















## FIRST COLUMN UP CHASES INVESTORS BUT PROBLEMS STAY

Poverty and unemployment are still big problems for the state



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Investment is coming to Uttar Pradesh. Figures are mind boggling. In the run-up to the Global Investors Summit, the state claimed to have received Rs 1.68 lakh crore through 'Nivesh Sarathi' portal. This is in addition to Rs 1.88 lakh supposed to have poured in between 2018 and 2021.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is helping Prime Minister Narendra Modi in building up a \$5-trillion economy by making UP itself a \$1-trillion economy. It will create 5.5 lakh jobs, UP claims. But kharif losses and high poverty cause drain on state finances.

The mega shows have had a pattern in UP since the mid-1990s. In 2022-23, UP claimed to have emerged as the third largest state with a nominal GDP of Rs 20.48 lakh crore. In the 1990s, chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav announced figures of Rs 54,000 to Rs 57,000 crore a number of times as investments through the MoUs. The real figures were always far less.



On the job front, UP has been lagging behind. Unemployment moved up from 2.1 per cent in July 2017 to 21.5 per cent in April 2020 at the peak of Covid-19, according to a survey conducted by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Now it has come down to 4.33 per cent after fluctuating during January-December 2022. The state government has come out with a new MSME policy. It may be recalled that a large number of MSMEs have suffered heavily since 2019.

Small businesses have been hit disproportionately hard by the continuing power crisis, with several units shutting down operations during outages, causing production losses. "Power outages lead to loss of production opportunities and the usage of power backups nearly doubles the cost of power," says Anil Bhardwaj, secretary general of the Federation of Indian Micro and Small and Medium Enterprises (FISME). He says the cost of power soars to Rs 12-13 per unit in case of power backups from the Rs 8 per unit generally charged by distribution companies. GST also hits them.

CM Adityanath says that to promote the real estate sector, UP has charted out plans to buy 43,000 acres of land for Rs 7.3 trillion. The move deprives farmers of land and creates new job seekers. The state is planning to build about 6.4 million new housing units. The state government, however, claims that 4.5 lakh jobs have been provided to youth in the last five years in the government sector, and many more in the private sector. It refutes the CMIE figures.

In UP, the number of unemployed persons—those without jobs but willing to work—has risen from about 40 lakh in January-April 2017 to nearly 56 lakh in May-August 2021, as per the CMIE. There is also pressure on the rural and agriculture sectors as the post-Covid-19 situation has hit them hard.

The Jewar international airport project, being built by the Tatas, is yet another mega project. The massive takeover of land all over the state for toll roads, metro, airports, etc., is expected to yield political dividends in the run up to the 2024 elections.

The state has acute poverty. Its 37.79 per cent population is extremely poor. Another 44.47 per cent is malnourished, highest in the country after Bihar and Jharkhand.

Despite private sector investment promises, it may not be easy for the most populous state to maintain its finances. The state has a public debt of 32.5 per cent. With not much state enterprises left, dependence on the private sector is a compulsion. Private investments may look good but can hardly support the functioning of the state.

(The author is a senior journalist)

# Cooperation Ministry rejuvenates the sector



SUMEET BHASIN

Cooperatives are now ready to play their pivotal role in achieving the aims of self-sufficiency and self-reliance

India's economic resilience lies in the reach of the cooperatives. In the past several decades, the cooperatives have done stellar jobs in empowering the rural parts of the country. With Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah at the helm, there is a new energy in the sector which had been ignored for decades. Now, the cooperatives are bracing up to play their designated role in driving the economic growth of the country.

According to the Economic Survey 2022-23, there are 8.5 lakh cooperatives in the country. Their membership base is 29 crore. Roughly, every fourth person in the country has some or other connections with cooperatives. Also, mostly the people from the marginalised and lower income groups in rural areas are connected with the cooperatives. It's also estimated that 98 per cent of the villages in the country are covered by Primary Agricultural Cooperatives (PACs).

The reach of the cooperatives make the institution central in the policy push to drive the rural economy and hasten the economic buoyancy by promoting rural entrepreneurship. Prime Minister Narendra Modi by carving out a separate Ministry for Cooperation filled a vacuum, which for long existed in the absence of the appreciation of the critical role played by such entities.

Under the guidance of Shah, a new national cooperation policy is being formulated, involving the relevant stakeholders such as experts, representatives from national, state, district, and primary-level cooperative societies, officials from the Union ministry of cooperation, and the state governments. This will address the demands of the stakeholders for the capacity building and necessary support ecosystem so that the cooperatives can contribute to realise the aim of India becoming a \$5 trillion economy soon, and also reaching the fourth largest economy status in a short span of time.

Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget has provided for a major push for cooperatives. Budget proposals have the potential to qualitatively change the scope and impact of the cooperatives in the overall economy of the country. A concessional tax of 15 per cent to promote new societies focusing on manufacturing has been provided for in the Budget. A higher limit of Rs 3 crore for TDS on cash withdrawal has also been spelt out in the Budget. Additionally, proposals have been laid in the Budget for the creation of decentralized storage capacities. A plan to set up a massive decentralised storage capacity, which will help farmers store their produce and realise remunerative prices by selling the commodity at an appropriate time, is also being worked out in the ministry on the direction of Shah to ensure that there is no distress selling of the agricultural produce.

Notably, Sitharaman said in her



MINISTER OF FINANCE NIRMALA SITHARAMAN IN THE BUDGET HAS PROVIDED FOR A MAJOR PUSH FOR COOPERATIVES. BUDGET PROPOSALS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO QUALITATIVELY CHANGE THE SCOPE AND IMPACT OF THE COOPERATIVES IN THE OVERALL ECONOMY OF THE COUNTRY

(The author is a policy analyst)

Budget speech that a new cooperative society (formed after April 1, 2023) which commences manufacturing by March 31, 2024, and does not avail of any specified incentive or deduction will be allowed to pay tax at a concessional rate of 15 per cent. This is a step in the right direction, as it provides parity of the cooperatives with the new manufacturing units.

The Budget has also provided an opportunity for the sugar cooperatives to claim the payments made to cane farmers for the period before the assessment year 2016-17 as expenditure, which is expected to provide sugar cooperatives with a relief of almost Rs 10,000 crore. The government will amend the relevant section of the Companies Act to ensure cash loans or transactions in cash, amounting to less than Rs 2 lakh for the cooperatives. For farmers, especially small and marginal farmers, and other marginalised sections, the government is promoting a cooperative-based economic development model.

The government will facilitate the setting up of a large number of multipurpose cooperative societies, primary fishery societies and dairy cooperative societies in uncovered panchayats and villages over the next five years. The government has already initiated the computerisation of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) with an investment of Rs 2,516 crore. In consultation with all stakeholders and states, model bye-laws were formulated enabling them to become multipurpose PACS, besides a national cooperative database is

being prepared for country-wide mapping of cooperative societies.

At a time when over 10,000 farmers producers organisations (FPOs) are being set up in the country as part of the vision of the prime minister for self-reliance of the rural population and also their economic empowerment, the Budget has provided for an economic architecture, which may bring buoyancy in the rural landscape in India. The Ministry of Cooperatives is also executing several initiatives for ensuring financial resilience of the cooperatives by looking into their existing capacities. The ministry has put in place the financial support system to hand-older the weaker cooperatives.

Now that the startup successes have taken the entrepreneurship to the tier-II and tier-III cities, it's very much possible that they will spread out to the rural parts of the country soon where the cooperatives will play a key role in supporting them. This is in addition to a series of scams in the cooperatives seen during the rule of the UPA government led by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during 2004-14. The cooperatives were maligned. Their reputations were destroyed. The people had even begun losing trust in them.

But the advent of participative governance led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought in the much needed transparency and regulation of the cooperatives so that they meet the desired prudent norms. It is in this context that the Ministry of Cooperation has shown a remarkable turnaround for the sector in the last few years.

With Shah leading from the front, the Ministry of Cooperation has overseen setting up of new sugar factories by providing investment loans). Also, the Ministry has helped in the modernization, expansion and diversification of existing sugar factories. In addition, the Ministry has also overseen establishment of new spinning mills, besides carrying out modernization and expansion of existing mills.

The Ministry in recent years also saw establishment of modern cotton ginning and pressing units in the small and medium scale agriculture and allied sector processing units. The Ministry is guiding the cooperatives to play roles of mentors by hand holding units in the areas of pre and post loom processing, garment and knitting units, besides also helping in the setting up of other processing units, such as foodgrains, oilseeds, plantation crops, fruits and vegetables.

Cooperatives are now ready to play their pivotal role in achieving the aims of the country to gain self-sufficiency and self-reliance in edible oil by promoting the adoption of the Central Government's policies. Also, the cooperatives are in the driver's seat in India scaling up its stake in the global food market by scaling up the processing and post-harvest management by promoting the adoption of technology and the necessary management know-how.

It's evident that the Ministry of Cooperation was the need of the hour which the Modi Government fulfilled timely to bring rural resilience in the country.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

I WONDER WHY ANY PERSON FROM THE (NEHRU-GANDHI) FAMILY DOESN'T KEEP THE NEHRU SURNAME. WHAT ARE THEY ASHAMED OF?  
— PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



WHO IN INDIA USES MATERNAL GRANDFATHER'S SURNAME? SOMEONE IN SUCH A RESPONSIBLE POSITION DOES NOT KNOW OR UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE OF INDIA.  
— AICC GENERAL SECRETARY RANDEEP SURJEWALA

# India can make definitional contributions at G20

Occasions like G20 meet are fit occasions for sharing of local experiences for universal use

A category is created by having something in common. Yet in each category, an entity can and usually may have some unique characteristics. Thus, all human beings across the globe have certain common features, physically, emotionally, and otherwise. Yet with human beings, there are different races, and each race has its distinctive features. The category can be further broken down into its conglomerates till one reaches the family, and even in the family, there are certain "streams". And then there are individuals.

