dictates of the ruling party is also a matter of concern to everyone. The process of keeping democracy alive begins with the effective functioning of the Election Commission. Already section of the public is demanding not to deploy EVMs. This is because of mistrust of the electronic outfit's vulnerability to manipulations as well as over the ruling section that stands abjectly exposed in the Electoral Bonds issue. E.C. needs to prove itself as a body that deserves the confidence of everyone.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

#### ENSURE FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

Sir — Revered columnist Kalyani Shankar's 'Addressing the poll conundrum' (The Pioneer, March 19) is a telling comment on the political scenario presently catching the electorate's fancy just after the election Watchdog on Saturday blew bugle for the much-hyped Lok Sabha polls, commencing from April 19 to last till June 1 across the states, even as a Model Code of Conduct (MCC) has come into force. Given the ongoing

#### Imported EVs to flood Indian market



Electric vehicles will soon make a beeline catering to Indian consumers in a big way if recent trends in the world landscape of EVs are to be believed. In a major setback to the domestic manufacturing set-up, the govt has reduced the import duties on fully built electric vehicles to meet its climate goals until 2030. This move is a break from the past promise of a flagship programme envisaged in 2020 for an Atmanirbhar Bharat. The brainstorming sessions for over one year to attract big companies month of deliberating upon the top EV company Tesla. The latter has struck a big deal by convincing India to bring down import duty

for a limited period. This big bargain from Elon Musk will allow the import of completely built-up (CBU) electric cars that have a minimum cost, insurance and freight value of dollar 35,000 at a 15% import duty. At present C.B.U. vehicles attract cent per cent duty. However, the benefit of lower import duty will be available only to those companies that commit a minimum investment of Rs 4150 crore or Rs dollar 500 million to manufacture in India. It remains to be seen how domestic internal combustion engine makers in India cater to the need for a well-knit market plan. A competitive environment resulting in a big blow to the domestic segment in the high category cannot be ruled out, but below the 30 lakh price segment, Indian manufacturers can still be competitive. Long and short-term climatic goals of net zero emissions by 2070 will require not only cutting down on emissions but also building confidence in domestic manufacturers.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

heated salvos between the ruling NDA and the Congress-led opposition parties' INDIA Block, the Election Commission has an uphill task ahead given that either group is going to leave no stone unturned to win these elections either by hook or by crook. Hence, the writer's sage advice that the poll watchdog must ensure free and fair Elections, merits a mature reflection given that the Sword of Damocles is always there hanging during the entire conduct of the elections while the menace of muscle power, money power and game of misinformation, in stark violation of the Model Code of Conduct, cannot be ruled out either. Hence, the Government must also ensure political transparency by fixing responsibility for upholding ethical behaviour through election campaigning. Simultaneously, there must be no let-ups in the security measures either so that the antisocial elements cannot fish in the troubled waters.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

#### MENTAL HEALTH IS IMPERATIVE

Sir — Mental health is significant in every phase of life, from childhood to adulthood. When a person wants to live peacefully, they choose family, social support, spirituality, and connections to nature. In India, it is reported that nearly 19.86% of the population suffers from mental health diseases, and nearly 14.3% of deaths worldwide are due to mental illness. Being completely engaged in a tedious and mundane work life leads to serious and prolonged mental health problems. The societal pressure of being called insane is a long-standing stereotype. Mental health and increased suicides among youngsters do correlate with them. It's okay to not be okay sometimes; seeking assistance demonstrates inner resilience. "Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, but stigma and bias shame us all."

Shreeya Acharya | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

# Ideological struggle or political blunder

The CPI in Kerala finds itself embroiled in an ideological conundrum, grappling with stark contradictions within its leadership



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

The ruling CPI(M) in Kerala is in a state of confusion. The party, described as the world's largest and most powerful Marxist outfit, finds itself speaking in different voices over its main enemy. While E P Jayarajan, the convenor of the Left Democratic Front who is also an intellectual giant declared that the Lok Sabha election is being fought between the socialist, secular and democratic CPI(M) and the "communal" BJP, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the female face of the party K K Shylaja claim that the battle is between the Marxists and the Congress. The CPI(M)'s State Secretary M V Govindan, the lower primary school drill master who is the chief ideologist of the global Left movement also declared that Jayarajan was wrong and the true fight was between his party and the GOP. Jayarajan was shocked and shattered as the party's leadership washed their hands off his outburst. Remember, he is the one who gave up his health and youth to fight the communalists. Whenever serious corruption charges



are made against the party leadership, it is Jayarajan who appears like a sumo fighter for justifying the CPI(M). His quotes and one-liners remain eternal classics in the growth history of the party. When the CPI(M) leadership was caught red-handed for accepting cash and kind from businessmen like Santiago Martin (yes, the same Martin who has been named as one of the biggest purchasers of electoral Bonds), comrade Jayarajan was the one who took the party's class enemies head-on. "You cannot build the party by consuming black tea and daal vada," declared Jayarajan bringing the curtain down once and for ever on the controversy. When the chief minister, Shylaja and Govindan came out with synchronised statements rubbishing his views,

a baffled Jayarajan disappeared from public glare for three days and declared after he resurfaced that the media had distorted his statement. This is the easiest way out for the Marxists who are caught in putting the foot in the mouth syndrome- blame the media. Since the media persons are unanimous in their opinion that the party is always right, no one dares to challenge the version of the commissars. In Kerala, the general feeling is that the CPI(M) is an intellectual powerhouse and only the leaders understand what they speak. Jayarajan hogged global headlines during his avatar as industries minister in the first Pinarayi Vijayan government (2016-2021). He was the minister for sports and a channel reporter approached him for his message on the demise of Mohammed Ali, the boxing star of the 1960s and 1970s. "I am shocked over the untimely demise of Mohammed Ali. He has brought many laurels to India by winning gold medals in many international events. We will make all arrangements to bring his

body back to Kerala," declared the sports minister. Though the CPI(M) has its presence only in Kerala, the party leaders are always at the forefront of making comments about happenings in Latin America, Africa, and Europe. People in Argentina where he was born and Cuba, where he served as minister for industries, have forgotten him. But the comrades in Kerala adore Guevara as an icon. Aleida, his daughter by his second wife, was taken aback when she saw hundreds of volunteers of the CPI(M) spotting her dad's picture on their T-shirts. It is another fact that none of them know who this character Guevara is. The comrades in Kerala need a re-education in history because for them Josef Stalin, Mao, Fidel Castro etc are deme gods. This is the result of the long-drawn-out indoctrination through party study classes where black tea and daal vada are served free of cost. One needs intelligence and common sense to identify one's real enemies. (The writer is special correspondent with the Pioneer, views are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN

## THE ENIGMA OF KARMA

The law of karma, which dictates that we reap what we sow, is an eternal truth



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

We were taught this in our early childhood that we would reap what we sow, so why is it that the good ones turn bad and the bad ones turn worse? Despite the law of karma being in operation, why do people not shy away from doing the wrong? This lack of fear of being punished has thus resulted in a world where people with low morals are holding high positions & in contrast, law-abiding persons are often seen suffering. They are crushed under the weight of a system that serves the corrupt and the clever.

In short, we can say that the vices of greed, anger and ego are overpowering the virtues of compassion, humility and benevolence & the whole world has been left to the mercy of corrupt human beings. Secondly, if the karmic accounts were settled in a just manner, then why is it that the world cycle continues to head towards downfall? In other words, if people settle their karmic debts regularly, they must return to equilibrium, so why do they continue to suffer? Hence, it seems as if something is missing that yet needs to be understood by us.

We all know that whenever a soul sins, it repays in the form of suffering in that birth itself or the following births. However, even after it has repaid its karmic account, it does not become completely free of evil in the way that it inherits a tendency to commit that sin. In other words, punishment may clear the soul's debt but the soul has lost its innocence. Hence, when the sin is repeated many times, the tendency hardens in the form of samskaras or what we call personality traits and the soul is trapped in it. This also brings to the fore the understanding that when a person commits a wrong he is not just planting a sapling of suffering for himself but also digging a pit for a greater sin in the future. The best



examples of such individuals can be found in juvenile homes where a teenager is first punished for a petty crime & is given a chance to reform, but it is not necessary that it would reform him. Most of the time, it has been found that the teenager ends up becoming a hardcore criminal & becomes a hardened jailbird.

It is said that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future. However, going by the law of karma, the saint must have done several good deeds in the past to reach a stage of such a spiritual elevation, likewise, the criminal too will surely bear suffering in the future for the crimes that he is committing in present. This also brings us to the conclusion that the initiation of the soul into evil and the formation of the sanskaras render the soul capable of more sins and drain it of its energy to do the right thing. This causes the world drama cycle to undergo a downfall. From the most elevated time of Satyug, it comes down to Kaliyug and still heading to its extreme.

Now as the world drama has reached the end of the Iron Age from the most elevated time of the Golden Age, it is totally in a dilapidated form as it has become old and everyone is settling their karmic accounts. The governments are trying to make new laws, they are initiating new schemes but the condition of the world is still deteriorating. It is this time when the Almighty Supreme descends on this earth to transform this world from the old to the new, to change it from hell to heaven. He is currently performing his highest divine task of heralding a new dawn by giving his beloved children the right knowledge so that they can settle their past accounts well and naturally keep away from further indulgence in vices. So let us all come together to receive the nectar of divine knowledge & burn away our sins and transform our old sanskaras from their very root to attain an immortal stage of divinity.

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

# The enduring resilience of the puppetry world

Every year, on the 21st of March, the global community converges in celebration of puppetry, an art form that transcends time and culture



RAJDEEP PATHAK

On the 21st of March, every year, the world comes together to celebrate the enchanting art form of puppetry. This day pays homage to the rich history and cultural significance of puppetry, tracing its origins from ancient civilizations to its modern-day relevance as a powerful medium of communication. From Asia to Europe, Africa to the Americas, puppetry has woven itself into the fabric of human expression, captivating audiences with its blend of entertainment, education, and social commentary.

From the mystique of ancient Egypt's religious ceremonies to the grandeur of Greece and Rome's theatrical spectacles, puppets danced across stages, breathing life into myths, legends, and tales of old. In the East, the delicate intricacies of Chinese puppetry, the vibrant storytelling of 'Indian Puppet Theater', and the mesmerising performances of Indonesian 'Wayang' (the Javanese word for 'shadow' or 'imagination' that originated in the 10th century from the thalubomalata of Southern India) captivated audiences with their diverse styles and techniques, showcasing the boundless creativity of human imagination. Across continents and epochs, puppetry served not only as entertainment but as a profound expression of cultural identity, tradition, and storytelling prowess, leaving an indelible mark on the collective heritage of humanity.

India, too, celebrates a rich puppetry legacy spanning millennia. Known as "Kathputli" (combining 'kath' for wood and 'putli' for dolls) in Hindi, puppetry weaves tales, educates, and entertains, mirroring India's cultural vividness. From Rajasthan's vibrant shows and South India's intricate shadow puppetry, they all showcase this diversity. Throughout history, puppets have been vehicles for social and political discourse, challenging norms and stimulating reflection. Here, besides narrating religious epics and tales, imparting moral wisdom, and advocating for social causes like gender equality, environmental conservation, etc, puppetry conveys a delicate, but strong message. Embedded within their strings, lies a timeless tradition, echoing the heartbeat of a nation. In this colourful landscape of Indian puppetry, numerous renowned puppeteers have left an indelible mark with their mesmerising performances and innovative story-telling techniques. One such luminary is Sangeet Natak Akademy Awardee, Puran Bhatt, a master puppeteer from Rajasthan, whose vibrant 'Kathputli' performances have enchanted audiences for decades. Hailing from the Bhatt community, Puran Bhatt's puppet shows are a celebration of Rajasthani folklore and mythology, featuring lively characters, intricate costumes, and dynamic music. His dedication to preserving and promoting the art of 'Kathputli', has earned him accolades both nationally and internationally, showcasing the enduring appeal of traditional puppetry in contemporary times.

In South India, the art of shadow puppetry, known as "Tolpava Koothu," has thrived under the skilled hands of puppeteers like K. K. Ramachandra Pulavar. As a fifth-generation puppeteer, Pulavar



IT IS UNDENIABLE THAT PUPPETRY SERVES AS A POWERFUL VEHICLE FOR CULTURAL EXPRESSION AND COMMUNAL BONDING WORLDWIDE

has inherited a rich legacy of story-telling, passed down through generations of his family. Through his captivating shadow plays, Pulavar brings to life ancient epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, using intricately crafted leather puppets and vibrant light effects. His performances not only entertain but also educate, imparting moral lessons and cultural values to audiences young and old.

It is undeniable that puppetry serves as a powerful vehicle for cultural expression and communal bonding worldwide. Southeast Asian nations like Indonesia and Thailand embrace traditions such as "Wayang Kulit" and "Nang Talung," weaving entertainment with spiritual significance and enriching rituals and festivals. Across Africa, Mali's "Sogo bo" showcases intricate wooden puppets, conveying ancestral wisdom and moral teachings. Moreover, South Africa's puppetry catalyses social change and cultural preservation. Also, Latin American countries like Mexico and Peru celebrate puppetry, blending wrestling with theatre for social commentary and reviving ancient forms like "Sarhua" to reinforce community pride and identity. These diverse puppetry traditions transcend borders, offering timeless tales and moral lessons that resonate across generations, fostering unity and celebrating cultural heritage worldwide.

