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INDIA'S EXPORTS TO TURKIYE

MAY GET JOLT IN SHORT RUN

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REAL WIN FIFA **CLUB WORLD**

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Govt appoints 6 new faces as Governors

12 Guvs, 1 LG appointed by Prez; Centre accepts Koshyari's resignation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

The Government on Sunday appointed 12 Governors and a new Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) for Ladakh, including a retired Supreme Court judge S Abdul Nazeer. Six new people were appointed, including four BJP leaders, and the rest were transfers to other

According to a Rashtrapati Bhavan spokesperson, President Droupadi Murmu has accepted the resignations of Bhagat Singh Koshyari and RK Mathur as the Governor of Maharashtra and the L-G of

Ladakh respectively. Justice Nazeer who retired as Supreme Court Judge, one month ago was appointed as the new Governor of Andhra Pradesh. The incumbent, Biswa Bhusan Harichandan, has been shifted to Chhattisgarh. Justice Nazeer, who retired on January 4, has been part of several path-breaking verdicts, including those on the politically sensitive Ayodhya land dispute, instant 'triple talaq' and the one that declared 'right to privacy' a fundamental right.

He was part of a five-judge Constitution Bench which had in November 2019 cleared the



way for the construction of a

Ram Temple at the disputed site

at Ayodhya and directed the

Centre to allot a five-acre plot

to the Sunni Waqf Board for a

mosque. Ramesh Bais, who was the Governor of Jharkhand, has

been appointed Governor of

Maharashtra, the official said.

Koshvari, who has been in the

line of Opposition fire over his

remarks on Chhatrapati Shivaji,

said last month that he had con-

veyed his desire to quit to

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and that he would like to spend

the remainder of his life read-

ing, writing and in other activ-

ities. Koshyari, 80, took charge



ties with the BJP.

as Maharashtra Governor in

September 2019 in the midst of

a political turmoil in the State

following Shiv Sena severing its

known what reasons prompted

Mathur's resignation. Mathur

has been facing stiff opposition

led by noted education

reformist Sonam Wangchuk in

the three-year-old Union terri-

tory. The President appointed

Governor of Arunachal Pradesh Brig BD Mishra (Retd)

in his place, the Rashtrapati

Bhawan spokesperson said. The

President also appointed Lt-Gen Kaiwalya Trivikram Parnaik (Retd) as Governor of

It was not immediately



Arunachal Pradesh, the spokesperson said. Lt-Gen Parnaik (Retd) served as commander of the Army's prestigious Northern Command, and t was during his tenure that bodies of two soldiers were

mutilated by the Pakistani

forces in Poonch sector in 2013. Four BJP leaders, including two from Uttar Pradesh, were also appointed as new Governors. Lakshman Prasad Acharya, CP Radhakrishnan, Shiv Pratap Shukla and Gulab Chand Kataria have been appointed as Governors of Sikkim, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Assam respectively. *Continued on Page 2*

Cong underestimated valour of forces: PM

Did not develop border areas, says Modi at opening of 1st phase of Delhi, Mumbai e-way

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR



Modi also accused the Congress Government in Rajasthan, where Assembly polls are due this year-end, of lacking vision and hindering the State's development, and said its plans



Mumbai Expressway, in Dausa, on Sunday

and announcements remained just on paper. Modi said Rajasthan would have

progressed better if it had the double-engine Government of the BJP, referring to the possibility of his party being in power both at the Centre and in the He alleged previous Congress

Governments did not carry out development work in border villages and areas "because they were scared, and they have said in Parliament that what will happen if the enemy comes on the roads made by us. 'The Congress has always under-

estimated the valour and bravery of our soldiers. Our forces know how to stop the enemy at the border and give them a befitting reply," he said.