It can, therefore, be argued that in definitional terms one has to look at both the conglomerates' traits and individual traits to be able to develop appropriate typologies and



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

indeed defining characteristics. This task is simultaneously essential and tricky. A lot of sociological and anthropological categories arise out of the above exercises. It needs to be appreciated that much work on the theme has been done over the years, making the task of categorization simultaneously simple yet complex. This also applies to what is referred to as "Indians".

Politically, all human beings with citizenship rights within the political boundaries of this country are entitled to be called Indians. Yet the physical characteristics from Kanyakumari to Kashmir have a range of variations. Under such circumstances, the characteristics of the 'majority' become the defining characteristic. This is a simple deduc-

tion because anything else would make for complexities.

All nation-building efforts require the need to recognize this. In the case of India, what would have been, a simple exercise has become subject to a misplaced sense of parity between one conglomerate and another.

It is obvious that a definition cannot be put in negative terms. There has to be positive content in the definition. In any nation-building exercise, the 'majority' of the population has a prime role, and the cultural element is its "way of life". "Way of life" is defined by the rituals of life, which in turn are defined by belief. Thus, it is "the beliefs" which are important. The definition of "belief" can vary, but it cannot be evaded because of the scientific

efforts it needs.

Consider the USA. The President of the USA takes an oath on the Bible, and nobody asks why the religious texts of other communities are not included in the oath-taking ceremony. In the UK, the Sovereign Monarch is the "Head of the Church of England". Nobody asks what about the followers of Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and whatever other religions of the subjects.

In the case of Russia, the Greek Orthodox Church has its say, and that is how the swearing-in ceremonies take place. In other words, a definition very often gets its expression through practice and acceptability.

This is an essential part of nation-building, or, for that

matter, any such definitional activity. In the case of India, so many identities have been drummed up repeatedly, that the word "diversity" has acquired almost definitional proportions. There is nothing wrong with appreciating diversity. However, a definition requires, as pointed out earlier, a positive content. Respecting each other's beliefs is normal, natural, and desirable. However, confusion will arise if the defining characteristics of a community and a conglomerate do not recognize the beliefs and the practices of the majority.

Taking this elaboration further, each conglomerate has its own unique elements, and those too have to be recognized. For example, in India, more than nine per cent of the

population is of tribal descent. Hence, it is necessary to recognise that, besides the majority traits, there may be identifiable minority characteristics that need to be registered, flagged, preserved, and developed.

As it happens in a democracy, noise can often be heard over and above a mild and a sane voice. A good example, again, comes from the tribes. Perhaps because the tribes are such that they have not yet organised into a politically powerful unified group, they are not paid the same deference as some of the local religious groups. This is a national loss.

It is a loss because it not only does not do justice to a substantial part of the population but also misses a focus on

some of the characteristics of a tribe that can be put to use for nation-building. Illustration can be the method by which the tribes have maintained their identity over several millennia.

To sum up the above, creating a definition is a tricky and time-consuming exercise. This has to be handled in a deft manner, and above all, it has to be handled in a statesmanlike and knowledgeable manner.

Occasions like the G20 meet are fit occasions for sharing methods for finding definitions and sharing of local experiences for universal use. India has a good opportunity to make definitional contributions at the coming G20 summit. There will be palpable wisdom in preparing for it.





# Turkiye Govt detain building contractors

## Toll crosses 33K mark

AP ■ ANTAKYA

Turkish justice officials targeted more than 130 people allegedly involved in shoddy and illegal construction methods as rescuers extricated more survivors, including a pregnant woman and two small children, six days after a pair of earthquakes collapsed thousands of buildings.

The death toll from Monday's quakes that hit southeastern Turkiye and northern Syria stood at 33,179 on Sunday and was certain to rise as search teams locate more bodies in the rubble. Authorities said more than 92,600 other people were injured in the disaster.

As despair also bred rage at the agonizingly slow rescue efforts, the focus turned to who was to blame for not better preparing people in the earthquake-prone region that was already suffering from years of civil war.

Even though Turkiye has, on paper, construction codes that meet current earthquake-engineering standards, they are too rarely enforced, explaining why thousands of buildings slumped onto their side or pancaked downward onto residents.



Turkish rescue workers carry Sevgi Colak, 45, to an ambulance after pulling her out from a collapsed building five days after the earthquake, in Adiyaman, southern Turkey on Saturday

Turkish Justice Minister Bekir Bozdogan said Sunday that 134 people were being investigated for their alleged responsibility in the construction of buildings that failed to withstand the quakes, according to Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency.

He said that three had been arrested pending trial, seven people were detained and seven other were barred from leaving the country.

Bozdogan has vowed to punish anyone responsible, and

prosecutors have begun gathering samples of buildings for evidence on materials used in constructions.

The quakes were powerful, but victims, experts and people across Turkiye are blaming bad construction for multiplying the devastation.

Authorities at Istanbul Airport on Sunday detained two contractors held responsible for the destruction of several buildings in Adiyaman, the private DHA news agency and other media reported. The pair were reportedly on their way to Georgia.

One of the arrested contractors, Yavuz Karakus, told reporters Sunday: "My conscience is clear. I built 44 buildings. Four of them were demolished. I did everything according to the rules," the DHA news agency reported.

they suspect are both political and religious reasons.

In Adiyaman, southeastern Turkiye, Elif Busra Ozturk waited outside the wreckage of a building on Saturday where her uncle and aunt were trapped — believed dead — and where the bodies of two of her cousins had already been found.

"For three days, I waited outside for help. No one came. There were so few rescue teams that they could only intervene in places they were sure there were people alive," she said.

At the same building complex, Abdullah Tas, 66, said he had been sleeping inside a car near the building where his son, daughter-in-law and four grandchildren were buried.

# Negligence of security forces reason for rising terror attacks in Pak: Imran

PTI ■ LAHORE

Imran Khan has said the outlawed Pakistani Taliban was allowed to flourish because of the "negligence" of the country's security forces, as the former prime minister underlined the importance of working closely with Afghanistan to jointly combat terrorism in the region.

Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, who was ousted from power in April 2022, made these comments in an interview with the Voice of America website on Saturday.

In the interview, Khan, 70, strongly defended his government's move to greenlight negotiations with the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) terrorist outfit.

"Well firstly, what were the choices [the] Pakistani government faced once the Taliban took over and they decided the TTP, and we're talking about 30, [30,000] to 40,000 people, you know, the families included, once they decided to send them back to Pakistan? Should we have just lined them up and shot them, or should we have tried to work with them to



resettle them?"

"We had a meeting, and the idea was that the resettlement had to be done with the concurrence of the politicians of all along the border, the FATA [tribal] region, and along with the security forces, plus, the TTP. But that never happened because our government left and once our government was removed, the new government took its eye off the ball," Khan said.

He pinned the blame on the negligence of Pakistan's security forces that allowed the banned outfit to prosper in the region.

"Meanwhile, this threat grew and it's possible that they regrouped, but then where were the Pakistani security

forces? Where were intelligence agencies? Could they not see them [re]grouping? So, the problem is, how could we be held responsible for their negligence?" he asked.

Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorism, mostly in the country's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and also in Balochistan and Punjab provinces.

Khan asserted that despite the differences between the two sides, Islamabad must get Kabul to work jointly to combat terrorism in the region.

## One transgender killed, two injured in Pak: Police

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

A transgender was killed and two others injured after an unidentified gunman opened fire at them in Pakistan's restive northwest region, police said.

The incident happened on Saturday night when the three transgenders were on their way back home after attending a music event in Kohat district.

# US holds drills in South China Sea amid tensions with China

AP ■ BEIJING

The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are holding joint exercises in the South China Sea at a time of heightened tensions with Beijing over the shooting down of a suspected Chinese spy balloon.

The 7th Fleet based in Japan said Sunday that the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier strike group and the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit have been conducting "integrated expeditionary strike force operations" in the South China Sea.

It said exercises involving ships, ground forces and aircraft took place Saturday but gave no details on when the began or whether they had ended.

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea and strongly objects to military activity by other nations in the contested waterway through which \$5 trillion in goods are shipped every year.

The U.S. Takes no official position on sovereignty in the South China Sea, but maintains



that freedom of navigation and overflight must be preserved. Several times a year, it sends ships sailing past fortified Chinese outposts in the Spratly Islands, prompting furious protests from Beijing.

The U.S. Has also been strengthening its defense alliance with the Philippines, which has faced encroachment on islands and fisheries by the Chinese coast guard and nominally civilian but government-backed fleets.

The U.S. Military exercises were planned in advance. They come as already tense relations between Washington and Beijing have been exacerbated by a diplomatic row sparked by the balloon, which was shot down last weekend in U.S. airspace off the coast of South Carolina.

# Germany to ease visa conditions for some earthquake victims

AP ■ BERLIN

The German government wants to temporarily ease visa restrictions for survivors of the earthquake in Turkiye and Syria who have close family ties to Germany if they are facing homelessness or were injured.