Not only this, puppetry workshops and educational programmes play a crucial role in empowering marginalised communities by providing them with a platform to voice their concerns and preserve their cultural heritage. Organisations like the 'Bread and Puppet Theatre' in the United States and the 'Hina

Community Theatre' in Nepal are a few examples, which conduct workshops and training sessions that empower individuals to create and perform puppetry productions that address social issues, promote cultural diversity, and foster community engagement.

Reflecting on puppetry, Jim Henson, the American puppeteer, animator, cartoonist, actor, inventor, and filmmaker who achieved worldwide notability as the creator of the Muppets says that "Puppetry is a magical art form that transcends language and culture, captivating audiences with its boundless creativity and imagination."

Julie Taymor, the American director and writer of theatre, opera, and the fame of stage adaptation of 'The Lion King', believes that "Through the art of puppetry, we can explore the depths of human emotion and experience, shedding light on the beauty and complexity of the human condition." Further, according to actor Richard Bradshaw "Puppetry is not just entertainment; it is a powerful medium for social change, offering a voice to the voiceless and challenging the status quo."

In the realm of contemporary Indian puppetry, Dadi Pudumjee stands as a pioneering figure, pushing the boundaries of the art form with his innovative approach and collaborative spirit.

As the founder of the 'Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust', Pudumjee has spearheaded numerous initiatives to revitalise and modernise puppetry in India. His groundbreaking productions blend traditional techniques with the modern art of telling stories, addressing pressing social issues and contemporary themes. Through

workshops, festivals, and international collaborations, Pudumjee has played a pivotal role in elevating the status of Indian puppetry on the global stage, showcasing its relevance and adaptability in the modern world.

It is also undeniable that puppeteers, especially in India face great hardships. The July 2022 issue of the International Journal of English and Studies (IJOES) features an article by Sweta Gour discussing the declining tradition of puppetry in India. Gour highlights factors such as lack of patronage, modernization, and technological distractions contributing to its demise. Poverty among puppeteers, inadequate support, and limited awareness further threaten its existence. Dadi Pudumjee has time and again emphasised the need for puppetry to evolve to remain relevant. Through various forums, Pudumjee has underscored the challenges faced by puppeteers in maintaining financial stability and therefore, suggests innovation as crucial for its survival.

Pudumjee says that without adaptation, traditional puppetry risks becoming obsolete amid changing audience preferences and technological advancements. Since they are characters, not people, the puppets create a world in which we recognise ourselves and identify with the characters as the drama unfolds. Our job, as audiences, is to keep this tradition alive and going and see that this art doesn't decline and fade away as another bygone chapter of history. The timeless tales created by these engaging puppets hanging by their strings must go on.

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

# Chirping for change: Tiny guardians of urban ecosystems

Sparrows hold a deep cultural and spiritual resonance. These small birds have been revered as symbols of love and fidelity

In the modern era, we have transitioned from small villages to towns and cities. With the changing physiography and land use pattern, our surroundings have changed, but within these urban landscapes, the balance of nature is maintained by the tiniest creatures to the large animals. One such important part of the natural ecosystem is the sparrow, which plays an important role in maintaining balance and harmony.

The word 'Sparrow' symbolises one of the smallest-sized bird groups in the world which is an important species of the urban ecosystem. Among this group, House sparrows are widely distributed and the most common species that inhabit every corner of the world except the polar region



DHRITHI BANERJEE

and some parts of colder Russia. India is home to seven species of sparrows, which are found throughout the country, the majority of them are residents, yet two species are migratory.

From the bustling streets of the country to the tranquil villages of Northeast India, the cheerful chirping of sparrows has been an integral part of our auditory landscape, evoking feelings of nostalgia and con-

nection to the natural world. But during the '80s to early 2000s, the chirps of the house sparrows started to fade and the colonies of these small creatures slowly began to disappear. In Andhra Pradesh, their population reduced up to 88% and in other states like Kerala, Gujarat, and Rajasthan, the numbers dropped down to 20%. In coastal areas of the country, the population dropped to 70 to 80%.

**Concern and Initiative** The first World Sparrow Day was celebrated on 20th March 2010 in different parts of the world to mark a day for the House Sparrow, to convey the message of its conservation and appreciation of the common biodiversity around us. As part of conservation efforts, in 2012, the sparrow was

declared the State Bird of Delhi and in 2013, the State Bird of Bihar. This declaration was part of "Rise for the Sparrows"-India's largest conservation programme for sparrows. Efforts have also been initiated to develop sparrow-friendly habitats in urban areas. Through initiatives such as the Sparrow Restoration Project, communities have come together to create green spaces, install nest boxes, and adopt sustainable practices that support sparrows and other urban wildlife.

**What led to this sharp fall?** Overall, the decline in House Sparrow populations is likely due to a combination of factors, mentioned below: **Habitat Loss:** Rapid changes in the urban landscape, and building structures, have led to



the loss of suitable nesting and roosting habitats for House Sparrows.

**Increased predation:** Many birds of prey mainly hawks and owls hunt and feed on house sparrows. The domestic cat now is a significant predator of House Sparrows. **Climate Change:** Changes in weather patterns and temperature impact the availability of food.

**Electromagnetic Radiation:** Some studies suggest that long-term exposure to low-intensity electromagnetic radiation from mobile phone (GSM) base stations, causes low population density of house sparrows during the breeding season. Some studies

do not support this conclusion. Merely a Bird? No, It's More Than That! Sparrows also hold substantial value in mythology, religion, and aesthetics. They are mentioned in various Hindu texts, and even in the epic 'The Ramayana', where sparrows are portrayed as a symbol of love, fidelity, and divine blessings. In Christianity, sparrows are often mentioned in the Bible as a symbol of God's love and care for all creatures, no matter how small.

Sparrows have made a significant contribution to the history of Indian ornithology. The journey of the "Birdman of India" Salim Ali, started from an incident with the Yellow-throated Sparrow (*Gymnoris xanthocolis*), which motivated him to ded-

icate himself to ornithological research and the conservation of India's natural heritage.

Salim Ali's ornithological journey started with a sparrow, later on, he described his life-long journey in the book 'The fall of a sparrow'. As the sparrow's song grows fainter, we are obligated to confront our role in its decline and the broader ecological crisis unfolding around us. The life of Salim Ali was shaped by a single sparrow, yet if we fail to address these concerns seriously, there may indeed be a "Fall of the Sparrow", which is not merely a loss of a small bird; it represents a decline in the health and vitality of our ecosystems.

(The writer is the Director, the Zoological Survey of India; views are personal)



# Biden and Trump notch wins in Tuesday primaries

AP ■ TEMPE (US)

As Joe Biden and Donald Trump moved closer to a November rematch, primary voters around the country on Tuesday urged their favoured candidate to keep up the fight and worried about what might happen if their side loses this fall.

There was little suspense about Tuesday's results as both candidates are already their parties' presumptive nominees. Trump easily won Republican primaries in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Kansas and Ohio. Biden did the same except in Florida, where Democrats had cancelled their primary and opted to award all 224 of their delegates to Biden.

Instead, the primaries and key downballot races became a reflection of the national political mood. With many Americans unenthusiastic about 2024's choice for the White House, both Biden and Trump's campaigns are working to fire up their bases by tearing into each other and warning of the perils of the

opponent. Those who did turn out to vote Tuesday seemed to hear that.

Pat Shackelford, an 84-year-old caregiver in Mesa, Arizona, said she voted for Trump in Arizona's primary to send the former president a message. "I wanted to encourage him that the fight has been worthwhile, that more of us are behind him than maybe the media tells you," Shackelford said.

Jamie and Cassandra Neal, sisters who both live in Phoenix, said they were unenthusiastic Biden supporters until they saw the vigour the president brought to his State of the Union speech. It fired them up for the coming election. "Beforehand it was like, Well, he's the only decent one there," said Cassandra Neal, 42. "After his address it was like, OK, let's do it!"

Jamie Neal, 45, said Biden had been "way too nice" before and needed to match Trump, whom she described as "vicious". "I hate to say it, sometimes you need to equal the looniness to get the person out," she said.



President Joe Biden listens before he speaks at a campaign event at El Portal restaurant Tuesday in Phoenix

"Sometimes you have to fight fire with fire." In Ohio's Republican Senate primary, Trump-backed businessman Bernie Moreno defeated two challengers, Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Matt Dolan, whose family owns the Cleveland

Guardians baseball team. Moreno and Trump appeared together Saturday at a rally where Trump praised his endorsed candidate as a "warrior" and ramped up his dark rhetoric, saying that were he not to be elected, "it's going to be a bloodbath for the country".

His campaign insists he was referring to the auto industry and not the country as a whole. In the final days of the campaign, The Associated Press reported on Thursday that in 2008, someone with access to Moreno's work email account created a profile on an adult website seeking "Men for 1-on-1 sex".

The AP could not definitively confirm that it was created by Moreno himself. Moreno's lawyer said a former intern created the account and provided a statement from the intern, Dan Ricci, who said he created the account as "part of a juvenile prank". Questions about the profile have circulated in GOP circles for the past month, sparking frustration among senior Republican operatives about Moreno's potential vulnerability in a general election, according to seven people who are directly familiar with conversations about how to address the matter. They requested anonymity to avoid running afoul of Trump and his allies.

Trump and Biden have for

weeks been focused on the general election, aiming their campaigns lately on states that could be competitive in November rather than merely those holding primaries.

Trump, a Florida voter, cast his ballot at a recreation centre in Palm Beach on Tuesday and told reporters, "I voted for Donald Trump."

Trump and Biden are running on their records in office and casting the other as a threat to America. Trump, 77, portrays the 81-year-old Biden as mentally unfit. The president has described his Republican rival as a threat to democracy after his attempt to overturn the 2020 election results and his praise of foreign strongmen. Those themes were evident Tuesday at some polling locations.

"President Biden, I don't think he knows how to tie his shoes anymore," said Trump supporter Linda Bennet, a resident of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, not far from the former president's Mar-a-Lago resort. Even as she echoed Trump's arguments about Biden, she

criticised Trump's rhetoric and "the way he composes himself" as "not presidential at all".

But she said the former president is "a man of his word", and she said the country, especially the economy, felt stronger to her under Trump's leadership. In Columbus, Ohio, Democrat Brenda Woodfolk voted for Biden and shared the president's framing of the choice this fall.

"It's scary," she said of the prospect that Trump could be in the Oval Office again. "Trump wants to be a dictator, talking about making America white again and all this kind of crap. There's too much hate going on."

Bennet and Woodfolk agreed that immigration is one of their top concerns, though they offered different takes on why.

"This border thing is out of control," said Bennet, the Republican voter. "I think it's the government's plot or plan to bring these people in to change the whole dynamic for their benefit, so I'm pretty peeved."

## Trump suggests he'd support national ban on abortions

New York (AP) Donald Trump suggested Tuesday that he'd support a national ban on abortions around 15 weeks of pregnancy, voicing for the first time support for a specific limit on the procedure.

The Republican former president has taken credit for striking down a federally guaranteed right to abortion by appointing three US Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn Roe vs Wade. As he seeks the White House a third time, Trump has refrained from embracing any specific limit on the procedure, warning it could backfire politically and instead suggesting he would "negotiate" a policy on abortion that would include exceptions for cases of rape, incest and to protect the life of the mother.

But in a radio interview Tuesday, Trump criticized Democrats for not endorsing a ban that would limit abortions in states that still allow the procedure.

"We're going to come up with a time — and maybe we could bring the country together on that issue," Trump said while calling into the "Sid and Friends in the Morning" show on WABC.

Trump went on to say: "The number of weeks now, people are agreeing on 15. And I'm thinking in terms of that. And it'll come out to something that's very reasonable. But people are really, even hard-liners are agreeing, seems to be, 15 weeks seems to be a number that people are agreeing at."

At the same time, Trump seemed to suggest reluctance to a federal ban.

"Everybody agrees — you've heard this for years — all the legal scholars on both sides agree: It's a state issue. It shouldn't be a federal issue, it's a state issue," he said.

Last month, Trump's campaign dismissed reports that he privately had expressed for a ban on abortion after 16 weeks of pregnancy, calling the report "fake news."

The campaign did not offer details on Trump's plans, only saying he planned to "negotiate a deal" on abortion.

## Irish PM Leo quitting as head of his party

London (AP) Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar says he will step down as leader of the country soon as a successor is chosen. Varadkar announced Wednesday he is quitting immediately as head of Fine Gael party, part of Ireland's coalition government. He'll be replaced as prime minister after a party leadership contest. He said his reasons were "both personal and political".

Varadkar, 45, has had two spells as taoiseach, or prime minister — between 2017 and 2020, and again since December 2022.

He was the country's youngest-ever leader when first elected, as well as Ireland's first openly gay prime minister. Varadkar, whose mother is Irish and father is Indian, was also Ireland's first biracial taoiseach. "I'm proud that we have made the country a more equal and more modern place," he said in a resignation statement in Dublin.