"It's about helping in times of need. We want to make it possible for Turkish or Syrian families in Germany to bring close relatives from the disaster region," German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser tweeted late Saturday.

"They can find shelter with us and receive medical treatment," Faeser said. "With regular visas, which are issued quickly and are valid for three months."

However, not all the requirements of a regular visa procedure are being waived. Applicants must still be able to present a valid passport — likely to be an obstacle for people who fled collapsing buildings.

Several million people in Germany have Turkish roots because, more than 60 years



ago, West Germany recruited "guest workers" from Turkey and elsewhere to help the country advance economically.

More recently, hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees came to Germany looking for safety from the brutal civil war back home.

Turkish and Syrian immigrants in Germany have been collecting aid, sending donations and worrying for their relatives back home. Calls to allow them to take in close family members from the devastated regions had been growing for days.

The German government said it would ease the normally very strict and bureaucratic visa conditions quickly, adding that the foreign ministry had already both increased its staff in Turkey and redeployed capacity at visa acceptance

centers there.

Earthquake victims who wish to seek refuge in Germany and want to apply for a three-month visa need to prove that they have close family members in Germany who have German citizenship or a permanent right of residence, German news agency dpa reported.

The German host family member must submit a declaration promising to pay for the living expenses and subsequent departure of the person taken in.

# Sorrow turns to tension over Turkiye earthquake response

AP ■ ANTAKYA

Six days after a massive earthquake killed more than 28,000 in Syria and Turkiye, sorrow and disbelief are turning to anger and tension over a sense that there has been an ineffective, unfair and disproportionate response to the historic disaster.

Many in Turkiye express frustration that rescue operations have proceeded painfully slowly, and that valuable time has been lost during the narrow window for finding people alive beneath the rubble.

Others, particularly in the southern Hatay province near the Syrian border, say that Turkiye's government was late in delivering assistance to the hardest-hit region for what

they suspect are both political and religious reasons.

In Adiyaman, southeastern Turkiye, Elif Busra Ozturk waited outside the wreckage of a building on Saturday where her uncle and aunt were trapped — believed dead — and where the bodies of two of her cousins had already been found.

"For three days, I waited outside for help. No one came. There were so few rescue teams that they could only intervene in places they were sure there were people alive," she said.

At the same building complex, Abdullah Tas, 66, said he had been sleeping inside a car near the building where his son, daughter-in-law and four grandchildren were buried.

## Shahabuddin Choppu set to become next B'desh president

PTI ■ DHAKA

Mohammad Shahabuddin Choppu, a former judge and freedom fighter, is set to become Bangladesh's next president after the ruling Awami League, which holds an absolute majority in Parliament, nominated him for the top post.

Choppu, 74, will replace President Mohammad Abdul Hamid, whose tenure ends on April 24.

## Iranian President Raisi to visit China to shore up ties

AP ■ BEIJING

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will visit China for a three-day trip starting Tuesday at the invitation of his counterpart, Xi Jinping.

China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying made the announcement on Sunday. She did not elaborate on Raisi's itinerary.

The two leaders met last September in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, when Xi under-

scored China's support for Iran. In December, Raisi pledged to remain committed to deepening the strategic partnership during a meeting with Chinese Vice Premier Hu Chunhua in Tehran.

China is a major buyer of Iranian oil and an important source of investment in the Mideast country. In 2021, Iran and China signed a 25-year strategic cooperation agreement that covered major economic activities.

## Bolsonaro says he may return to Brazil in coming weeks

Brasilia: Former President Jair Bolsonaro said Saturday he intends to return to Brazil "in the following weeks."

The comment during an event at an evangelical church in Florida was the first time that Bolsonaro has made a statement in public about returning home.

The far-right politician has been in the US since arriving in Orlando, Florida, on December 31, the eve of the inauguration of his leftist rival, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, as Brazil's current president.

## Biden hosts GOP, Dem governors at White House for dinner

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden, hosting both Republican and Democratic governors for a black-tie affair at the White House, raised his glass for a toast.

Standing under a portrait of Abraham Lincoln, he told the people in the room to remember who they were. "We're the United States of America. We can get big things done if we do it together."

"Cheers!" the crowd replied, as the clink-clink of glasses rippled about the State Dining Room.

Biden hosted the dinner for members of the National Governors Association at the White House for the first time in his administration. It's usually a tradition, but the dinner was held last year at Mount Vernon, George Washington's Virginia estate, and virtually in 2021 because of Covid-19.

The dinner came as federal leaders seemed as divided as ever with the new Republican majority in the House courting a risky debt ceiling showdown. On Saturday at the White House, though, the message was togetherness — and not just because the room was tightly packed with governors, spouses and Cabinet members.

Biden and both associations' leaders, Republican Gov. Spencer Cox of Utah and Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy of New Jersey, spoke about the need to put aside the increas-



ingly rancorous political differences in order to work together to better the nation. "I think when we work together it works," Biden said, adding he'd work to be a little more bipartisan and praised the work of the governors.

The tables were set with purple velvet tablecloths (wink wink on bipartisanship), china bearing the presidential seal and large floral centerpieces in white and pink.

Cabinet members were mixed together with governors in ball gowns, tuxedos and sparkles. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer sat near Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. Maryland Gov. Wes Moore and New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, both Democrats, sat near Vice President Kamala Harris. Not far away were Republican Govs. Bill Lee of Tennessee and Doug Burgum of North Dakota.

First lady Jill Biden held a service project event earlier Saturday for spouses, but she had to skip a Friday event because she wasn't feeling well. She tested negative for COVID-19.

# Cambodian leader shuts down independent media outlet

AP ■ PHNOM PENH

Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen on Sunday ordered one of the handful of independent media broadcasters to shut down for publishing an article he said intentionally slandered his son in connection with the country's relief assistance to earthquake victims in Turkey.

The article published by VOD, which also owns a radio station, centered around the signing of a government decision to donate USD 100,000 to Turkey. It alleged that Lt. Gen. Hun Manet, an elder son of Hun Sen who is also the commander of the army and has been nominated by the ruling party to succeed his father in future elections, had signed the document on Hun Sen's behalf.

Hun Sen had earlier given VOD 72 hours to verify the

facts with the Information Ministry and to apologise to Hun Manet and the government. On Sunday evening, Hun Sen nevertheless ordered the ministry to revoke VOD's license and said he cannot accept a letter of apology offered by the media organisation.

Hun Sen said the article misinterpreted the facts and that only the prime minister has the authority to make decisions on foreign aid.

VOD said it was an unintentional mistake.

Hun Sen said VOD had until 10 a.m. Monday to cease broadcasting, and foreign countries who fund the organisation should get their money back. Hun Sen has ruled Cambodia for decades and has launched a sweeping crackdown on opponents and independent media.

# California 2024 US Senate contest kicks off at furious pace

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

California's US Senate race is unfolding at a furious pace, with candidates reporting seven-figure fundraising and holding competing rallies and campaign events more than a year before the 2024 primary election.

The fight for the safely Democratic seat held by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who at 89 is the oldest member of Congress, is shaping up as a marquee match-up between nationally known rivals and is likely to become one of the most expensive Senate races in the country next year.

On Saturday, Democratic U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff, who rose to prominence as the lead prosecutor in former President Donald Trump's first impeachment trial, gathered hundreds of supporters in a union hall parking lot for a rally in his hometown of Burbank, California, where he implored the cheering crowd, "Let's go win this thing."

Schiff, who announced his candidacy last month, said he was running for Senate after two decades in Congress "to build an economy that works for everyone, a democracy that will last for all time and



a planet that doesn't melt beneath our feet."

A day earlier, Democratic US Rep. Katie Porter brought her Senate campaign to Los Angeles, where she met with local leaders to discuss pollution in lower-income neighbourhoods.

She said such areas are often overlooked in Washington and Sacramento, where residents' complaints about unhealthy conditions go unheard.

Porter, a leader in Congress' progressive wing, built a reputation for her tough questioning of CEOs and other witnesses at congressional hearings — often using a whiteboard to break down information.

Other potential contenders for the seat include Democratic Rep. Barbara Lee, a

former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. If she runs and is elected, Lee would be the only Black woman in the Senate.

Feinstein has yet to say if she will seek a seventh term. In recent years, questions have arisen about her cognitive health and memory, though she has defended her effectiveness. However, her reticence about her future has created a publicly awkward dynamic — the race to replace her is rapidly taking shape, even as the senator remains unclear about her intentions.

Schiff's rally, held on a nippy, mostly overcast morning, marked the start of a two-week statewide tour, with stops to include San Diego, Sacramento, Fresno and San Francisco.

He was joined by his wife Eve, one of his two children, Alexa, and David McMillan, whom the congressman mentored as a youth and considers part of his family.

After recounting his career as a federal prosecutor, state legislator and member of Congress, Schiff made clear he would anchor his campaign to his role as impeachment manager and Trump's chief antagonist in Congress.

# New Zealand cancels flights as deluge from cyclone looms

AP ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand's national carrier canceled dozens of flights Sunday as Aucklanders braced for a deluge from Cyclone Gabrielle, two weeks after a record-breaking storm swamped the nation's largest city and killed four people.

Air New Zealand said it was canceling all domestic flights to and from Auckland through midday Tuesday as well as many international flights. The carrier said some international routes would continue operating, although flights might need to be diverted from Auckland.

The carrier also canceled domestic flights to and from the cities of Hamilton, Tauranga and Taupo. Cyclone Gabrielle

was already affecting the northern part of New Zealand on Sunday. On Monday, it was expected to dump up to 250 millimeters (10 inches) of rain on Auckland.

Gabrielle's windspeed was earlier downgraded as the cyclone slowed. Gusts of about 130 kilometers per hour (80 miles per hour) were expected.

Weather forecaster MetService said it was expecting a "widespread and significant" weather event, with heavy rain, strong winds and large waves.

"Please do take this seriously, we do expect severe weather is on the way," New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins told reporters. "So please make sure that you're prepared. Make sure that you've got preparations in place for either if you have



to stay put for a period of time, or if you have to evacuate." Earlier, the cyclone passed near remote Norfolk Island, a ter-

ritory of Australia that is home to about 1,750 people. Emergency Management Norfolk Island Controller George Plant said Sunday it had issued an all-clear. He said there was some debris on the roads and some power lines were down.

"We have been extremely fortunate with the passage of the cyclone as the most destructive winds have just missed us," Plant wrote on Facebook. "However, there is still considerable clean-up to be undertaken and it may take a while for services such as power to be restored."

As the cyclone began hitting New Zealand's Northland region on Sunday, flooding and winds caused some roads to be closed and thousands of homes to lose power.

# India's exports to Turkiye may get jolt in short run

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports of commodities such as cotton, manmade yarn and textile dyes may be impacted in the short run to earthquake-hit Turkiye, according to exporters.

Two powerful earthquakes hours apart on Monday last week caused widespread destruction of property and killed more than 28,000 people, leaving millions homeless in Turkiye.

The earthquakes also caused damage to the infrastructure and logistics network with the Port of Iskenderun remaining closed for around a week. Exports to Turkiye increased to \$6.2 billion during April-November 2022 against \$5.1 billion in the corresponding period in 2021.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (Fieo) Director General Ajay Sahai said that the extent of the damage in Turkiye is yet not known and thus its impact on exports is difficult to ascertain.

However, the earthquake will further depreciate Turkish Lira, which has significantly depreciated recently, and has touched its record low following the earthquake making imports costlier and impacting the demand, he said.



"Since the textile manufacturing centres of Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş provinces are worst-affected, our exports of cotton and manmade yarn and textile dyes may be impacted in short run," Sahai said.

Gaziantep is a province in south-central Turkiye. It is a major manufacturing hub of that country.

Sharing similar views, Hand Tools Association President S C Ralhan said that India's exports to Turkiye are increasing.

"Trade may get impacted in the short-term only due to the earthquake there, but not in the long run. There was no news so far from the MSME segment exporters of any issue while exporting to Turkiye so far," Ralhan said.

# Six of top-10 firms lose ₹49,231 cr in m-cap; HUL biggest laggard

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined valuation of six of the 10 most valued firms eroded by ₹49,231.44 crore last week, with FMCG major Hindustan Unilever taking the biggest hit.

Last week, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 159.18 points or 0.26 per cent.

While Bharti Airtel, ITC, ICICI Bank and HDFC twins were the other laggards from the top-10 pack, TCS, SBI, Reliance Industries and Infosys posted gains.

However, the combined market valuation gain of the four firms at ₹35,840.35 crore was less than the total loss suffered by the six companies.

The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever plummeted by ₹15,918.48 crore to reach ₹6,05,759.87 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Bharti Airtel tanked by ₹12,540.63 crore to ₹4,29,474.82 crore and that of ITC plunged by ₹11,420.89 crore to ₹4,60,932.38 crore.

ICICI Bank lost ₹6,863.37 crore to stand at ₹5,95,885.63 crore.

The mcap of HDFC Bank dipped by ₹1,255 crore to ₹9,23,933.45 crore and that of HDFC fell ₹1,233.07 crore to



stand at ₹4,91,080 crore.

From the gainers' pack, TCS added ₹19,612.52 crore, taking its valuation to ₹12,93,639.32 crore.

State Bank of India's (SBI) mcap jumped ₹7,585.92 crore to reach ₹4,93,486.41 crore.

The valuation of index heavyweight Reliance Industries climbed ₹4,938.8 crore to ₹15,80,653.94 crore and that of Infosys increased ₹3,703.11 crore to ₹6,76,638.36 crore.

In the ranking of the most valued Indian firms, Reliance Industries retained its top spot, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, ICICI Bank, SBI, HDFC, ITC and Bharti Airtel.

# 'Inflation data, global cues to guide markets this week'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Trading activity in the domestic equity markets this week will be largely driven by inflation data, trend in global markets and foreign fund movement, analysts said.

Participants will also monitor developments related to the Adani Group crisis, which has been a major overhang recently, they added.

"...The movement of crude oil, the dollar index, and US bond yields will be other important factors. The institutional flow will be important as FIIs' selling has come down after relentless selling in January," Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth a net ₹144.73 crore last week.

This week, the market will be awaiting key inflation data from the US and India for clues on the rate hike trajectory of central banks.

Retail inflation data for both the US and India is scheduled to be announced on Tuesday. Last week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) hiked the key benchmark policy rate by 25 basis points to 6.5 per cent, citing sticky core inflation.

# Oil India reports highest ever quarterly profit of ₹1,746 cr in Q3

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil India Ltd (OIL) reported its highest ever quarterly net profit in the third quarter ended December 31 on the back of a rise in oil and natural gas prices.

Net profit of ₹1,746.10 crore, or ₹16.10 per share, in October-December compared with ₹1,244.90 crore, or ₹11.48 a share, in the same period a year back, the company said in a statement.

The rise in profitability was helped by higher realisation on crude oil and gas the firm produces and sells. Also, output increased, helping both topline and bottomline.

OIL earned \$88.33 for every barrel of crude oil it produced and sold in the third quarter of the current fiscal, up from \$78.59 a barrel realisation in the year-ago period.

Crude oil is refined at refineries to produce fuels such as petrol and diesel.

Prices of natural gas, which is used as fuel to produce electricity, make fertilizers and converted into CNG for use in automobiles, rose to \$8.57 per million British thermal unit from \$6.10.

The firm produced 0.81 million tonnes of crude oil in October-December, up from



0.75 million tonnes a year back.

Gas output also increased from 0.79 billion cubic metres to 0.8 bcm. It sold 1.41 million tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas in the quarter as opposed to sales of 1.35 million tonnes a year back.

The highest ever profit was "on strength of better pricing and higher output of crude Oil and natural gas," the company said.

For the nine months ended December 31, 2022, profit after tax recorded growth of over 120 per cent to ₹5,022.12 crore from ₹2,257.30 crore in the year-ago period.

The turnover increased by 27 per cent during Q3 FY-23 to ₹5,981.63 crore.

The Board of OIL has declared a second interim dividend of ₹10 per share (face value of ₹10). This is in addition to the first interim dividend of ₹4.50 per share declared earlier. The total interim dividend paid during the year is ₹14.50 per share.

# Avg monthly rents for 1K sq ft 2BHK flats rise to 23% in top 7 cities from 2019 level: Anarock

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The average monthly rentals for two-bedroom flats of 1,000 square feet area have risen by up to 23 per cent since 2019 across seven major cities, according to Anarock.

The key residential rental hotspots saw up to 23 per cent growth in average monthly rentals between 2019 and 2022, the property consultant said in a report.

The consultant has taken average rent for standard 2BHK (2 bedroom) unit of 1,000 square feet area.

Noida's Sector-150 saw the highest 23 per cent increase in average rentals to about ₹19,000 per month, from ₹15,500 in 2019.

"Rental demand increased substantially in 2022," said Anuj Puri, Chairman, Anarock Group.

"With more companies calling their employees back to the office, including in the hybrid mode, rental demand is rising across the 7 top cities, after plummeting during the two worst Covid-19 waves," he



added. The rental demand would continue to head northward in 2023, Puri said.

"Employees returning from their hometowns or other parts of the city tend to rent homes for at least the short-term, often to consider purchases at a later stage," he observed.

As per the Anarock data, in Hyderabad, the average rent in Hitech City rose 7 per cent to ₹24,600 in 2022 from 23,000 per month during 2019.

Gachibowli saw a 6 per cent rise to ₹23,400 from ₹22,000 a month.

In Delhi-NCR, the average rent in Sohna Road, Gurugram rose 14 per cent to ₹28,500 from ₹25,000 per month.

Dwarka in the national capital witnessed a 13 per cent increase in rent to ₹22,000 from ₹19,500.

# Domestic market ownership rises for 5th quarter in a row to 24.44% in Dec

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The equity ownership of domestic investors, including institutions and high net-worth individuals, touched an all-time high of 24.44 per cent in December quarter, making it the fifth consecutive quarterly increase.

Retail investors' ownership in the market stood at 7.23 per cent in December 2022, marginally down from 7.34 per cent in September 2022. But in rupee terms, the same increased to ₹19.94 lakh crore from ₹19.48 lakh crore in the previous quarter, registering an increase of 2.35 per cent.

In September 2022, the share was 24.25 per cent, according to data collated by market information major Prime Database, based on the shareholding patterns of 1,832 of the total 1,857 companies on NSE for the quarter to December 2022.

According to Pranav Haldea, managing director of Prime Database Group, this was the fifth consecutive quar-



ter of increase from 22.37 per cent in September quarter 2021 and showcases the rising dominance of domestic investors.