## Vietnamese Prez Vo Voun resigns

Hanoi (AP) Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong resigned after a little over a year in the job, the Communist Party said Wednesday, making him the latest senior official to leave office amid an intense anti-corruption campaign.

The party approved his resignation, writing in a statement that "violations by Vo Van Thuong have left a bad mark on the reputation of the Communist party."

Thuong, 54, became president in March 2023, two months after his predecessor Nguyen Xuan Phuc resigned to take "political responsibility" for corruption scandals during the pandemic. He was the youngest president since modern day Vietnam emerged from war in the mid-1970s.

The announcement came a day before Vietnam's Parliament is set to meet for a special session in Hanoi, which is likely to approve the party's decision.

The position of president in Vietnam is largely ceremonial and ranks third in the country's political hierarchy. The most powerful position is that of Communist Party general secretary, a post held since 2011 by Nguyen Phu Trong, who is 79. The ideologically conservative Truong was considered a protege of Trong's, and his departure underscores the reach of the anti-corruption drive that has been Trong's "most important legacy," said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

The party said that Truong's "violations" had "negatively affected public perception, as well as the reputation of the Party and the state. Being aware of his responsibilities before the Party, the state and the people, Thuong has sent his resignation from his positions," in a statement reported by state media VN Express International.

## Guterres decries violence in Myanmar as military airstrikes kill 25 Rohingya

AP ■ BANGKOK

Military airstrikes in western Myanmar killed at least 25 members of the country's Muslim Rohingya minority, including children, local media reported, prompting the UN chief to express concerns over the escalating violence.

According to the reports, the airstrikes took place early on Monday morning and targeted the village of Thada, north of Minbya township in Rakhine state. The strikes also left another 25 people wounded. The military government had no immediate comment on the reports.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed deep concern over "the deteriorating situation and escalation of conflict in Myanmar," according to a spokesperson. The UN chief "condemns all forms of violence and reiterates his call for the protection of civilians, includ-

ing aid workers in accordance with international humanitarian law, for the cessation of hostilities, and humanitarian access," said Guterres' deputy spokesperson, Farhan Haq, in a statement on Monday.

Myanmar's military is increasingly using airstrikes to counter the widespread armed struggle against its rule since its seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

A report issued at the end of last year by Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica, a Myanmar research and advocacy organisation, said that since the military's 2021 takeover, 936 civilians had been killed and 878 wounded in 1,652 airstrikes. It said 137 religious buildings, 76 schools and 28 hospital and dispensaries had been damaged by aerial attacks. The Rohingya village of Thada is about 340 kilometres (210 miles) southwest of Mandalay, the country's second

largest city. However, almost 90 per cent of Myanmar's people are Buddhist, especially the Burman majority, which constitutes the Southeast Asian nation's ruling class.

Two villagers from the Thada village told The Associated Press late on Monday that a jet fighter dropped two bombs on the village at around 1:30 am. Six children were among the 25 killed, they said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fears of arrests and reprisals.

The victims included those who had fled fighting in nearby villages, the villagers said. Independent media including Myanmar Now, The Irrawaddy and Rakhine-based outlets also reported about the incident, giving death tolls between 21 and 23 on Monday and Tuesday. Different casualty tolls are common in areas of Myanmar that are difficult to access. The AP was unable to independently confirm details

of the airstrikes because reporting is greatly restricted and most phone services in the affected area has been cut by the military government.

Members of the Rohingya minority have long been persecuted in Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

About 740,000 fled from Myanmar to refugee camps in Bangladesh when the military in August 2017 launched a brutal counterinsurgency campaign in response to attacks in Rakhine by a guerrilla group claiming to represent the Rohingya.

The Buddhist Rakhine are the majority ethnic group in Rakhine, which is also known by its older name of Arakan. The Rakhine, like other ethnic groups in Myanmar's border regions, have long sought more autonomy from the central government, and have set up their own armed force, called the Arakan Army.

## Several probes target Brazil's Bolsonaro

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

As Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's term wound down in the final days of December 2022, he had decided to skip the ritual of handing over the presidential sash to his successor, and instead made plans to travel abroad. But there was a problem, according to a Federal Police indictment unveiled on Tuesday: Bolsonaro didn't have the necessary vaccination certificate required by US authorities.

So Bolsonaro turned to his aide-de-camp, Mauro Cid, and asked him to insert false data into the public health system to make it appear as though he and his 12-year-old daughter had received the COVID-19 vaccine, according to the indictment. Cid told police he tasked someone with the carrying out the deed, then printed out the certificates inside the presidential palace on December 22 and hand-delivered them to Bolsonaro, according to detective Fabio

Alvarez Shor, who signed the indictment.

It is Bolsonaro's first indictment since leaving office, and tampering with public records in Brazil is no trifling matter; should the prosecutor-general's office decide to use the indictment to file charges at the Supreme Court, the 68-year-old politician could spend up to 12 years behind bars or as little as two years, according to legal analyst Zilan Costa. A separate indictment for criminal association carries a maximum jail time of four years, he said.

Bolsonaro, who didn't comment on Tuesday, previously denied any wrongdoing during questioning in May 2023.

In addition to the allegation Bolsonaro falsified records, another ongoing investigation seeks to determine whether he tried to sneak two sets of expensive diamond jewellery into Brazil and prevent them from being incorporated into the presidency's public collection.

Police are also probing his alleged involvement in the January 8, 2023 uprising in the capital, soon after Lula took power. It resembled the US Capitol riot in Washington two years prior and sought to restore Bolsonaro to power. Commanders who served under Bolsonaro have told police the former leader presented them with a plan for him to remain in power after he lost his 2022 reelection bid. But it is his actions during the COVID-19 pandemic — which he called "a measly cold" as he brazenly flouted health restrictions and encouraged Brazilians to follow his example — that may have caught up with him first.

After vaccines became available, he dismissed them as unnecessary, despite Brazil registering one of the highest death tolls in the world, and repeatedly said he would not receive a job himself.

His administration ignored several offers from pharmaceutical company Pfizer to sell

Brazil tens of millions of shots in 2020, and he openly criticised a move by Sao Paulo state's governor to buy vaccines from Chinese company Sinovac when no other doses at hand.

Bolsonaro wasn't the only one indicted on Tuesday: Cid and 15 others were accused of involvement in the scheme to falsify records for themselves and others.

"The former president never ordered or knew that any of his advisors had produced vaccination certificates with ideologically false content," three of Bolsonaro's lawyers said in a statement released late Tuesday. "When he entered the US at the end of December 2022, he was not asked for a vaccination certificate since, as President of the Republic, he was exempt from this requirement."

Shor, the police detective, wrote in his indictment he is awaiting information from the US Justice Department to "clarify whether those under investigation did make use of the false

## N Korea claims progress on hypersonic missile

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea successfully tested a solid-fuel engine for its new-type intermediate-range hypersonic missile, state media reported on Wednesday, claiming a progress in efforts to develop a more powerful, agile missile designed to strike far-away US targets in the region.

A hypersonic missile is among an array of high-tech weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un publicly vowed to introduce in 2021 to cope with what he called deepening US hostility.

Outside experts say Kim wants a modernised weapons arsenal to wrest US concessions like sanctions relief when diplomacy resumes.

On Tuesday, Kim guided the ground jet test of the multi-stage solid-fuel engine for the hypersonic missile at the North's northwestern rocket launch facility, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

It cited Kim as saying the



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, left, watches what it says is a test of a solid-fuel engine for its new-type intermediate-range hypersonic missile at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground in North Korea Tuesday. AP/PTI

strategic value of the new missile with an intermediate-range is as important as intercontinental ballistic missiles targeting the US mainland and that "enemies know better about it". It said that a timetable for completing the development of

Guam, home to US military bases.

Those missile can also reach Alaska, and with a range adjustment they can be used to strike closer targets like US military installations in Japan's Okinawa island, experts say. In recent years, North Korea has been pushing to develop more weapons with built-in solid propellants, which make launches harder to detect than liquid-propellant missiles that must be fuelled before liftoffs and cannot last long. The North's pursuit of hypersonic weapons is also meant to defeat US and South Korean missile defence systems, but it's unclear the North's hypersonic vehicles proved their desired speed and maneuverability during tests in recent years, analysts say. In January, North Korea said it flight-tested a new solid-fuel intermediate-range ballistic missile tipped with a hypersonic, maneuverable warhead, in a likely reference to the missile mentioned in Wednesday's KCNA dispatch.

## Probe launched over Kate's medical data breach

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK's information watchdog said it is assessing reports that hospital staff attempted to view Kate Middleton's private medical records while the Princess of Wales was admitted for an abdominal surgery in London. The private hospital in central London, The London Clinic, where the 42-year-old was treated in January is said to have launched its own investigation into the claims.

According to a report in the "Daily Mirror", at least one member of staff at the hospital had allegedly tried to access Princess Kate's medical notes. "We can confirm that we have received a breach report and are assessing the information provided," said a spokesperson for the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The hospital reportedly con-



tacted Kensington Palace, the Prince and Princess of Wales' office, after the alleged breach came to light. "This is a matter for the London Clinic," the palace said in a statement.

The private clinic has so far not commented directly on the allegations. "We firmly believe that all our patients, no matter their status,

deserve total privacy and confidentiality regarding their medical information," the London Clinic told the "Mirror" newspaper.

The incident is reminiscent of a data breach scandal dating back to 2012, when two Australian DJs posed as Queen Elizabeth II and the then Prince Charles in a prank call to King Edward VII's Hospital in London where Kate Middleton was being treated for acute morning sickness. India-born nurse Jacintha Saldanha was found to have committed suicide in her nursing quarter three days after she inadvertently transferred the hoax call to a colleague who divulged details about the recovery of Kate — then Duchess of Cambridge. The incident caused international outrage at the time, with the nurse's body flown to Mangalore for last rites.

## South Korean chemical tanker capsizes off Japan, 8 killed, 2 people missing

Tokyo (AP) A South Korean chemical tanker capsized off an island in southwestern Japan on Wednesday, authorities said, killing eight people on board. One crew member survived, and the fate of two others was unknown. Officials said the tanker was carrying 980 tons of acrylic acid, a corrosive organic compound that is used in adhesives, paints and polishes. No leak has been detected, and officials are studying what environmental protection measures may be needed in case there is a leak.

The Japan Coast Guard said it received a distress call from the chemical tanker Keoyoung Sun, saying that it was tilting, while seeking refuge from the weather near Japan's Mutsure Island, about 1,000 km (620 miles) from Tokyo in southwestern Japan. The ship was

completely capsized by the time rescuers arrived at the scene. Footage on Japan's NHK television showed the ship lying upside down, a rough sea washing over its red underside. The ship was carrying 11 crew, of whom nine have been found, authorities said. The one crew member confirmed alive is from Indonesia, and the coast guard was still searching for two more. South Korean officials held a meeting Wednesday to discuss the capsizing. During the meeting, Vice Foreign Minister Kang Insun asked officials to mobilise all available resources to support rescue works and assist the relatives of South Korean crew members, according to the Foreign Ministry. The ship was en route from the Japanese port of Himeji to Ulsan in South Korea, the coast guard said.

## French regulators fine Google \$272 mn

AP ■ PARIS

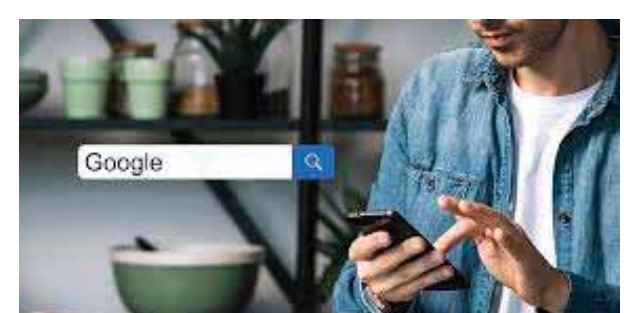
France's competition watchdog hit Google on Wednesday with another big fine tied to a long-running dispute over payments to French publishers for their news.

The French Competition Authority said it issued the 250 million euro (\$272 million) penalty because of Google's failure to comply with some commitments it made in a negotiating framework.

The dispute is part of a larger effort by authorities in the European Union and around the world to force Google and other tech companies to compensate news publishers for content.

The US tech giant was forced to negotiate with French publishers after a court in 2020 upheld an order saying payments were required by a 2019 European Union copyright directive.

Google said in a blog post that it agreed to settle the fine,



which was imposed over how it conducted the negotiations, "because it's time to move on."

It said the fine was "not proportionate" to the issues raised by the French watchdog and "doesn't sufficiently take into account" Google's efforts to answer and resolve the concerns. France was the first of the EU's 27 nations to adopt the copyright directive, which lays out a way for publishers and news companies to strike licensing deals with online platforms. Wednesday's decision by the French

Competition Authority is the fourth in as many years against Google for failing to comply with the EU legal framework that aims to establish "necessary conditions for balanced negotiations between press agencies, publishers and digital platforms".