Net inflows from domestic institutional investors (DIIs) stood at ₹27,134 crore during the quarter, as against net inflows from foreign institutional investors (FIIs) at ₹47,349 crore, resulting in their shareholding marginally increasing to 20.18 per cent in December 2022, from 19.98 per

cent in September 2022, massively down from 23.30 per cent in March 2015, when the combined share of DIIs, retail and HNIs was only 18.47 per cent. The widest gap between FII and DII holding was in March 2015 quarter, when DII holding was 55.45 per cent lower than FII holding.

The FII to DII ownership ratio has also declined to an all-time low of 1.32 in December 2022 from 1.33 as of September 2022.

# PSU banks' profit jumps 65% in Q3; BoM tops chart with 139% surge

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Public sector banks (PSBs) have logged a robust profit growth of 65 per cent to ₹29,175 crore during the third quarter ended December 2022, with Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) emerging as the top performer in terms of percentage growth in profit.

The Pune-headquartered lender recorded a 139 per cent jump in profit to ₹775 crore at the end of December 2022, according to quarterly results declared by the PSBs.

BoM was followed by Kolkata-based UCO Bank which posted a profit of ₹653 crore, 110 per cent higher than its earnings in the third quarter of the previous fiscal.

Two other lenders whose profit growth was higher than 100 per cent were Union Bank of India and Indian Bank.



The Mumbai-based Union Bank of India witnessed a 107 per cent rise in net profit at ₹2,245 crore, while Chennai-based Indian Bank reported a

# 'Merger of seven subsidiaries with Tata Steel to be complete by FY24'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The merger of 7 subsidiary companies with Tata Steel is expected to be completed in 2023-24 fiscal year, its CEO and managing director T V Narendran said.

In September 2022, Tata Steel board had approved a proposal to merge six of its subsidiaries into itself for greater synergies, higher efficiency and reduce costs.

"We had already announced (merger of) 6 companies earlier. (Merger of) one more Angul Energy we announced recently," he told PTI in reply to a question on the timeline for the merger.

However, the completion of the merger depends on the regulatory processes including NCLT clearances, post which the process is expected to be completed in the next financial year, the CEO said.

"We are dependent on the speed at which we can go through our regulatory requirements," he added.

# Hitachi India aims to add \$20 bn to parent's global revenue by 2030

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hitachi India, part of the Japanese conglomerate Hitachi, aims to work towards contributing \$20 billion in the overall consolidated global revenue for the parent company by 2030 with a 'higher double-digit profit', said Managing Director Bharat Kaushal.

By 2030, Hitachi India aims to occupy an "influential position" across rail, energy, and digital, automotive businesses of the group, he said.

"Some of the horizontal enablers that support integrating technologies using digital as the catalyst including Artificial Intelligence (AI), hydrogen, and energy storage, will become an important growth driver. We aim to have a higher double-digit profit to the overall Hitachi's consolidated



revenues," Kaushal told PTI. India is increasingly emerging as a base to do business outside India, especially in capital goods, where the government has launched a lot of incentives for technology transfer, and funding it, allowing to keep the IPR and these are very significant steps.

When asked about Hitachi India's revenue, Kaushal said: "We expect to contribute to Hitachi's economy by \$20 billion."

The idea is that India will work towards contributing the above amount to the overall global revenue for Hitachi, he added.

"Hitachi's innovative and globally acclaimed technology has been fuelling the transformation of India. Hitachi's new Mid-term Management Plan 2024 aims to support people's quality of life with data and technology that fosters a sustainable society," he said.

Hitachi is been playing a significant role in accelerating India's journey towards achieving a carbon-neutral environment.

"Growing globally by digital, green, and innovation, Hitachi India will continue creating milestones across the globe. Hitachi operates in the infra, manufacturing and IT sectors among others.

# Nayara Energy Q3 profit up 2% as shutdown, windfall tax impact margins

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nayara Energy, India's second largest private oil refining and fuel marketing company, saw its net profit rise by a marginal 2 per cent in the third quarter ended December 31 as the company undertook a month-long maintenance shutdown and windfall tax impacted margins.

Net profit of ₹869.8 crore in October-December compared with ₹850.3 crore profit in the same period a year back, according to a stock exchange filing by the company. Revenue from operations dropped to ₹24,757.7 crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal from ₹32,412.9 crore a year back.

This was mainly because

the company fully shut its 400,000 barrels per day or 20 million tonnes per annum Vadinar refinery in Gujarat for about a month in November for routine maintenance. The firm also operates a network of 6,497 petrol pumps or 7.5 per cent of all fuel stations in the country.

For the first nine months of the current fiscal, Nayara reported a net profit of ₹6,226.9 crore on a turnover of ₹1 lakh crore. It had a net profit of ₹1029.9 crore on a turnover of ₹1.19 lakh crore for the full 2021-22 fiscal year.

The current quarter and year to date performance was impacted by external factors such as imposition of special additional excise duties and suppressed retail margins.

# FPIs' exodus continues; take out ₹9,600 cr from equities in Feb

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors continue to desert Indian stock markets as they pulled out over ₹9,600 crore this month so far on costlier valuation of domestic equities compared to other emerging markets.

The outflow comes following a net withdrawal of ₹28,852 crore by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in January. This was also the worst outflow in the last seven months, data with the depositaries showed.

Prior to that, they made a net investment of ₹11,119 crore in December and ₹36,238 crore in November.

Going ahead, FPIs flow are expected to remain volatile as Indian equities given the



increase in rate by central banks, Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities, said. "I expect this flow (outflow) trend to continue until there is more clarity on the Adani issue, markets stabilize further and FPIs see more concrete signs of recovery in the Indian economy," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

According to the data, FPIs withdrew a net sum of ₹9,672 crore from equities in February 1-10.

One of the prominent reasons for this net outflow is higher valuation of Indian equities as against some of the other comparable markets. This has resulted in investments flowing out of Indian markets to other comparable markets such as Taiwan, South Korea, Japan among others, Srivastava said.

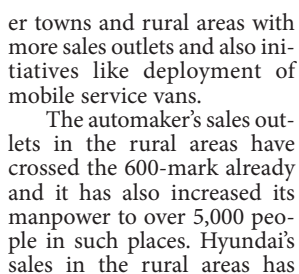
In addition, aggressive opening of China after series of lockdowns drew foreign investors towards its shores. Following the rigorous lockdowns, Chinese markets declined sharply, making them more appealing from a value standpoint, he added.

# Hyundai aims to tap rising demand for aspirational models in rural areas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India is looking to tap growth opportunities in the rural areas with rise in demand for aspirational products like sports utility vehicles and feature-rich models, according to company's Chief Operating Officer Tarun Garg.

The country's second largest carmaker is looking to enhance presence in the small-



towns and rural areas with more sales outlets and also initiatives like deployment of mobile service vans.

The automaker's sales outlets in the rural areas have crossed the 600-mark already and it has also increased its manpower to over 5,000 people in such places. Hyundai's sales in the rural areas has crossed the one lakh-mark last year.

"Almost 18 per cent of our

improved on that front. We touched one lakh retails for the first time last year. We now also have 100 mobile service vans in the rural areas," Garg told PTI in an interaction.

With information about various products readily available now via cell phones and improvement in the road infrastructure, the demand for products that are up in the value chain has gone up in the hinterlands, he said.

# Macrotech Developers to deliver 11,000 flats in FY'23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Macrotech Developers Ltd will deliver around 11,000 flats this fiscal as against 7,000 units in the previous year as it has ramped up construction work across all projects, its MD and CEO Abhishek Lodha said.

Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers, which is one of the leading real estate firms in the country, markets its properties under the Lodha brand.

In an interview with PTI, Lodha said sentiment in the



housing market remains strong.

"We continue to see strength in sales despite hike in interest rates on home loans," he said when asked whether there has been any slowdown in demand after the festive October-December quarter.

On business performance in the March quarter, Lodha

said the company has been clocking quarterly sales of around ₹3,000 crore and expressed confidence of achieving that number this quarter as well.

That apart, Lodha said the company would deliver "10,000 to 11,000 flats this fiscal year, a big ramp up from the previous fiscal year which was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic."

In the 2021-22 financial year, Macrotech Developers had delivered around 7,000 flats.

On debt, Lodha said sales

bookings and cash flows have been very strong so far this fiscal year, resulting in reduction in debt by ₹753 crore in the December quarter to ₹8,042 crore.

"We are hoping to reduce debt further by ₹1,000 crore this fiscal to about ₹7,000 crore," he said.

The company plans to cut debt by ₹500-800 crore every quarter.

"We hope to be close to ₹5,000 crore of net debt sometime by end of this calendar year," Lodha said.

# SAURASHTRA, BENGAL ENTER RANJI FINAL WITH CONTRASTING WINS

PTI ■ INDORE

Riding on a dominant all-round performance, Bengal stormed into the Ranji Trophy final, ousting defending champions Madhya Pradesh by 306 runs at the Holkar Stadium here on Sunday.

Bengal, who last won the Ranji title in the 1989-90 season, will face Saurashtra, who beat Karnataka by four wickets in the other semi-final.

Bengal will host the final against Saurashtra, by virtue of having secured more points than its fellow finalist in the group stage in a repeat of the 2020 final.

The star of the semi-final for Bengal was Akash Deep, who wrecked the home side with his six wickets to take the team to their second Ranji final appearance in three seasons.

Anustup Majumdar and Sudip Kumar Gharami also contributed heavily, scoring 200 and 153 runs respectively in the first innings that took Bengal to a massive 438.

Pradipta Pramanik also impressed with his all-round skills, scoring an unbeaten 60, followed by a superb five-wicket haul in the second innings.

Earlier, on the fifth and final day of the semi-final clash, Bengal posted 279 in their second innings, thereby setting a mammoth 548-run target for the reigning champions.

Chasing a big score, Madhya Pradesh got off to a positive start, thanks to openers Yash Dubey (30) and Himanshu Mantri (16). But Shahbaz Ahmed and Akash Deep got rid



of the openers to reduce the home side to 67/2.

Rajat Patidar (52) and Shubham Sharma (24) played sensibly to score some handy runs but the target was too big to chase on a final day pitch.

Young left-arm spinner Pramanik did not let the batters settle down as he dismissed Shubham and incoming batter Venkatesh Iyer (19) while Mukesh Kumar got rid of Patidar to have half their side back in the hut at 179/5.

Thereafter, Pramanik also sent Kumar Kartikeya (6), Avesh Khan (0) and Gaurav Yadav (0) packing to bag a superb five-wicket haul and send his team into the final.

## VASAVADA SHINES

**Bengaluru:** Saurashtra secured a place in the Ranji Trophy final for the fifth time in the history of the tournament, defeating Karnataka by four wickets at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

The 2019-20 edition champions scored the required 115 runs for victory on the fifth and

final day of the semifinal match.

Saurashtra skipper Arpit Vasavada, following his match-altering double century in the first innings that helped the team to a mammoth 527, played another polished knock of unbeaten 47 just when the Karnataka bowlers had reduced the team to 42/5 in the second innings.

With Karnataka looking poised to defend a paltry 100-plus total on home turf and Krishnappa Gowtham (3/38) and Vasuki Koushik (3/32) on

fire, the 34-year-old Vasavada remained calm under trying circumstances to guide his side to a hard-fought win in 34.2 overs.

Karnataka, whose first innings had folded up at 407 after which Saurashtra slammed 527 to take the crucial first-innings lead, started day five at 123/4 with their in-form batter Nikin Jose on 54.

The young batter, who came at the fall of Devdutt Padikkal in the final session on Saturday, shared a century part-

nership with captain Mayank Agarwal (55) and guided his team to 114.

But, thereafter, the 22-year-old couldn't find a partner who could stick around with him and put up a fighting total on the board.

Karnataka's second innings wound up at 234 in 58.2 overs, with some of their key batters like Ravikumar Samarth, Padikkal, Manish Pandey and Shreyas Gopal departing at single-digit scores.

India white-ball player Chetan Sakariya did the maximum damage with his left-arm medium-pace bowling, returning with figures of 4/49 in 11 overs, while Saurashtra's veteran left-arm spinner Dharmendrasinh Jadeja kept rattling the home team batters to also return a four-wicket haul. Saurashtra, however, made heavy weather of the paltry 115-run winning target, with the entire top and middle order being wiped out by Karnataka bowlers Gowtham and Koushik.

Finally, a 63-run partnership between captain Vasavada and Sakariya took the 2019-20 Ranji champions within sniffing distance of victory, before the latter departed at 24.

Vasavada and new batter Prerak Mankad (7 not out) ensured no more hiccups as Saurashtra set up a title clash with Bengal. Vasavada was adjudged "Player of the Match" for his composed 202 off 406 balls in the first innings and a match-winning 51-ball 47 under trying circumstances in the second innings.



## BCCI release Undakat from 2nd Test squad to play Ranji final

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Pace bowler Jaydev Undakat was on Sunday released from the Indian squad for the second Test against Australia so that he can play in the Ranji Trophy final for Saurashtra, the BCCI said on Sunday.

The 31-year-old Undakat will add more firepower to Saurashtra, which will take on Bengal in the Ranji Trophy final on February 16.

"The All-India Senior Selection Committee in consultation with the Indian team management has decided to release Jaydev Undakat from India's squad for the 2nd Test of the Mastercard Australia tour of India for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy," said a statement issued by BCCI secretary Jay Shah.

"Jaydev will join the Saurashtra squad, which qualified for the Mastercard Ranji Trophy final to be played against Bengal from 16th February at the Eden Gardens, Kolkata," it added.

Undakat was a member of the India squad for the four-match Test series against Australia but he was not included for the opening match, which India won by an innings and 132 runs in Nagpur inside three days on Saturday. The second Test begins in New Delhi on February 17.

India had gone into the first Test with two specialist pace bowlers in Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj, besides three spinners in Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja.

With the composition of the side expected to remain the same during the second Test, Undakat was released from national duty to play for Saurashtra, who will be aiming to lift the Ranji Trophy for the second time in the history of the tournament.

Saurashtra had last won the domestic first-class championships during the 2019/20 season. Undakat was the highest wicket-taker during the season with 67 scalps.



## I'm confident and positive, says fit-again Sindhu

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Completely recovered from a stress fracture on the left foot that kept her away from the circuit for five months, a fit-again Indian shuttler PV Sindhu is confident and sounding positive ahead of the ongoing season.

Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, said her injury has "completely healed" and is aiming to go full throttle this year.

Sindhu was sidelined with injury after winning the Commonwealth Games women's singles gold in Birmingham in August and made a comeback at the year's first event -- Petronas Malaysia Open 2023 -- where she lost a three-gamer in the opening round to Carolina Marin of Spain.

Sindhu made another first-round exit a week later at the India Open at home, but said she was "happy with my footwork, skills and strokes" on her return to competitive action in Kuala Lumpur.

"I'm completely alright now. Physically and mentally I'm completely fine. Injuries happen but it's important to keep your body healthy and come back stronger every time. I am confident, positive and learning from my mistakes," the 27-year-old told Badminton World Federation.

"My parents were athletes too. The support and motivation they give me keep me going during low moments."

Sindhu, who bagged three titles -- Syed Modi India International, Swiss Open and Singapore Open last year -- hopes to replicate her success at the HSBC BWF World Tour this season.

"I hope it will be," said the world No.9 shuttler.

"You also have to be 100 per cent but I'm completely recovered now. It takes time to get into that rhythm and play tournament matches. I'm on track."

Along with Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy, Sindhu will spearhead India's challenge at the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships starting Tuesday in Dubai.

# Fit-again Shaheen to lead Lahore in PSL

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Shaheen Shah Afridi will stage a comeback to competitive cricket after three months out with a freak knee injury to lead defending champions Lahore Qalandars in the Pakistan Super League, beginning from Monday.

Afridi led Lahore to its maiden PSL title last year in Pakistan's premier domestic T20 tournament that has once again attracted several foreign T20 specialists in a six-team event also featuring two-time champions Islamabad United and past winners Multan Sultans, Karachi Kings, Quetta Gladiators and Peshawar Zalmi.

Afridi, the lanky left-arm fast bowler, has been Pakistan's bowling mainstay for the last five years since making his international debut in 2018. But a knee injury during the

final of the T20 World Cup against England saw him undergo a long strenuous rehabilitation program before finally getting ready for the PSL.

Afridi, who has a tendency of picking up wickets in the batting powerplay, has taken 70 wickets since making his PSL debut during the third edition of the tournament in 2018. He is third behind his countrymen Wahab Riaz (103), who is the only bowler in the PSL history with over 100 wickets, and Hasan Ali (81).

Lahore might rue the absence of hard-hitting England batter Harry Brook, who will be on national duty while star leg-spinner Rashid Khan will also miss the first three games due to his commitment with the Afghanistan national team.

However, Lahore has drafted in Englishman Sam Billings and West Indian Shai Hoe to bolster its batting



line-up which has the experience of Fakhar Zaman upfront. The combination of Afridi and

Haris Rauf forms the best pace bowling pair in the PSL with the latter having the capability to tie down batters in the latter half of the innings with his pace and impeccable line and length.

Pakistan all-format skipper Babar Azam, who won the ICC's ODI cricketer of the year award for the second successive year, had a forgettable last year in the PSL when his team Karachi Kings could win only one of the 10 league games.

This year Babar will be leading Peshawar Zalmi after he was traded to Karachi while T20 veteran Shoaib Malik and young middle-order batter Haider Ali were traded from Peshawar to Karachi.

Karachi has the experience of Mohammad Amir in its bowling ranks and has also drafted Australian wicketkeeper Matthew Wade and fast bowler Andrew Tye. Although

Englishman James Vince might not be available for the entire tournament, left-handed opener Sharjeel Khan will need to shoulder more of the burden of scoring in the absence of Babar.

Islamabad, winners of the first two of the three editions of the tournament, is a team which believes in match-ups and relies heavily on data to find a winning edge. Led by Shadab Khan, Islamabad has power-hitters in Paul Stirling and Asif Ali with young Azam Khan also making good progress in the T20 format after hitting a century in the recent Caribbean Premier League.

Multan got beaten in the final last year and will open the PSL at home against Lahore on Monday.

South African pair of Rilee Rossouw and David Miller, Shan Masood and skipper Mohammad Rizwan carry enough experience in

the batting lineup, but its bowling resources look thin this year with Shah Nawaz Dahani and tall leg-spinner Usama Mir likely to carry the bowling burden.

Veteran Sarfaraz Ahmed will be leading Quetta Gladiators for the eighth successive season after failing to qualify for the final in the last three editions since it won the tournament in 2019.