The French antitrust agency had issued temporary orders to Google in April 2020 to hold talks within three months with news publishers. In 2021, the agency fined Google 500 million euros (\$592 million) for failing to negotiate a fair payment for publishers' news.



# 7 killed in attack on Gawadar Port Authority complex in Pak

**PTI ■ KARACHI**  
 Baloch insurgents armed with automatic assault weapons on Wednesday stormed the Gawadar Port Authority complex in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province but security forces foiled the attack and claimed killing at least seven militants. The separatist Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is opposed to China's investments in Balochistan and accuses China and Pakistan of exploitation of the resource-rich province, a charge rejected by the authorities. Gawadar Senior Superintendent of Police Zohaib Mohsin told the media that "seven attackers have been killed and the firing has stopped". Commissioner Makran Division Saeed Ahmed Umrani confirmed the attack and said the attackers entered

the Gawadar Port Authority building and the clearing operation was going on. Earlier, local media reported that eight terrorists were killed in clashes. So far there was no word on killing any security person or civilian. The United Nations Department for Safety and Security said in a statement that seven personnel from three UN agencies based in Gawadar and two UN agencies on missions were "safe and accounted for". The Majeed Brigade of the proscribed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack. It is the suicide squad of the BLA and mostly targets security forces and Chinese interests. Named after a guard of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto, who was killed while attempting to assassinate him, it was formed in 2011. Bhutto had initiated an operation against miscreants in the province in the 1970s. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti hailed security agencies for their response against the attackers, saying that "the message is loud and clear." He added that "whoever chooses to use violence will see no mercy from the state." Balochistan, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups have previously carried out several attacks targeting the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects being carried

out under the aegis of the CPEC. Balochistan faces a double threat by the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and Baloch militants. The attack comes on a day when Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif asserted that his government will not tolerate any acts of cross-border terrorism. The incidents of terrorism have increased in Pakistan since the Taliban took over the government in Kabul, dashing hopes in Islamabad that a friendly government in Afghanistan would help to tackle militancy. According to an annual security report issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies, Pakistan witnessed 1,524 violence-related fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terror attacks and counter-terror operations in 2023 — marking a record six-year high.

# Pak not to tolerate cross-border terrorism: PM Shehbaz Sharif

**PTI ■ ISLAMABAD**  
 Amidst a spike in terror attacks in Pakistan, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday asserted that his government will not tolerate any acts of cross-border terrorism and that his country would like to exist in peace with all its neighbours. Days after what is now known as the Mir Ali attack in the restive northwest Pakistan, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was addressing the first meeting of the apex committee — a top official civil-military body tasked to tackle militancy — since the new government came to power earlier in the month. Pakistan is facing a renewed threat by militancy. Over the weekend, two Pakistan Army officers and five soldiers were killed in a terror attack at Mir Ali in the troubled northwest of



the country. Without naming any country, Sharif asserted that his country would not tolerate any cross-border terrorism from the neighbouring countries "under no circumstances." The prime minister said that Pakistan would like to have peace with all neighbours and urged them to come and sit with Pakistan to devise a plan against terrorism "with sincerity of purpose work towards

eradicating it." "We want to exist in a very peaceful environment with our neighbouring brothers — do trade, commerce and expand our relations — but unfortunately, if a neighbour's land is used for terrorism, this is intolerable" he stated. The premier also hoped that "our neighbouring country will carefully consider my invitation." There has been an uptick in the incidents of terrorism in Pakistan since the Taliban took over the government in Kabul in 2021, dashing hopes in Islamabad that a friendly government in Afghanistan would help to tackle militancy. According to an annual security report issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies, a think tank, Pakistan witnessed 1,524 violence-related fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terror attacks and

counter-terror operations in 2023 — marking a six-year high record. The latest incident saw Pakistani air force jets carry out intelligence-based anti-terrorist operations (IBOs) in the border regions of Khost and Paktika inside Afghanistan against terrorists launching attacks in Pakistan from Afghan soil following the March 16 attack. Pakistan accused terror organisation Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) of allegedly hiding in Afghanistan, which in turn, responded by using heavy weapons, including mortars, to target troops across the border in Kurram and North Waziristan districts. Recalling his visit to the family of an officer killed in the terrorist attack, Sharif quoted the father of 23-year-old Captain Ahmed Badar as saying: "Prime minister, terrorism must be eradicated."

# Imran Khan approaches SC; seeks probe into Feb polls



**PTI ■ ISLAMABAD**  
 Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on Wednesday approached the Supreme Court to form a judicial commission comprising serving judges to probe the authenticity of last month's elections marred by allegations of rigging. The general elections were held on February 8 but Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf refused to accept the outcome by alleging that the results were manipulated.

Senior lawyer Hamid Khan, who is also a leader of PTI, filed the petition on behalf of Khan, stating the commission should investigate, audit and review matters related to the procedure and conduct of the general elections held on February 8, as well as its results and the investigation should be complete and made public. "It is further prayed that all the consequential acts of forming the government at the federal and Punjab levels be immediately suspended till the result of the probe by the Judicial Commission appointed on this behalf is made public," the petition stated. Khan's party claims that it had won about 180 seats of the National Assembly but the results were rigged and it was deprived of dozens of them and won only 92 out of 266 contested seats. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) along with some other political parties have formed a coalition government, denying Khan's PTI from returning to power. However, the Election Commission of Pakistan rejected the allegation and said that polling was held in a fair manner and results compiled accordingly. Though the PTI has joined Parliament, it has been protesting in the assemblies as well as outside on the streets against the alleged injustice.

# Pak-IMF reach staff-level agreement on releasing last tranche of bailout

**PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/ WASHINGTON**  
 The IMF on Wednesday said it has reached a staff-level agreement with the new government in cash-strapped Pakistan on the final review of a USD 3 billion bailout, paving the way for the release of the last USD 1.1 billion tranche from the global lender. The agreement, however, is subject to the approval of the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to be held in April. Pakistan's new finance minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, who assumed charge last week, had said that his priority was to start negotiations with the Washington-based IMF to bail out the country from its financial woes. Last year, the IMF Executive Board approved the USD 3 billion Stand-By Arrangement

(SBA) for Pakistan, the term for which is set to expire next month. So far, two tranches have been issued while the last one is pending the review of the conditions set by the lender. Led by IMF's Mission chief to Pakistan, Nathan Porter, the team visited Islamabad from March 14 to 19 and discussed the Second Review of Pakistan's economic programme with senior officials. "The IMF team has reached a staff-level agreement with the Pakistani authorities on the second and a final review of Pakistan's stabilisation programme supported by the IMF's USD 3 billion SBA," the IMF said in a statement at Washington. "The agreement recognises the strong programme implementation by the State Bank of Pakistan and the caretaker government in recent months,

as well as the new government's intentions for ongoing policy and reform efforts to move Pakistan from stabilisation to a strong and sustainable recovery," the IMF statement said. Porter said in the statement that Pakistan's economic and financial position improved in the months since the first review, "with growth and confidence continuing to recover on the back of prudent policy management and the resumption of inflows from multilateral and bilateral partners" but cautioned that the economic growth remained modest and inflation was above the target level. The IMF also said that Pakistan will further increase gas and electricity prices to keep the circular debt at the agreed level in this fiscal year. "Given the timing of the Second Review mission,

immediately following the formation of the new Cabinet, we expect the review to be considered by the IMF's Board in late April," the Fund said. "The new government is committed to continue the policy efforts that started under the current SBA to entrench economic and financial stability for the remainder of this year," the Fund said. The successful completion of the review is expected to lead to another loan programme by the IMF for Pakistan which it still needs to support its balance of payments. Last year, the timely support by the IMF helped the country to avoid a potential default on its external liabilities. Meanwhile, the agreement with the IMF resounded in the country's stock market and shares at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) climbed 374 points.



Presidential candidate Anta Babacar Ngom greets supporters during her electoral campaign caravan in Dakar, Senegal, Monday, March 11, 2024. Senegal's only female presidential candidate may stand no chance of winning but activists say her presence alone is helping to advance a decades long campaign to achieve equality in the West African nation. **AP/PTI**

# Subianto confirmed as Indonesia's next president

**Jakarta (AP):** Prabowo Subianto, a former special forces general with ties to Indonesia's current president and past dictatorship, was confirmed the victor of last month's presidential election over two former governors who have vowed to contest the result in court. Subianto won 58.6% of the votes, while former Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan received 24.9% and former Central Java Gov. Ganjar Pranowo got 16.5%, the General Election Commission said Wednesday after the official counting was completed. In Indonesia, election disputes can be registered with the Constitutional Court during the three days that follow the announcement of official results. The two other candidates have alleged fraud and irregularities in the election process, such as the vice presidential candidacy of President Joko Widodo's son. The popular outgoing president is serving his second term and could not run again, but his son's candidacy is seen



as a sign of his tacit backing for Subianto. Widodo's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is 37 but became Subianto's running mate after the Constitutional Court made an exception to the minimum age requirement of 40 for candidates. The Constitutional Court's chief justice, who is Widodo's brother-in-law, was then removed by an ethics panel for failing to recuse himself and for making last-minute changes to the election candidacy requirements. Subianto, who is Widodo's defense minister, had claimed victory on election day after unofficial tallies showed he was winning nearly 60% of the votes.

# Cash-strapped Pak PM Sharif & Cabinet ministers to forgo salaries

**Islamabad (PTI):** Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his Cabinet on Wednesday unanimously decided to forego their salaries and related benefits due to the precarious economic condition of the country. The decision was taken during a Cabinet meeting as part of the government's austerity policies, aimed at curbing unnecessary expenditures, according to a press release by the PM Office. The Cabinet has already introduced measures restricting foreign trips funded by the government, ordering federal ministers, parliamentarians, and government officials not to go on foreign trips by using government funds without prior approval. The measures are focused on promoting fiscal responsibility and optimising governmental resources in the face of economic challenges, due to which the country needs a fresh loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

# Top former US generals say failures of Biden admn in planning drove chaotic fall of Kabul

**AP ■ WASHINGTON**  
 The top two US generals who oversaw the evacuation of Afghanistan as it fell to the Taliban in August 2021 blamed the Biden administration for the chaotic departure, telling lawmakers on Tuesday that it inadequately planned for the evacuation and did not order it in time. The rare testimony by former Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley and US Central Command retired Gen. Frank McKenzie publicly exposed for the first time the strain and differences the military leaders had with the Biden administration in the final days of the war. Two of those key differences included that the military had advised that the US keep at least 2,500 service members in Afghanistan to maintain stability and a concern that the State Department was not moving fast enough to get an evacuation started. The remarks also contrasted with an internal White House review of the administration's decisions which found that President Joe Biden's decisions had been "severely constrained" by previous withdrawal agreements negotiated by former

President Donald Trump and blamed the military, saying top commanders said they had enough resources to handle the evacuation. Thirteen US service members were killed by a suicide bomber at the Kabul airport's Abbey Gate in the final days of the war, as the Taliban took over Afghanistan. Thousands of panicked Afghans and US citizens desperately tried to get on US military flights that were airlifting people out. In the end the military was able to rescue more than 130,000 civilians before the final US military aircraft departed. That chaos was the end result of the State Department failing to call for an evacuation of US personnel until it was too late, Milley and McKenzie told the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "On 14 August the non-combatant evacuation operation decision was made by the Department of State and the US military alerted, marshalled, mobilised and rapidly deployed faster than any military in the world could ever do," Milley said. But the State Department's decision came too late, Milley said. "The fundamental mis-

take, the fundamental flaw was the timing of the State Department," Milley said. "That was too slow and too late." In a lengthy statement late Tuesday, the National Security Council took issue with the generals' remarks, saying that Biden's hard decision was the right thing to do and part of his commitment to get the US out of America's longest war. The president "was not going to send another generation of troops to fight and die in a conflict that had no end in sight," the NSC said. "We have also demonstrated that we do not need a permanent troop presence on the ground in harm's way to remain vigilant against terrorism threats." The statement said the president and first lady still mourn for those lost at Abbey Gate and are "enormously proud of the men and women of our military, our diplomats and the intel community who conducted that withdrawal," the NSC said. In the hearing, which was prompted by a lengthy investigation by the House Foreign Affairs Committee into the decisions surrounding the evacuation of Kabul, McKenzie spoke at length about his discomfort in

how little seemed to be ready for an evacuation, even raising those concerns with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin. Evacuation orders must come from the State Department, but in the weeks and months before Kabul fell to the Taliban, the Pentagon was still pressing the State Department for evacuation plans, McKenzie said. "We had forces in the region as early as 9 July, but we could do nothing" without State ordering the evacuation, McKenzie said, calling State's timing "the fatal flaw that created what happened in August." "I believe the events of mid and late August 2021 were the direct result of delaying the initiation of the (evacuation) for several months, in fact until we were in extremis and the Taliban had overrun the country," McKenzie said. Milley was the nation's top-ranking military officer at the time, and had urged President Joe Biden to keep a residual force of 2,500 forces there to give Afghanistan's special forces enough back-up to keep the Taliban at bay and allow the US military to hold on to Bagram Air Base, which could have provided the military additional options to respond to Taliban attacks.