Sarfaraz is expected to bat higher in the order and has got a red-hot Iftikhar Ahmed also in the ranks. Iftikhar hit six sixes in an over against Peshawar Zalmi's Riaz during an exhibition PSL match last week in Quetta and also made his mark in this season's BPL. Karachi and Multan will host the first leg of the tournament before Rawalpindi and Lahore stage the second leg. Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore will host the play-offs and the final on March 19.

# WPL: Mandhana, Harmanpreet, Shafali set to cross ₹1-crore mark

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Prolific batters Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur and teen sensation Shafali Verma are expected to spark bidding wars when they go under the hammer during the inaugural Women's Premier League auction, here on Monday.

Among the overseas names, Alyssa Healy, Beth Mooney, Elysse Perry, Nat Sciver, Megan Schutt and Deandra Dottin are some of the big names expected to enjoy a big pay day.

The five teams -- Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, RCB, Gujarat Giants and UP Warriorz -- will be bidding for 90 players in a list of 409.

With a salary purse of ₹12 crore per team for the first year and a squad size of 18 including six overseas players, at least 20 to 25 of the 60 Indian women set to be picked will command good auction price. The base prices are set in five brackets with the least being ₹10 lakh and the highest ₹50 lakh. The other brackets are ₹20, 30 and 40 lakh, respectively.

It is expected that members of this current Indian team and those from Australia, England, New Zealand and South Africa will be the most sought after players at the auction.

If some officials associated with the franchises are to be



**With a salary purse of ₹12 crore per team for the first year and a squad size of 18 including six overseas players, at least 20 to 25 of the 60 Indian women set to be picked will command good auction price**

KEY FIGURES OF AUCTION	
TEAMS: 5	
<b>NAMES:</b> DC, MI, RCB, Gujarat Giants, UP Warriorz	
Minimum Salary Mandatory	: ₹9 crore
Maximum Salary purse/team	: ₹12 crore
Minimum Squad Strength Mandatory	: 15
Maximum Squad Strength	: 18
Maximum India players in squad	: 12
Maximum Overseas players/squad	: 6
Total number of players available	: 409
Indian players for auction	: 246
Foreign players from Full members	: 155
Players from Associate Nations	: 8
<b>NAME OF AUCTIONEER:</b> Malika Sagar	
<b>Nb:</b> A team can field five foreign players in playing XI if the fifth player is from Associate nation.	

believed, Smriti, Shafali, Harmanpreet and all-rounder Deepti Sharma are set to earn anywhere between ₹1.25 to 2 crore from teams that successfully bid for them.

Big hitter Richa Ghosh and seamer Renuka Thakur will also invoke a lot of interest from potential bidders. So will the spinners like Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Radha Yadav, and seamers Meghana Singh and Shikha Pandey.

Jemimah Rodrigues, who has had a good run in foreign T20 leagues, could also be a big earner during the auction. In the uncapped Indian players' category, Kashmir's Jasia Akhtar and Railways' Swagatika Rath are some of the prominent names expected to get richer by the end of the auction.

Among the U-19 World Cup-winning women's team, batter Shweta Sehrawat, spinners Parshvi Chopra, Mannat Kashyap and Archana Devi along with seamer Titus Sadhu are expected to attract good bids.

The five franchises will look at potential captains and, apart from Smriti and Harman, some of the other likely captaincy candidates are legendary Southern Stars boss Meg Lanning, England skipper Heather Knight and White Ferns leader Sophie Devine, all of whom have put their names in the list.



## Real win record fifth Club World Cup title

AP ■ RABAT

Real Madrid lifted the Club World Cup for a record fifth time with a pulsating 5-3 win over Al Hilal on Saturday in Morocco.

Vinicius Junior and Fede Valverde struck twice each, while Karim Benzema also scored on his return from injury in Madrid's spectacular victory over their Saudi Arabian opponents.

Carlo Ancelotti's side, who qualified as Champions League winners last season, had far too much attacking quality for their opponents to handle.

Madrid's emphatic triumph at Rabat's Prince Moulay Abdellah stadium secured their second piece of silverware of the season, after winning the European Super Cup in August.

It also provided welcome respite from their La Liga campaign, where they sit eight points behind rivals Barcelona, who also beat them in the Spanish Super Cup final in January.

Madrid also won three Intercontinental Cups in 1960, 1998 and 2002 -- a match between European and South American champions, which merged with the Club World Cup in 2005.

"We are very happy, for the eighth time Madrid are champions of the world, it was what we had to do," Ancelotti told Telecinco.

"We're happy, it was a good game. I think we were good up front, with Vinicius, Karim, Valverde, who got two, and up top the team had mobility and quality."

Ancelotti brought Benzema back into the starting line-up after he had missed the semi-final win over Al Ahly with a thigh injury, with Rodrygo dropping to the bench.

"We are delighted with him because he keeps improving, he's much more effective," Ancelotti told reporters. "He scores in almost all the games and makes the difference in all of them."

# INDIA BEAT PAKISTAN

## Jemimah scores unbeaten fifty to help Indian women's cricket beat Women in Green by 7 wickets in T20 WC opener

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Experienced batter Jemimah Rodrigues produced a master class of an innings as she and youngster Richa Ghosh held their nerves under pressure to guide India to a seven-wicket win over arch-rivals Pakistan in their opening match of the Women's T20 World Cup here on Saturday.

Jemimah (53 not out off 38 balls) and Richa (31 not out off 20 balls) stitched 58 runs for the unconquered fourth wicket as India chased down a challenging target of 150 with six balls to spare.

Jemimah struck eight boundaries while Richa hit five fours during their unbeaten knocks as India reached 151 for 3 in 19 overs, their highest successful chase in the T20 World Cup.

Shafali Verma (33 off 25 balls) and Yastika Bhatia (17) gave a good start to the Indian run chase, stitching 38 runs in 5.3 overs. The powerplay overs yielded 43 runs for one wicket.

Shafali, who successfully reviewed a LBW decision in the fourth over, was going strong as she took the attack to the opposition bowlers. But her dismissal in the 10th over with Sidra Ameen taking a fine catch near the boundary off the bowling of Nashra Sandhu set India on the back-foot.

One-down Jemimah survived a close stumping call as India reached 67 for 2 at the halfway mark with the experienced captain Harmanpreet Kaur having arrived at the crease.

Harmanpreet struck a boundary from the third delivery she faced and repeated it in the same 11th over to swell the Indian total. But she was guilty of trying to slog-sweep across the line and against the turn off the bowling of Fatima Sana.

The top edge was easily taken by



Bismah Maroof as India were reduced to 93 for 3 in 13.3 overs.

India needed 83 runs from the last 10 overs and despite the fall of crucial wickets, the good start and batting depth kept India in the hunt. But run rate kept climbing for India as they needed 47 from the last five overs.

With Jemimah and new batter Richa getting the boundaries often, the equation became 28 runs from three overs.

Richa turned the match on its head as she hit three successive boundaries in the first three balls of the 18th over bowled by Aiman Anwer. Ghosh was smart enough to

send two wishful deliveries to the fence.

Needing 14 from the last two overs, Jemimah struck three fours in the penultimate over to end the match in a jiffy.

Earlier, Pakistan posted 149 for 4 after electing to bat, their highest T20 World Cup total.

Pakistan were reduced to 43 for 3 in the eighth over but they made a brilliant recovery, scoring 91 runs in the second half of their innings with captain Bismah Maroof (68 not out) and Ayesha Naseem (43 not out) stitching 81 runs for the unconquered fifth wicket.

Maroof struck seven fours during her 55-ball unbeaten knock while Naseem hit two fours and two sixes from 25 balls during her unbeaten innings.

Pakistan scored 91 runs from the second half of their innings and 58 from the last five overs, as Maroof and Naseem frustrated the Indian bowlers for more than eight overs to take their side to a challenging total.

For India, left-arm spinner Radha Yadav was the most successful bowler with figures of 2/21 while Deepti Sharma and Pooja Vastrakar got one wicket each. India did not take long to get

## Australia, England in cruise control

AP ■ PAARL

Australia and England made emphatic statements with convincing wins in a double-header at Boland Park in Paarl on the second day of the Women's T20 World Cup on Saturday.

Defending champions Australia crushed New Zealand by 97 runs, while England made light of a challenging target as they raced to a seven-wicket win over the West Indies with 5.3 overs to spare.

England's bowling and fielding was some way below perfection in 38-degree heat as West Indies scored 135 for seven.

But their batters attacked the West Indian bowlers with a formidable display of power and aggression.

Opener Sophia Dunkley pounded 34 off 18 balls before Nat Sciver-Brunt (40 not out) and skipper Heather Knight (32 not out) completed the win with an unbeaten fourth-wicket partnership of 67 off 43 balls.



"That's exactly what we want to do," said Knight.

"We want to be fearless and take the game on - and entertain as well. We want to try to go hard up front and today was a big step to do that in a big tournament."

If England were impressive, Australia were even more so as they shone in all departments.

They overcame tricky batting conditions on a pitch showing

signs of wear to make 173 for nine, the highest total of the first two days of the tournament.

Alyssa Healy top-scored with 55 off 38 balls with skipper Meg Lanning making 41 and Elysse Perry hitting 40, an innings which included two sixes.

Then they bowled out New Zealand for 76, with off-spinner Ash Gardner using helpful conditions to take five for 12.

the breakthrough, with in-form off-spinner Deepti Sharma dismissing Pakistan opener Javeria Khan (8) in the second over with India captain Harmanpreet Kaur taking an easy catch at short fine leg after the batter had struck a boundary in the previous ball.

Pakistan showed attacking intent even after the early jolt as captain and one-down Bismah Maroof hit two consecutive boundaries in the fourth over. Pakistan were 39 for one at the end of powerplay overs.

A change in bowling yielded success for the Indians as left-arm spinner Radha Yadav removed the other opener Muneeba Ali (12) in the seventh over. A smart review by the Indians in the next over resulted to another wicket as Nida Dar was ruled out as there was a slight touch of the ball on her gloves off Pooja Vastrakar.

The two quick wickets set Pakistan on the back-foot from a promising position as they were

reduced to 58 for 3 at the halfway mark.

The experienced Maroof was going strong and held one end together but wickets fell around her, including that of Sidra Ameen (11) who became Yadav's second victim in the 13th over.

With the arrival of Ayesha Naseem in the 13th over, Pakistan pressed the accelerator as she made scoring look easy with a six and four off Renuka Singh in the 16th over.

## Alcaraz plays catch-up after four months out

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

Carlos Alcaraz returns to action in Buenos Aires after four months on the sidelines admitting "it won't be easy" playing catch-up with rivals who already have six weeks under their belts in 2023.

The 19-year-old Spanish sensation captured a maiden Grand Slam title at the US Open last year before going onto become the youngest ever world number one.

However, a leg muscle tear at the Paris Masters in November meant he missed the start of this season, including the Australian Open won by Novak Djokovic.

Alcaraz also lost his top ranking to the 22-time major winner from Serbia.

"This will be my first tournament since I picked up the injury in Paris," Alcaraz told a news conference on Saturday at the Buenos Aires clay court event.

"It's been four months since then. But I always arrive thinking about winning and wanting to win, even though it won't be easy after such a long time without competing."

Alcaraz will get his season underway in the Argentine capital with a second round clash against either Fabio Fognini or Laslo Djere after receiving a first round bye.

"I've come a few days early, to train with really good players, gradually improve and to be able to start

the tournament as well as possible," added the top seed.

Alcaraz had a breakout 2022. As well as becoming the youngest US Open champion since Pete Sampras in 1990, he also defeated Djokovic and compatriot Rafael Nadal on back-to-back days on his way to the Madrid Masters crown. He also claimed the Miami Masters and ATP 500-level trophies in Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona.

"It was a very good year. I achieved my dream, my goal, very quickly. I dealt with it as naturally as possible," said Alcaraz.

"After becoming number one I had to set new goals, new things for the long term, to continue to enjoy myself, continue to improve, because I'm very young and I have a lot of things to improve."

"Despite being the number one, you have to keep training and looking forward."

He has few doubts over who he needs to keep emulating -- Nadal, Djokovic and the now-retired Roger Federer.

"When they were young, they were so good, but as time has gone by, they've improved."

### WU WINS

Wu Yibing stunned top-seeded Taylor Fritz 6-7 (3/7), 7-5, 6-4 at the Dallas Open on Saturday to become the first Chinese man to reach an ATP final in the Open Era.

## Nagpur Test exposed Australia's weakness against spin: Chappell

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The legendary Ian Chappell feels Australia's capitulation in the first Test against India has exposed their frailties against spin, and said the touring Pat Cummins-led side needs to adapt to the conditions quickly.

He asked Australia to stop thinking about pitches in India and just concentrate on their job.

Spin duo of Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja bamboozled Australia on a typical red-soil wicket as the visitors crumbled to their lowest total in India -- 91 -- to suffer an innings defeat inside three days in Nagpur on Saturday.

"The first Test has exposed Australia's weakness against good spin bowling on turning pitches," the former Australian captain wrote in his column for ESPNcricinfo.

"If they can ensure this setback doesn't mean their mental capacity to cope in India is not dented, it will keep them in the series. If they waver, they are in big trouble," Chappell added.

India faced typical pitch doctoring allegations in the build-up to the Nagpur Test but the Australian batting great opined that it was "by no means impossible to play on."

"The noise was exactly that in the case of the pitch. Not unexpectedly, it turned out to



be nothing more than a fairly typical first-day Indian red-soil wicket," Chappell wrote.

"It was by no means impossible to play on, as Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith showed, but Australia failed to post a testing first-innings total."

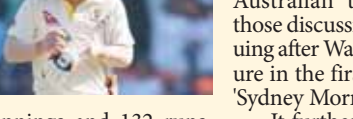
"The media making allega-

## Head may replace Warner in Delhi Test: Reports

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Smarting from a humiliating defeat in the series-opening first Test against India in Nagpur, Australia may replace struggling David Warner with off-spin all-rounder Travis Head in the second match in New Delhi starting February 17, Australian media reported on Sunday.

Australia's aspiration to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy suffered a big blow after the visitors lost the Nagpur Test



for 91 in the second essay, their lowest total in India.

"Sources close to the Australian team confirmed those discussions were continuing after Warner's double failure in the first Test," reported 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

It further added that left-arm finger spinner Matt Kuhnemann also has a "chance" to make his Test debut in New Delhi after being summoned to India as a replacement for reserve leg-spinner Mitch Swepson.

## Broad hails McCullum's England impact

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Veteran England seamer Stuart Broad says coach Brendon McCullum's focus on fun has not just revitalised the team's Test fortunes but could grow global interest in the game.

Broad is set to return for the two-Test series against New Zealand starting in Mount Maunganui on Thursday, having missed the 3-0 series win in Pakistan in December following the birth of his daughter.

The 36-year-old said returning to the England set-up under former Black Caps captain McCullum had been a pleasure.

Riding high on the back of nine wins from 10 Tests overseen by the attack-minded coach, England's players have spent much of their two weeks of preparation focusing on team bonding, including countless rounds of golf.

"It's been one of the best, most enjoyable starts to a tour that I've ever had in my time," Broad told journalists.

"I think Baz (McCullum) has got a great mentality for the group, and life really. In this environment, I don't think I've ever heard stats or numbers mentioned once. It's all about going with the feel of the game and taking the positive option at all times."

Broad said McCullum's approach contrasted with the successful regime under Andy



Flower, when England climbed to the top of the world Test rankings after winning the 2010-11 Ashes series in Australia.

"We got to number one through discipline, through organisation and knowing exactly what our roles were," Broad said.

"Andrew Strauss was captain, he wanted everyone to go at under three (runs) an over and bat a long time. All our batters averaged over 40."

"So different styles do work ... but there's no doubt this has been the most fun environment that I've been a part of and I think it's because that is almost Baz's number one priority."

Broad believed other nations will seriously consider copying England's buccaneering approach, which he said would be great for the game at a time when Twenty20 leagues threaten to steal players and eyeballs away from Test cricket.

## Uncapped Kuhnemann has a 'live chance' of playing 2nd Test: McDonald

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Uncapped Australia left-arm spinner Matt Kuhnemann, who is flying in for Mitchell Swepson, has a "live chance" to make his debut in the second Test against India starting here on February 17 if the visitors opt for three spinners, said coach Andrew McDonald.

Kuhnemann, 26, will be joining the touring party in place of leg-spinner Swepson who will make a pre-planned return home for the birth of his first child.

Swepson, however, is set to return to India ahead of the third Test.

"He's (Kuhnemann) a live chance to play in the next Test match," McDonald was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo on Sunday.

want to go."

Kuhnemann doesn't have international experience under his belt, having scalped just 35 wickets at 34.80 in 13 first-class matches.

Kuhnemann was "shocked" to get the news.

"Got a phone call yesterday morning when walking out for the warm-ups. Was pretty shocked," Kuhnemann said after Queensland's Sheffield Shield match against Victoria.

"I was just lucky enough that my passport was in my bag. I watched every day (of the first Test) just being such a fan. These series are so good to watch. Todd Murphy was exceptional and sort of watched how (Ravindra) Jadeja bowled. So just really excited to get over there."



26-YEAR OLD MATT KUHNEMANN WILL BE JOINING THE TOURING PARTY IN PLACE OF LEG-SPINNER MITCHELL SWEPSON WHO WILL MAKE A PRE-PLANNED RETURN HOME FOR THE BIRTH OF HIS FIRST CHILD

pretty fresh in my memory. I learned heaps just being over there for a couple (of) months. If I got the opportunity I'd like to think I'd be okay," he added.

Meanwhile, McDonald is hopeful about Cameron Green's availability for the second Test.

The young all-rounder is recovering from a broken finger he suffered against South Africa at the MCG last December. "We're hopeful. It's been six weeks now. I think he's actually got his final X-ray or scan today. He does allow us different options to the way that we want to structure up," McDonald said.

Pacer Mitchell Starc, who missed the first Test, has arrived here after recovering from a finger injury he also sustained in Melbourne.

"(Starc) will have a rest day today (in Delhi) and then he'll train tomorrow on his own up there," McDonald

said. "A couple of the staff members will go up there. We're hopeful that both of those are back on the selection table and that would change the balance of our side."

McDonald, however, informed that Josh Hazlewood won't be available for the second Test after missing the series opener due to an Achilles issue. "He's close. So I think it's just probably the load in that Achilles," McDonald said.

"We just don't want to push it. He's going to have three days off and then have a main bowl if he gets through that."

McDonald defended the team management's decision to go with Matt Renshaw in place of Travis Head, a selection which raised a few eyebrows. The coach, however, said Renshaw failed to live up to the expectations.