# Af's school year starts without more than 1 mn girls barred from education by Taliban

**AP ■ ISLAMABAD**  
 The school year in Afghanistan started Wednesday but without girls whom the Taliban barred from attending classes beyond the sixth grade, making it the only country with restrictions on female education. The U.N. children's agency says more than 1 million girls are affected by the ban. It also estimates 5 million were out of school before the Taliban takeover due to a lack of facilities and other reasons. The Taliban's education ministry marked the start of the new academic year with a ceremony that female journalists were not allowed to attend. The invitations sent out to reporters

said: "Due to the lack of a suitable place for the sisters, we apologize to female reporters." During a ceremony, the Taliban's education minister, Habibullah Agha, said that the ministry is trying "to increase the quality of education of religious and modern sciences as much as possible." The Taliban have been prioritizing Islamic knowledge over basic literacy and numeracy when their shift toward madrasas, or religious schools. The minister also called on students to avoid wearing clothes that contradict Islamic and Afghan principles. Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Taliban's deputy prime minister, said they were trying to expand education in "all remote

areas in the country." The Taliban previously said girls continuing their education went against their strict interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia, and that certain conditions were needed for their return to school. However, they made no progress in creating said conditions. When they ruled Afghanistan in the 1990s, they also banned girls' education. Despite initially promising a more moderate rule, the group has also barred women from higher education, public spaces like parks, and most jobs as part of harsh measures imposed after they took over following the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from the

country in 2021. The ban on girls' education remains the Taliban's biggest obstacle to gaining recognition as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. Although Afghan boys have access to education, Human Rights Watch has criticized the Taliban, saying their "abusive" educational policies are harming boys as well as girls. The group, in a report published in December, said there has been less attention to the deep harm inflicted on boys' education as qualified teachers — including women — left, and inclusion of regressive curriculum changes as well as an increase in corporal punishment have led to falling attendance.

# 'Foreign research ships allowed for replenishment after Chinese protest'

**Colombo (PTI):** Sri Lanka has said it will allow foreign offshore research ships for replenishments at its ports despite a one-year ban on such vessels, a senior official has said after China protested to Colombo for allowing a German survey ship but turning down Beijing's similar request. This is the first time Sri Lanka has officially admitted that foreign research vessels will be allowed for replenishments since President Ranil Wickremesinghe's government imposed a one-year ban on offshore research vessels in December last year after strong security concerns raised by India and the US following the

visit of two Chinese high-tech research vessels in 14 months. "The ban on foreign ships is for research purposes, not on replenishment," the Economy Next portal quoted Niluka Kadurugamuwa, Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, as saying. "There was a German research vessel recently for replenishment and Sri Lanka allowed it," he said. Chinese Embassy in Colombo has raised strong protest against the move to allow a German research vessel to dock at a port early this month after Sri Lankan authorities turned down a request from Beijing for a research vessel in February.

**OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR**  
 UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) TRIBUNAL,  
 ROOM NO. 15, GROUND FLOOR, BLOCK 'A', DELHI HIGH COURT, NEW DELHI-110503

RE: Notification No. S.O. 354 (E) dated 29th January, 2024 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, under Section 3(1) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, declaring the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as an Unlawful Association.

To,  
 Students Islamic Movement of India

WHEREAS the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-sections (1) and (3) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") has declared Students Islamic Movement of India (for short "SIMI") to be an "Unlawful Association" vide Notification No. S.O. 354 (E) dated 29th January, 2024 [published in the Gazette of India: Extraordinary Part II, Section 3 (ii)].

AND WHEREAS by Gazette Notification No. S.O. 722 (E) dated 16th February, 2024 [published in the Gazette of India: Extraordinary Part II, Section 3 (iii)], in exercise of powers under sub-section (1) of Section 5 read with sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the Act, the Central Government has constituted a Tribunal comprising Hon'ble Mr. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav, Judge of the High Court of Delhi, for adjudicating as to whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as an "Unlawful Association" as required by sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the said Act.

NOW THEREFORE, a notice is hereby given under sub-section (2) of Section 4 of the Act, and you are hereby called upon to show cause, within 30 days from the date of service of notice, as to why your Association, declared as unlawful, be not adjudicated to be so and why an order confirming such declaration be not made under Section 4(3) of the Act.

The objections/reply affidavits, if any, may be filed/delivered, before the next date of hearing of the Tribunal, to the undersigned at his office in Room No. 15, Ground Floor, 'A' Block, Delhi High Court, Sher Shah Road, New Delhi-110503. In case the objections / reply and documents are in regional language, true English Translation thereof be also attached.

You may appear through a duly authorized person before the Tribunal on 09.04.2024 at 04:30 pm in Court Room No. 16, Delhi High Court, Sher Shah Road, New Delhi-110503 for further proceedings.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal, High Court of Delhi, New Delhi this 29th February, 2024

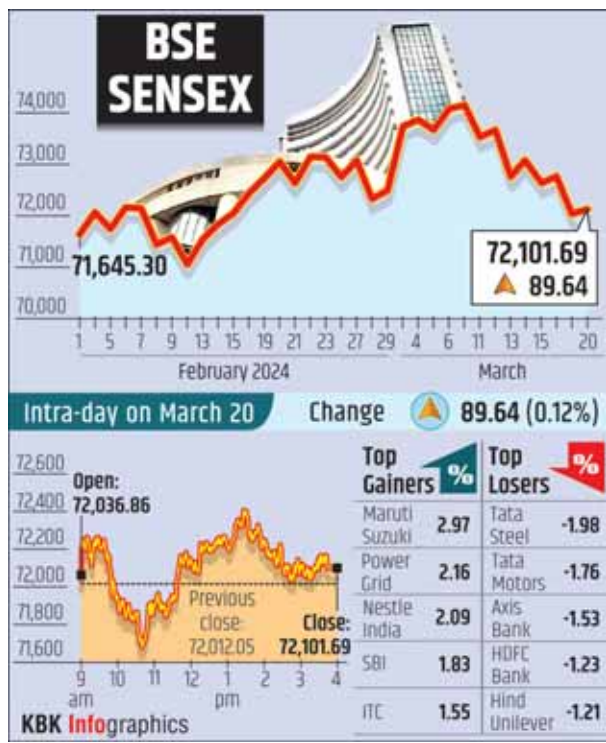
(**Titendra Pratap Singh**) Registrar,  
 Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal.



# Sensex, Nifty rebound as Reliance, ITC shares rally

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Wednesday, propelled by bargain hunting in index majors Reliance Industries, ITC and SBI amid a largely firm trend in global equities. However, a depreciating rupee and selling pressure in small-cap stocks restricted the gains, traders said. In a highly volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 89.64 points or 0.12 per cent to settle at 72,101.69. During the day, it jumped 390.62 points or 0.54 per cent to 72,402.67. The benchmark hit its day's low of 71,674.42, down 337.63 points or 0.46 per cent. The NSE Nifty climbed 21.65 points or 0.10 per cent to finish at 21,839.10. "Lifted by favourable global sentiment and solid direct tax collection, Indian markets rebounded, closing with modest gains. Robust FII and DII inflows sustained the market. "The US Fed is likely to delay the cut rate to the latter part of the year due to a resilient economy. Domestic mid and



small caps are likely to lag large caps driven by premium valuations in the short-term," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

From the Sensex basket, Maruti, Nestle, Power Grid, State Bank of India, ITC, Reliance Industries, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank and Asian

Paints were the major gainers. In contrast, Tata Steel, Axis Bank, Tata Motors and HDFC Bank were among the laggards. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed marginally by 0.05 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.14 per cent. Among the sectoral indices, energy jumped 1.09 per cent, oil & gas (1.07 per cent), power (0.92 per cent), telecommunication (0.61 per cent), auto (0.47 per cent) and utilities (0.45 per cent). On the other hand, commodities, financial services, IT, metal and tech were the laggards. "Nifty recovered losses to end higher on March 20. Asian shares closed mostly higher while European markets opened lower Wednesday as investors awaited the latest signals from the Federal Reserve on the timing of cuts to interest rates," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai, and Hong Kong settled in positive territory. Japanese stock exchanges were closed for a holiday.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. Wall Street ended with gains in the overnight trade on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,421.48 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. The net direct tax collection grew 19.88 per cent to over Rs 18.90 lakh crore till March 17 on higher advance tax mop-up. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said net direct tax collection of Rs 18,90,259 crore (as of March 17) includes Corporation Tax (CIT) at Rs 9,14,469 crore (net of refund) and Personal Income Tax (PIT), including Securities Transaction Tax (STT) at Rs 9,72,224 crore (net of refund). Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.80 per cent to USD 86.68 a barrel. Falling for the eighth straight session, the rupee declined 14 paise to 83.17 against the US dollar on Wednesday. The 30-share BSE benchmark tanked 736.37 points or 1.01 per cent to settle at 72,012.05 on Tuesday. The NSE Nifty slumped 238.25 points or 1.08 per cent to finish at 21,817.45.

# RBI Governor calls on Finance Minister

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for a non-agenda courtesy meeting, a fortnight ahead of the central bank's meet to decide on benchmark policy rate. Das-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled to meet from April 3-5, the first for 2024-25 fiscal year. The MPC meet is expected to spell out inflation and growth trajectory for financial year beginning April 1. RBI in its last policy released in February projected a growth rate of 7 per cent and inflation outlook at 4.5 per cent for FY25. An RBI bulletin on Tuesday said food price pressure is an obstacle to swifter fall in retail inflation to the Reserve Bank's target of 4 per cent. Retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) is on a decline since December and was at 5.09 per cent in February. It further said the global economy is losing steam, with growth slowing in some of the most resilient economies and

high frequency indicators pointing to further levelling in the period ahead. In India, real GDP growth was at a six-quarter high in the third quarter of 2023-24, powered by strong momentum, robust indirect taxes, and lower subsidies. The high visibility of structural demand and healthier corporate and bank balance sheets will likely be the galvanising forces for the growth going forward, the

article on the 'State of Economy' in the central bank's March bulletin said. It also said India can sustain 8 per cent annual GDP growth and the conducive macroeconomic configuration may become a launching pad for a step-up in the country's growth trajectory. Over the period 2021-24, gross domestic product (GDP) growth has averaged above 8 per cent.



# MeraDoc, MakeMyTrip partner to offer real time medical services

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

HealthTech startup and India's fastest-growing online medical services company MeraDoc has entered into a strategic partnership with travel booking MakeMyTrip to offer a bouquet of healthcare services on the go for the latter's subscribers across the country. With this alliance, MeraDoc's digital-health platform and its services will now become available 24x7 on a real-time basis to MakeMyTrip customers across India, the company said in a statement. "The ground-breaking partnership will provide MakeMyTrip customers round-the-clock instant access to MeraDoc's panel of qualified doctors through video and audio consultations," it said. Additionally, pathology services, personalised follow-ups and updates, as also delivery of medicines prescribed by the doctors, will be available to MakeMyTrip customers at their doorstep within two hours, whether they are at home or travelling anywhere in the country on business or for personal reasons. Set up in 2021 by Sudhir Mathur, ex-CEO of Cairn India and former CFO of Idea Cellular; Eshaan Singh, a serial entrepreneur & Duke Fuqua MBA, and Adit Mathur, renowned physician, hospital administrator and an IIM-C alumni, MeraDoc

says it is building democratised healthcare solutions for a billion Indians, with a family physician centred practice at its core. MeraDoc provides its subscribers dedicated family doctor for 24x7 consultation as well as a connected care network of over 35,000 pharmacies, 1,200-plus labs, 100-plus specialists, ambulance, emergency and hospitalisation assistance. "We have a proven network in place, with our empanelled doctors now conducting over 8,000 consultations daily, thereby having totalled over 4 million consultations nationwide since our launch," said Sudhir Mathur, founder & CEO, MeraDoc, said. "I am delighted to announce that our personalised services have now gone live on the MakeMyTrip platform for all domestic travellers. With this alliance, our integrated packages of both primary and essential health services will be available to Flipkart's customers, providing them with a unique and hassle-free travel experience, while MeraDoc's footprint will be further widened." Besides working with e-pharmacies and renowned diagnostic chains, MeraDoc has in place partnerships with over 200,000 standalone chemists, 35,000 diagnostic labs and 100,000 hospitals to ensure service at the earliest, available to the last mile pan-India.

# CCI dismisses pleas of Indian app firms against Google

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fair trade regulator CCI on Wednesday dismissed four petitions of Indian app companies filed against Google's new Play Store billing policy to levy an 11 to 26 per cent charge on in-app payments. Indian-origin app firms alleged that Google's Play Store payment policies are anti-competitive. However, CCI made clear that nothing stated in this order shall be tantamount to a final expression of opinion on the merits of the case, and the Director General will conduct the investigation without being

swayed in any manner whatsoever by the observations made herein. "The commission is of the view that the informants have failed to meet the necessary criteria for grant of interim relief as propounded by the Supreme Court. "The informants have not been able to project any higher level of prima facie case warranting a positive direction as sought for by the informants at the interim stage," CCI said in its order. The complainants were Anupam Mittal's People Interactive India Pvt Ltd, Mebigoo Labs, the Indian

Broadcasting and Digital Foundation (IBDF) and the Indian Digital Media Industry Foundation (IDMIF). The petitions were seeking the regulator to restrain Google from collecting any fee for transactions involving paid downloads or in-app purchases on apps offering digital products/ services. While there may be concerns about the fairness of Google's fee structure as outlined by the regulator in its prima facie order dated March 15, it is essential to recognise the costs and responsibilities associated with maintaining and operating app stores, CCI

noted. In its order, the regulator stated, "Informants have not been able to demonstrate a case in their favour for grant of interim relief for complete restraint on Google from the collection of its fee." CCI also said that no case whatsoever has been made out by the informants, which warrants a grant of interim relief. Accordingly, the applications stand dismissed. Indian apps representative body Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF) said it is concerned about the high commission imposed during in-app purchases that are not in

the best interest of our nation's digital entrepreneurs. "These rates, ranging from 11 to 26 per cent, are significantly higher. The rates should be reconsidered and mutually favourable to both. This model will support the growth and sustainability of India's digital economy. We trust the judicial process and await further hearings with the hope that the best interests of the Indian app development community will be prioritised by the Indian judiciary," ADIF Associate Director Prateek Jain said. The order came after the Competition Commission of India (CCI), on March 15,

ordered a probe against Google for alleged discriminatory practices with respect to its Play Store pricing policy after finding a prima facie violation of the competition law. The order for detailed investigation comes less than two years after CCI penalised and passed various directions against Google regarding Play Store policies. The regulator's decision came on a raft of complaints that Google's updated payment policies in relation to its proprietary app store — Google Play Store — which is alleged to be in violation of the competition law.

# REITs pitch for direct bank lending, classification as equity

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) industry on Wednesday pitched for the entities to get access to direct bank lending and classification as equities. At present, such vehicles can issue bonds or borrow from non-bank lenders or mutual funds, but are prohibited to borrow from banks, said the Indian REITs Association (IRA), a newly formed umbrella body for the five-year-old sector, which comprises four listed entities. The body's Chairman and Embassy REIT's Chief Executive Arvind Maiya told reporters it is in touch with the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) for allowing banks to lend to such vehicles. The real estate industry is asset-heavy and needs funds regularly to buy assets for which it should be allowed to borrow directly from banks, he added. Typically, banks have access to deposits which brings down the cost of funds, and hence, the cost of borrowing can become softer for a borrowing entity. Alok Aggarwal, the Managing Director and Chief Executive of Brookfield India Real Estate Trust, said, at present REITs are



classified as a "hybrid" instrument which creates confusion in the minds of the investors. Maiya said classification as equities will lead to passive money coming into REITs as the instrument gets included in indices. Other geographies like Singapore, which has inspired the Indian REIT regulations, as well as the US, treat the instrument as equity, he said, stressing that all the features of the instrument are similar to equity. An industry participant said the tax advantages which it gets courtesy of the hybrid status will continue even if it is classified as equity, while another hoped that it can also get gains from a taxation front courtesy of the Long Term Capital

Gains (LTCG) which is applicable for equity. The IRA said there are lots of opportunities for the REITs sector to grow in the country, both from a supply side, where the demand for real estate is bound to keep growing and also on the demand for such instruments as Indians look for newer asset classes. Ramesh Nair, the Chief Executive of Mindspace REIT, said the Global Capability Centres (GCCs) of multinationals alone present a very handsome opportunity for the REIT's story in the country. Citing the experience in the US, industry executives said there will be dedicated REITs for specific aspects like warehousing and residential properties. When asked about the lack of demand in the residential space till now -- three Indian REITs are in commercial space while the fourth is in retail -- an industry executive said the yields are very low at 2-3 per cent which prevents REITs' play. Nair said the sector wants to reach out to mutual funds' lobby grouping Amfi to learn and partner with them, given that the REIT's current priority is also to create awareness among the investors.



# India solar waste could reach 600 kilotonnes by 2030, says study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's solar waste could reach a staggering 600 kilotonnes by 2030 — equivalent to filling up 720 Olympic-size swimming pools — according to a new study released on Wednesday. The study by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and independent think tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) said around 67 per cent of this waste will come from five states: Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. India's current installed 66.7 GW capacity (as of FY23) has already generated about 100 kilotonnes of waste, which will increase to 340 kilotonnes by 2030. This will include about 10 kilotonnes of silicon, 12-18 tonnes of silver, and 16 tonnes of cadmium and tellurium — the majority of which are critical minerals for India, the study titled "Enabling a Circular Economy in India's Solar Industry: Assessing the Solar Waste Quantum" said. Recycling solar waste to recover these materials will reduce import dependency and enhance India's mineral security. The study found that the rest of the 260 kilotonnes of waste will come from new capacity that will be deployed in this decade (from 2024 to 2030). The solar waste will increase to about 19,000 kilotonnes by 2050; 77 per cent of which will arise from new capacities, CEEW said, adding this is an opportunity for India to emerge as a leading hub of circular economy for the solar industry and ensure resilient solar supply chains. India plans to amass around 292 gigawatt of solar capacity by 2030, making solar PV waste management crucial for environmental, economic, and social reasons.

The study, conducted under Niti Aayog's Action Plan for Circular Economy — Solar Panels, for the first time, estimates India-specific solar waste generation from various streams, excluding manufacturing. This information is crucial for creating data-driven waste management policies. India is already implementing several measures to tackle the waste. Last year, the environment ministry issued amended E-waste Management Rules 2022 bringing solar photovoltaic cells, panels, and modules under its ambit. These rules mandate the producers of solar cells and modules to manage their waste under the extended producer responsibility (EPR) framework. Arunabha Ghosh, CEO, CEEW, said, "India must proactively address solar waste, not just as an environmental imperative but as a strategic necessity for ensuring energy security and building a circular economy. As we witness the remarkable growth of solar from only 4 GW in March 2015 to 73 GW in December 2023, robust recycling mechanisms become increasingly crucial. They safeguard renewable ecosystems, create green jobs, enhance mineral security, foster innovation, and build resilient, circular supply chains." Neeraj Kuldeep, Senior Programme Lead, CEEW, said, "India's G20 Presidency identified a circular economy as a thrust area for sustainable development. A circular solar industry and responsible waste management will maximise resource efficiency and make domestic supply chains resilient. The study provides robust evidence of the opportunity in solar waste management. However, solar recycling technologies and the industry are still at a nascent stage and require policy push and support."

# JSW MG Motor India to set up second plant

PTI ■ MUMBAI

JSW MG Motor India will invest Rs 5,000 crore to enhance production capacity and launch one new car every 3-6 months starting September, top company officials said on Wednesday. The newly formed company, a joint venture between China's SAIC and Indian conglomerate JSW Group will also seek to create a "Maruti moment" in the new energy vehicle segment. JSW Group Chairman Sajjan Jindal said here, while announcing the finalisation of the partnership here. The joint venture aims to sell one million units of passenger electric vehicles in India by 2030 when the total market is expected to be 10 million units annually. "We have announced today that we are going to have our second plant in Gujarat near our existing unit at Halol itself," MG Motor India Chairman Emeritus Rajeev Chhabra told

PTI on the sidelines of the event. The company's production capacity will go from over 1 lakh per year to over 3 lakh a year, he said. Asked about the investment, he said, "The total investment from all stakeholders in this space is going to be over Rs 5,000 crore on capacity enhancement and new product introductions." Outlining the roadmap for the company, Jindal in his address said the JSW Group believes in scale when it comes to building capacity. "We are going to churn the whole industry a lot and we will create some sort of disruption in the industry. Our idea is that we will bring one new car every 3-4 months, six months down the line," he said. September onwards, he said, "We will be bringing the new cars. We will manufacture them in India not only for India but also export these cars to the most developed markets."



"Forty years ago when Maruti came to India, it changed the auto industry. It brought very efficient cars, very lightweight cars and the Ambassadors and the Fiats went into oblivion. "Maruti brought in state-of-the-art new cars. Today they are the market leader," he said. "I believe that with MG we can create a new energy vehicle Maruti moment," Jindal said. JSW MG Motor India is seeking to be the market leader in the new energy vehicle (NEV) segment in India, targeting sales of 10 lakh units

annually by 2030. Speaking at the event, JSW MG Motor India Member of Steering Committee Parth Jindal said, "It is our aim to have 33 per cent of the new energy vehicle segment by 2030. That means, we want to sell one million passenger vehicles only electric apart from all the other products that we will sell." Last year in November, China's largest automaker SAIC Motor had inked a joint venture agreement with the JSW Group to accelerate the

transformation and growth of MG Motor in India. MG Motor is a British brand owned by Shanghai-headquartered SAIC Motor. JSW Group will hold 35 per cent in the Indian JV operations. SAIC will continue supporting the joint venture with advanced technology and products to deliver mobility solutions with a focus on the Indian consumer, as per the agreement. In 2022, MG Motor India had announced plans to invest around Rs 4,000 crore on a second manufacturing unit, for which it was in talks with several state governments, including Gujarat, where its first facility is located. The company, which was looking to expand its annual production capacity of its plant at Halol in Gujarat to 1.25 lakh units, was looking to add another 1.75 lakh units capacity from the second plant and take its overall capacity to 3 lakh units a year in two years. However, its expansion plans

got delayed owing to funding crunch. Since its inception in 2019, MG Motor India has invested Rs 7,000 crore and sold close to 2,00,000 vehicles in the country. In 2023, the company had sold around 60,000 units as compared to about 48,000 units in 2022. On the other hand, last month JSW Group signed an MoU with the Odisha government for establishment of an integrated electric vehicle (EV) and EV battery manufacturing project at an investment of Rs 40,000 crore in the state. The JSW group will set up an electric vehicle, and component manufacturing plant at Naraj in Cuttack district, while it will set up a copper smelter and lithium refinery at Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district. The project consists of a 50 GWH EV battery plant, EV, lithium refinery, copper smelter and related component manufacturing units.





# LIVERPOOL HIRES HUGHES AS SPORTING DIRECTOR

**AP ■ LIVERPOOL**  
Liverpool's restructuring of its technical staff continued on Wednesday when the club hired Richard Hughes as sporting director starting June 1. Hughes is leaving his role as technical director at Bournemouth to take up the post at Liverpool after previously working with Michael Edwards, who was hired last week as chief executive of football at Fenway Sports Group - the US-based conglomerate whose portfolio of sports teams includes Liverpool. Hughes' main task will be identifying a replacement for Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, who said in January that he will be stepping down after nearly nine years as manager. "It is clear to everyone that Jurgen will leave a legacy to build upon," Edwards said, "and in Richard we have the right person to make the key decisions and offer the leadership to take us forward into a bright future. "As one very successful chapter will come to a close for Liverpool in the summer, the objective of everyone here is for another one to begin - and with Richard I am confident we have the right person in position for us to

# Matches against Kuwait, Qatar will tell us everything about qualification to third round: Stimac

**PTI ■ ABHA (SAUDI ARABIA)**

The results against Kuwait and Qatar in June will be the real indicator of the Indian football team's prospects of making a maiden appearance in the third round of the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers, head coach Igor Stimac said on Wednesday. India will take on lower-ranked Afghanistan in their second round qualifying match here on Thursday, and a win in the hill town will only brighten their chances of progressing to the third round, something the Blue Tigers have never achieved. "Each game is important from the aspect of self-confidence and rankings. But our priority and the final goal is to qualify for Round 3. There are various options to get there and obviously, nothing will be decided in the next two games. The matches in June against Kuwait and Qatar will tell us everything," Stimac said. This will be the fourth time in five years that India will face Afghanistan in an official match. The two meetings in the World Cup Qualifiers in 2019 and 2021 ended 1-1 each, while India ran out 2-1 winners in the Asian Cup Qualifiers in 2022 in Kolkata, thanks to Sahal Abdul Samad's added-time strike. The Indians arrived here on March 15 and have had five full training sessions ahead of the match, acclimatising to the conditions in the mountain



city, which is 2,470 metres above sea level. "We have been training normally as usual. We came here earlier so the boys can adapt to the different climate in Abha, and things look okay at the moment," said the Croat. "Ashley knows most of our boys quite well and has been preparing his team for us since the Asian Cup," said Stimac.

Indian football all too well, having coached Bengaluru FC, ATK, and RoundGlass Punjab FC. He took charge of the Afghanistan national team last November, right before the World Cup Qualifiers kicked off.

"A few months back they had a camp in Abha to work on their game plan and played a friendly with a local team here. But we are sure they will be a much better side than what we have seen in their opening games," he added. India skipper Sunil Chhetri, who won two I-League titles and a Federation Cup playing under Westwood at Bengaluru

FC, shared his thoughts on the Afghanistan side. "They will play like a unit, they will be aggressive, they will know exactly what they have to do because that's how Ashley Westwood is. But I think it's more about us. "We are here right in the corner of Saudi Arabia and we really have to bounce back after what happened in the Asian Cup. It's not going to be easy. We have to turn up," said Chhetri. With three points and one win from two matches, India currently occupy the second place in the Group A pecking order. Reigning Asian champions Qatar lead the Group A standings with six points from two wins, while Kuwait are second with one win. Having lost both their games so far, Afghanistan are placed last. India's away win against Kuwait has put Igor Stimac's team in a strong position to progress further in the qualification cycle, something the 117-ranked side has never achieved. Victories in their upcoming outings (away and home) against the 158-ranked Afghanistan will help India acquire nine points and with Qatar expected to win their next two matches against Kuwait, the Blue Tigers have a real chance of jumping to second place in the standings. India defeated Kuwait (1-0) in Kuwait City in their opening match of the qualifiers, before losing to Qatar (0-3) in Bhubaneswar.



# Indian men and women occupy second place in maiden FIH Hockey 5s rankings

**PTI ■ LAUSANNE**

Indian men's and women's teams are both placed second in the maiden Hockey 5s rankings issued recently by the world body (FIH). The Indian men's team occupies second spot jointly with Oman and Malaysia following a three-way tie with 1400 points each. Having won the Asian Championship, India had finished fifth at the World Cup at Muscat from January 28-31. Oman on the other hand had won bronze medal in front of their home crowd in their first-ever World Cup appearance. World Cup runners-up Malaysia improved massively since their fourth-place finish at the Asian Championships. The Netherlands (1750 points) lead the pack after winning the inaugural World Cup following their victory at the European Championships. Poland (1350) and Egypt (1350) are tied for fifth place in the world rankings. Poland narrowly missed out on the bronze medal in the World Cup, while Egypt finished in sixth place. Following closely behind are Trinidad & Tobago (1200) and Kenya (1200) tied for seventh in the world rankings. Pakistan (1150) find themselves in ninth place, after winning the Challenger Trophy at the World Cup and Australia (1100) close out the top-10. The Netherlands once again occupy pole position in the women's rankings with their gold medal at the World Cup as well as the European Championships that secured them 1750 points. India (1550), who won the silver medal at the World Cup after winning the Asian Championship, are ranked second. World Cup bronze medallists Poland (1450) are placed third. Uruguay (1350) and South Africa (1350) are tied for fourth place after their impressive show at the World Cup. Malaysia (1250) are ranked sixth following a sixth place finish in the World Cup. They are followed closely by Ukraine, New Zealand and the United States who are all tied for seventh place with 1200 points each. Namibia (1150) complete the top-10 in the women's Hockey5s world rankings.

# MORE HOLI FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2024

For the convenience of the rail passengers, Railway will run the following Holi Festival Special Trains during the Holi festival season. The details are as under: -

Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Days of Run	Period	Accommodation
01053	Lokmanya Tilak (T)	12:15	Banaras	16:05	Wednesday	27.03.24	1st AC, 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC (Economy), Sleeper & General
01054	Banaras	20:30	Lokmanya Tilak (T)	23:55	Thursday	Upto 28.03.24	
01123	Lokmanya Tilak (T)	12:15	Gorakhpur Jn.	18:55	Friday	Upto 29.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
01124	Gorakhpur Jn.	21:15	Lokmanya Tilak (T)	07:25	Saturday	Upto 30.03.24	
01103	Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T)	22:35	Gorakhpur Jn.	09:30	Thursday	Upto 28.03.24	1st AC, 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC (Economy), Sleeper & General
01104	Gorakhpur Jn.	15:30	Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T)	00:40	Saturday	Upto 30.03.24	
05115	Chhapra	17:45	Anand Vihar (T)	11:50	Wednesday	27.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
05116	Anand Vihar (T)	14:45	Chhapra	09:30	Thursday	21.03.24 & 28.03.24	
05023	Gorakhpur Jn.	21:15	Anand Vihar (T)	13:15	Sunday	24.03.24 & 31.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
05024	Anand Vihar (T)	15:15	Gorakhpur Jn.	07:30	Monday	25.03.24 & 01.04.24	
05097	Tanakpur Jn.	18:25	Daurai Jn.	13:40	Fri, Mon, Wed	22.03.24 to 29.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
05098	Daurai Jn.	16:05	Tanakpur Jn.	09:35	Sat, Tue, Thu	23.03.24 to 30.03.24	
05047	Banaras	19:20	Anand Vihar (T)	09:30	Tuesday	26.03.2024	3 Tier AC, AC Chair Car
05048	Anand Vihar (T)	18:15	Banaras	08:10	Wednesday	27.03.2024	
05053	Gorakhpur Jn.	09:30	Bandra Terminus	16:00	Friday	22.03.24 & 29.03.24	2nd Sitting
05054	Bandra Terminus	21:45	Gorakhpur Jn.	06:25	Saturday	23.03.24 & 30.03.24	
05005	Gorakhpur Jn.	14:40	Amritsar	09:30	Wednesday	27.03.2024	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
05006	Amritsar	12:45	Gorakhpur Jn.	08:50	Thursday	21.03.24 & 28.03.24	
05049	Chhapra	09:55	Amritsar	09:30	Friday	22.03.24 & 29.03.24	3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
05050	Amritsar	12:45	Chhapra	14:00	Saturday	23.03.24 & 30.03.24	
05012	Gomti Nagar	14:00	Chhapra	00:05	Thu, Sat, Mon, Wed	21.03.24 to 27.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
05011	Chhapra	05:45	Gomti Nagar	16:00	Fri, Sun, Tue, Thu	22.03.24 to 28.03.24	
05045	Lalkuan	13:10	Rajkot	18:10	Sunday	24.03.24 & 31.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
05046	Rajkot	22:30	Lalkuan	04:05	Monday	25.03.24 & 01.04.24	
05193	Chhapra	15:20	Panvel	20:30	Thursday	21.03.24 to 28.03.24	3 Tier AC (Economy), Sleeper & General
05194	Panvel	21:40	Chhapra	08:50	Friday	22.03.24 to 29.03.24	
09526	Naharlagun	10:00	Hapa	00:30	Saturday	23.03.2024	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
09184	Banaras	14:30	Mumbai Central	04:20	Friday	22.03.2024	1st AC, 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC (Economy)
09195	Vadodara	19:00	Mau	20:45	Saturday	23.03.24 & 30.03.24	1st AC, 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
09196	Mau	23:00	Vadodara	00:45	Sunday	24.03.24 & 31.03.24	
09062	Barauni	12:15	Valsad	03:45	Thursday	21.03.2024	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
04145	Subedarganj	21:30	Anand Vihar (T)	08:00	As per dates	21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29 & 31.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC (Economy), Sleeper & General
04146	Anand Vihar (T)	09:30	Subedarganj	19:00	As per dates	21 to 25, 27 to 30.03.24 & 01.04.24	
03435	Malda Town	09:30	Anand Vihar (T)	14:10	Monday	25.03.24 to 01.04.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
03436	Anand Vihar (T)	19:00	Malda Town	23:30	Tuesday	26.03.24 to 02.04.24	
08475	Puri	04:50	Hazrat Nizamuddin	17:40	Friday	22.03.24 & 29.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
08476	Hazrat Nizamuddin	23:35	Puri	06:55	Saturday	23.03.24 & 30.03.24	
08571	Visakhapatnam	08:20	Hazrat Nizamuddin	17:40	Saturday	23.03.24 to 30.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC (Economy), & General
08572	Hazrat Nizamuddin	23:35	Visakhapatnam	13:30	Sunday	24.03.24 & 31.03.24	
04066	Anand Vihar(T)	23:00	Patna Jn.	16:00	Monday, Thursday	21.03.24 to 28.03.24	1st AC, AC 2 Tier & AC 3 Tier.
04065	Patna Jn.	17:45	Anand Vihar(T)	11:20	Tuesday, Friday	22.03.24 to 29.03.24	
04062	Delhi Jn.	08:50	Barauni	06:30	Sunday	24.03.24 to 31.03.24	AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General
04061	Barauni	08:00	Delhi Jn.	07:35	Monday	25.03.24 to 01.04.24	
04518	Chandigarh	23:15	Gorakhpur	18:20	Thursday	21.03.24 to 28.03.24	AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, 3 Tier Economy, Sleeper & General.
04517	Gorakhpur	22:05	Chandigarh	14:10	Friday	22.03.24 to 29.03.24	
04060	Anand Vihar(T)	10:30	Jaynagar	15:15	Tuesday, Friday	22.03.24 to 29.03.24	Sleeper & General
04059	Jaynagar	17:00	Anand Vihar(T)	19:55	Wednesday, Saturday	23.03.24 to 30.03.24	
01664	Anand Vihar(T)	11:10	Saharsa Jn.	11:20	Monday	25.03.2024	Sleeper & General.
01663	Saharsa Jn.	09:30	Anand Vihar(T)	13:55	Wednesday	27.03.2024	
04010	Anand Vihar(T)	23:45	Jogbani	05:20	Tuesday	26.03.2024	Sleeper & General.
04009	Jogbani	09:00	Anand Vihar(T)	16:05	Thursday	28.03.2024	

Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Days of Run	Period	Accommodation
04068	Delhi Jn.	19:30	Darbhanga	16:30	Thursday, Friday	22.03.24 to 29.03.24	AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.
04067	Darbhanga	18:00	Delhi Jn.	16:40	Wednesday, Saturday	23.03.24 to 30.03.24	
04004	New Delhi	00:10	Sitamari	22:00	Thursday, Friday	22.03.24 to 29.03.24	AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.
04003	Sitamari	23:30	New Delhi	01:30			
04033	New Delhi	23:45	Martyr Captain Tushar Mahajan	11:10	Friday	22.03.24 to 29.03.24	3 Tier AC Economy and Sleeper.
04034	Martyr Captain Tushar Mahajan	20:55	New Delhi	09:30	Saturday	23.03.24 to 30.03.24	
04075	New Delhi	23:45	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	11:10	Wednesday, Sunday	24.03.24 to 31.03.24	3 Tier AC Economy and Sleeper.
04076	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	20:55	New Delhi	09:30	Thursday, Monday	25.03.24 to 01.04.24	
04080	Delhi Jn.	19:30	Varanasi	09:45	Mon, Thu, Sat	21.03.24 to 30.03.24	3 Tier AC Economy and Sleeper.
04079	Varanasi	18:20	Delhi Jn.	08:50	Tue, Fri, Sun	22.03.24 to 31.03.24	
01654	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	23:35	Varanasi	23:55	Sunday	24.03.24 to 31.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC Economy, General and Sleeper
01653	Varanasi	05:30	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	11:25	Tuesday	26.03.24 to 02.04.24	
02371	Howrah	08:15	Banaras	21:45	Saturday	23.03.2024	1st AC., 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General.
02372	Banaras	23:05	Howrah	12:20			
04064	Delhi Jn.	13:20	Tundla	17:15	Daily	21.03.24 to 24.03.24	General
04063	Tundla	17:45	Delhi Jn.	22:15			
04923	Saharanpur	04:40	Ambala Cantt.	06:45	Daily	21.03.24 to 24.03.24	General
04924	Ambala Cantt.	20:22	Saharanpur	22:30			
04051	Delhi Jn.	10:00	Panipat	12:10	Daily	21.03.24 to 24.03.24	General
04052	Panipat	13:10	Delhi Jn.	15:40			
04249	Varanasi	06:25	Lucknow	12:25	Daily	21.03.24 to 24.03.24	General
04250	Lucknow	16:35	Varanasi	22:35			
04048	New Delhi	06:20	Agra Cantt.	11:15	Daily	21.03.24 to 24.03.24	General
04047	Agra Cantt.	14:30	New Delhi	18:45			
09003	Mumbai Central	16:00	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	14:25	Friday	22.03.24 & 29.03.24	1st AC., 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General.
09004	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	17:25	Mumbai Central	15:25	Saturday	23.03.24 & 30.03.24	
04731	Sri Ganganagar	14:30	Agra Cantt.	04:05	Wednesday	27.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC Economy Sleeper & General.
04732	Agra Cantt.	07:05	Sri Ganganagar	00:50	Thursday	21.03.24 & 28.03.24	
09603	Udaipur City	23:00	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	03:20	Tuesday	26.03.24	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC Economy Sleeper & General.
09604	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	10:50	Udaipur City	15:10	Thursday	21.03.24 & 28.03.24	
04022	Anand Vihar(T)	23:55	Muzaffarpur	21:30	Thursday	21.03.2024	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General.
04021	Muzaffarpur	23:00	Anand Vihar(T)	23:30	Friday	22.03.2024	
01431	Pune	16:15	Gorakhpur Jn.	21:00	Friday	22.03.2024	3 Tier AC and Sleeper
01432	Gorakhpur Jn.	23:25	Pune	06:25	Saturday	23.03.2024	
01083	Chhatrapati Shivaji(T)	22:35	Gorakhpur Jn.	09:30	Friday	22.03.2024	3 Tier AC and Sleeper
01084	Gorakhpur Jn.	15:30	Chhatrapati Shivaji(T)	00:40	Sunday	24.03.2024	
04530	Bathinda Jn.	20:50	Varanasi	17:30	Date Wise	23.03.2024	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General.
04529	Varanasi	20:45	Bathinda Jn.	17:00	Date Wise	23.03.2024	
04536	Ambala Cantt.	00:40	Katihar Jn.	05:00	Date Wise	22.03.2024	3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
04535	Katihar Jn.	07:00	Ambala Cantt.	11:15	Date Wise	23.03.2024	
04538	Chandigarh	19:15	Katihar Jn.	23:45	Date Wise	23.03.2024	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General.
04537	Katihar Jn.	04:00	Chandigarh	09:40	Date Wise	25.03.2024	
04540	Ambala Cantt.	20:25	Katihar Jn.	23:45	Date Wise	21.03.2024	3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
04539	Katihar Jn.	04:00	Ambala Cantt.	09:00	Date Wise	23.03.2024	
04534	Sirhind	13:00	Jaynagar	19:45	Date Wise	22.03.2024	2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General.
04533	Jaynagar	23:30	Sirhind	05:15	Date Wise	23.03.2024	

For any kind of information, such as seat availability and time-table etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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# MOMENT OF MY LIFE: RCB ACE PATIL DESCRIBES MEETING IDOL KOHLI

PTI ■ BENGALURU

She was the cynosure of all eyes on Sunday having played a massive role in RCB's WPL triumph but Tuesday night gave 'Purple Cap' winner Shreyanka Patil a chance to enjoy a rare 'Fan Girl' moment with none other than Virat Kohli.

The 21-year-old off-spinner, who had been a revelation in both eliminator and final with her match-winning performances at the death, couldn't stop gushing on social media when she realised that her childhood idol actually knew her name.

"Started watching cricket cos of him. Grew up dreaming to be like him. And last night, had the moment of my life," she wrote on 'X', posting her picture alongside Kohli from the RCB 'Unbox' event.

"Virat said, 'Hi Shreyanka, well bowled.' He actually knows my name," the surreal feeling was yet to sink and it was understandable from her post. Shreyanka was picked up by RCB during inaugural WPL auctions last year at base price of Rs 10 lakh and she finished with six wickets in seven matches, the most for her team.

In September, the 21-year-old offie played in the CPL for Guyana Amazon Warriors,



where she finished with the most wickets (9) in the tournament. The performances were noticed by the Indian selectors, who called her up for the home T20 series against England in December last year and she made her national team debut on December 6. Since then there has been no looking back for the youngsters, who battled many injuries, to stake her claim in the national team with her performances. Shreyanka has so far represented India in two ODIs and six T20s, picking up four and eight wickets respectively.

# Surya maintains pole position in batting list

## T20I RANKINGS



PTI ■ DUBAI

Suryakumar Yadav maintained his numero uno position among batters despite being out of competitive cricket for past three months while ace spinner Rashid Khan, back in Afghan jersey after an injury lay-off, is back among top-10 in bowlers' list in the latest ICC T20I rankings published on Wednesday. Surya, who will make a comeback for Mumbai Indians in the upcoming IPL, is way ahead of the pack with 861 points under his belt. Phil Salt is a distant number two

with 802 points. Surya hadn't played any cricket since December, having undergone sports hernia surgery. Afghanistan spin wizard Rashid re-entered the elite list of the ICC men's T20I bowler rankings following his contribution in team's 2-1 series victory over Ireland. The 25-year-old spinner returned from injury in style, claiming eight wickets and his exploits saw him jump four places to ninth in the latest rankings. The Afghanistan ace collected a series-high eight wickets over the three matches at an

average of 5.62 in what was his first series since he injured his back during last year's ICC Men's Cricket World Cup. Rashid, who first held the No.1 ranking for T20I bowlers at the start of 2018 and has consistently remained near the top, only slipped out of the top 10 recently and will be keen to maintain his position within the premier spots in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup in USA and the Caribbean. Afghanistan teammate Naveen-ul-Haq (up two places to 55th) made some ground following his three

wickets during the Ireland series, while Irish trio of Josh Little (up seven spots to 39th), Mark Adair (up two places to 56th) and Barry McCarthy (up 15 spots to 77th) also boosted their T20I bowler ranking that is still being led by England spinner Adil Rashid. In T20I batting rankings, Bangladesh veteran Shakib Al Hasan maintained his place at the top of the rankings for T20I all-rounders, with Ireland's Gareth Delany (up four places to 18th) the biggest mover in this category following his 76 runs and a wicket against Afghanistan.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

# If Rahul performs well in IPL, reward will be T20 World Cup slot: Langer

If KL Rahul leads Lucknow Super Giants to their maiden IPL title, he will automatically be rewarded with a spot in the Indian team for the T20 World Cup, reckons head coach Justin Langer, who wants his team's national hopefuls to "concentrate" on doing well for the franchise first.

Rahul, who is coming back from a quadriceps injury and is not expected to keep wickets at the beginning of the IPL, is still not a certainty in the Indian T20 squad and only a good IPL with both the bat and gloves can seal the deal for him.

Asked how he would balance his skipper's personal ambition with the team's interests, Langer said it isn't all that complicated.

"If the team does well, everyone gets rewarded. If KL can captain LSG to IPL title, that means he would have captained well, batted well and kept wickets well," Langer replied to a PTI query during a season-opening media interaction on Wednesday.

Apart from Rahul, the other serious T20 World Cup contender from LSG is leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi.

"The message for players, like KL or Bishi (Bishnoi) will be that more they concentrate on playing well for LSG, their chances (of WT20 call-up) will increase."

Rahul is expected to link up with the team on Wednesday evening due to a flight delay but the former Australian opener didn't say a word about when the star player will start keeping.

"He has followed all the 'Return To Play' protocols and he has been hitting a lot of balls."

**BOWLING THIN ON EXPERIENCE BUT TALENT AMAZING:** With foreign recruits Mark Wood and David Willey ruled out of the tournament, Lucknow Super Giants' pace bowling unit looks thin on experience. Shivam Mavi, the injury prone pacer,

hasn't played competitive cricket since August 2023 while Delhi's talented tearaway quick Mayank Yadav was out of the entire Ranji Trophy season with a side strain. Mohsin Khan, the find of the 2022 IPL, has had injury issues and Yash Thakur isn't very experienced at the tournament level.

"It is a very good observation that we lack some experience in pace department but there is enormous talent. The pacers -- they all look fit, healthy and hungry."

"We need to manage them well not just at start but through the whole tournament. Among pacers Naveen (ul Haq) has played a lot of T20 cricket," the 2021 T20 World Cup and multiple Ashes winning coach, said. The coach seemed mighty impressed with Mayank and said he seems to be a phenomenal talent with "serious pace".

Apart from Naveen, the other overseas fast bowler is Shamar Joseph, the West Indies sensation, who has won hearts with his performances in the recent two Tests in Australia.

However, with very little T20 experience even in the Caribbean Premier League, will he come in handy in IPL? Langer sounded bullish.

"He didn't have experience even before going into two Test matches," Langer sounded dismissive about the experience bit.

"I was commenting and I saw him take seven wickets in 37 degrees, 80 per cent humidity and a broken toe. He is an incredible athlete. Smile, spirit, athleticism and skill, he has got



all those ingredients that you need to succeed. Another talented guy is Mayank." Langer was also pretty confident about the spin bowling arsenal of his team, especially Bishnoi and the 41-year-old veteran leg-break bowler Amit Mishra. Tamil Nadu's left-arm spinner M

Siddharth has also caught coach's attention. "He (Bishnoi) is an outstanding bowler. I love his energy. I watched his training. There is no better pure leg-spinner than Mishi (Mishra's nickname). I saw young M Siddharth, who bowled a maiden over first-up in a training game. There is Krishnappa

Gowtham." Gautam Gambhir was the mentor of LSG before he joined KKR ahead of this season. Asked whether the fans can expect a face-off with the feisty former India player, Langer said there is only admiration for the work he did with the franchise.

"There is no face-off. I was disappointed when he left for KKR but he is a real hero in KKR. We have been good friends," said Langer, who had once conducted personalised coaching sessions for Gambhir in Perth, when he needed to sort out his game against the short ball.

"But then when we play DC, my good friend Ricky Ponting is the coach, in CSK, Stephen Fleming and Mike Hussey are friends."

**COACHING AN IPL TEAM:** For Langer, coaching an IPL team is quite similar to coaching an international team.

"It is only at domestic level that you get players for pre-season. At international level, players only assemble before competition phase. So it is pretty similar."

Having guided Australia to a T20 World Cup title, Langer said that he knows the "blue-print of success" but it will be important to execute the plans.

"I have been sleeping well for the past two years after I left coaching Australia. Now I will have sleepless nights in fitting so much talent in just 11 slots," he said referring to his forced break he had to take after leaving the Australia job for not getting a long-term contract following discontent among players.



# Cricket remains integral but not everything for Dhoni, says Zaheer

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Cricket remains integral but "not everything" for MS Dhoni, says his former India teammate Zaheer Khan of the man with a penchant for catching the world off-guard and an eagerness to explore various avenues.

At 42, the two-time World Cup winning captain Dhoni is gearing up to lead Chennai Super Kings in the upcoming IPL. The charismatic former India skipper had quit international cricket four years back.

"MS Dhoni understood a long time ago that he is passionate about cricket and it is an integral part of his life. But it couldn't be everything," Zaheer said in an episode dedicated to the Dhoni on JioCinema.

Besides his World Cup triumphs and India's march to the world number one position in Tests, Dhoni has led CSK to a joint-record five IPL titles, having taken on the top leadership role from the league's inaugural edition in 2008.

Zaheer said, "When you're playing, switching off (from the game) is very important. Cricket is not everything. Every cricketer has to face this eventually."

"When you step away from the game, you may not have a lot of options. We've seen many athletes struggle after retiring because they gave everything to the game, and when they left it, they didn't know what to do.

"In this sense, MS Dhoni understood a long time ago that he is passionate about cricket and it is an integral part of his life. But it couldn't be everything."

"He keeps doing things outside of the sport. For example, his interest in bikes. He's always researching them."

Speaking about Dhoni, ex-India and CSK all-rounder Suresh Raina said he wants his former teammate to continue playing in IPL for another five years.

"The biggest question is who'll be their next captain? Even if Dhoni stepped away as captain, he'll be in the dugout whether it's as a mental toughness coach or just for his presence. But the question is, who is he going to nurture?"

"This is a pivotal year for CSK. Who does MS have his eyes on? Rituraj Gaikwad is a good option. This year is a very important year for CSK, more than for MS Dhoni."

"Because we'll see who he is going to select as his deputy and probably say: 'You handle this now, I've been looking after the team since 2008. You take care of the yellow, I will wear the jersey and sit in the dressing room,'" Raina said.

"It's important now to see how he plans for the future. He's 42 years old. I would love to see him play for five more years, or at least two or three more years."

The IPL starts on Friday with reigning champions CSK taking Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the opener.

# Afghanistan condemns Australia postponement of bilateral series

PTI ■ KABUL

Affiliated Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) on Wednesday asked its Australian counterparts to "not succumb" to pressures from their government, which the south Asian country believes led to the postponement of a bilateral T20 series. Cricket Australia (CA) on Tuesday postponed a three-match T20 International home series against Afghanistan's men's team in August this year, citing the "worsening" conditions for women and girls in that country.

Responding to CA's move in a strongly-worded letter, the ACB said, "The Afghanistan Cricket Board expresses disappointment over Cricket Australia's decision to postpone yet another bilateral series against Afghanistan and reiterates its stance on neutral and politics-free cricket across the globe."

"ACB advocates for keeping

cricket distinct from political influence, considering the game's significance in Afghanistan and its connection to the happiness and joy of the Afghan nation."

CA's decision to postpone the upcoming series is the continuation of its tough stand on Afghanistan. CA had cancelled a one-off Test against them in Hobart in November 2021, following which they also postponed a three-match ODI series in the UAE.

The Afghanistan board feels CA is acting on directives from the Australian government, who was requested "not to impose its policies on cricket boards and instead focus on supporting the development of cricket across regions."

"ACB acknowledges the pressures faced by Cricket Australia from the Australian government, and emphasises on the importance of addressing such issues through collaborative efforts between the two cricket boards.



"ACB's top management had previously engaged in negotiations with Cricket Australia and proposed exploring alternative solutions instead of publicly announcing withdrawals."

"ACB expresses disappointment over CA's decision to withdraw

from Afghanistan for the third time," the board said in the letter.

The three-match T20I series was part of Afghanistan's FTP (Future Tours Programmes) for the ICC 2023-2027 international calendar, which was approved

by the ICC in the presence of the CA delegation, who had "agreed to the fixtures at the time", the ACB said.

"This recent withdrawal follows Cricket Australia's previous actions, including withdrawing from a one-off Test match

against Afghanistan in 2021 and refusing to play Afghanistan in a three-match ODI series in March 2023 due to government influence."

"ACB urges Cricket Australia to respect and understand its position as a Full Member nation and look for alternative solutions rather than succumbing to external pressures and/or political influences."

To conclude, the disappointed board said the ACB remains "committed to negotiating" with the ICC, CA, and other full member countries and "adhering" to the game's apex body's principles to ensure cricket remains free from political influence and supported by all parties involved.

Afghanistan were the only Full Member to not be represented at the Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa, because the females in the country have been barred from playing cricket.