Modi said his Government has created a network of roads and rail in border areas in the last

Targeting Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot for reading excerpts from previous year's Budget while presenting the States 2023-24 Budget on Friday, Modi said, "Anybody can make a mistake, but this shows the Congress has neither vision nor gravitas (wajan) and its plans and announcements remained just

The PM's rally in Dausa in the politically significant eastern Rajasthan is being seen as a BJP move to strengthen the party's prospects in the region dominated by the Meena and Gurjar communities

The BJP mobilised its supporters and workers from eastern Rajasthan for this rally. State BJP chief Satish Poonia visited Dausa Karauli, Sawai Madhopur, Bharatpur districts before the rally to ensure the event is well-

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

INDIA BEAT PAK IN WOMEN'S T20 WC

Cape Town: Experienced batter Jemimah Rodrigues produced a master class of an innings as she and Richa Ghosh held their nerves under pressure to guide India to a seven-wicket win over arch-rivals Pakistan in their opening match of Women's T20 World Cup here, Jemimah (53) not out off 38 balls) and Richa (31 not out off 20 halls) stitched 58 runs for unconquered fourth wicket as India chased down a challenging target of 150 with six balls to spare. Jemimah struck eight houndaries while Richa hit five fours during their unheaten knocks as India reached 151 for 3 in 19 overs. their highest successful chase in T20 World Cup. (See page 12)

MUNDA VISITS **TORTURED HELP**

Gurugram: Union Minister Arjun Munda on Sunday visited the Civil Hospital to see the 17-yearold domestic help who was tortured by her employers. The former Jharkhand Chief Minister also snoke to the mother of the teenager and staved there for 20 minutes. Munda assured all his help to girl's family and also consulted doctors taking care of teenager about her health.

CHINA TO SHOOT DOWN **UFO OVER ITS WATERS Beijing:** China has spotted an

unidentified object flying over waters near Qingdao and the authorities are preparing to shoot it down. An employee at the marine development authority of Qingdao said "relevant authorities" were preparing to take down the object and fishermen in the area have been told to be careful.

LG nod to Mayor poll on Feb 16

A fter failing to elect Mayoral posts in the last three House meeting, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai given nod to February 16, as the date suggested by the Delhi Government and the civic body for holding elections for the posts of Mayor, Deputy Mayor and six members of the standing committee of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). This will be the fourth meeting of the House for the purpose The elections were stalled thrice previously: on January 6,

According to officials, both the civic body and the Delhi government has agreed to hold the House meeting on February 16 and Saxena has accepted it. Lt Governor Saxena informed in a statement that the meeting will be convened on February 16, at 11 am on the 4th floor, A Block, Dr SP Mukherjee Civic Centre. "As recommended by Chief Minister, GNCTD, I approve the proposal to convene the

January 24 and February 6.

first meeting of Municipal Corporation of Delhi on Thursday February

11:00 AM at 4th Floor, A-Block, Dr. S.P. Mukherjee Civic Centre for the election of Mayor, Dy. Mayor and six members to the Standing Committee," the statement

Earlier on February 9, the MCD got the nod from the Delhi government on the proposed date, and only the final nod from the LG was pending. it is noteworthy that several projects have been delayed as civic body budget for this year has yet to be passed.

Reacting on the development, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that this is the fourth attempt and the AAP leaders should not disrupt the proceeding of the House and allow elections as per the Presiding officer. *Contd on P2*

'Swami instilled hope in crores of Indians' PM Modi inaugurates year-long celebrations

commemorating 200th birth anniv of Dayanand Saraswati

tating that Swami Dayanand Saraswati instilled hope in crores of people when India was weakened after centuries of slavery and was "losing its aura and self-confidence", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday recalled Mahatma Gandhi attributing the Swami's fight against untouchability as

his "biggest contribution." Inaugurating the year-long celebrations commemorating the 200th birth anniversary of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here, Modi said it is "an occasion to create a future and inspiration for the entire

The Prime Minister also released a logo for the commemoration. Modi recalled the Swami's campaign against "social ills like discrimination and untouchability." He cited the reactions against his emphasis on duty as a challenge in the 21st century to illustrate the enormity of the effort of the Maharshi in his time. "Evils that were falsely attributed to religion, Swami Ji removed them with the light of religion itself", the Prime Minister

explained. Prime Minister, considered Swamiji's fight against untouchability as his biggest contribu-

Upon arriving at the venue, the Prime Minister walked past the panorama and live rep resentations of Arva Samaj and also offered 'Ahuti Arpan' in the ongoing Yagya. Later on, he handed over the LED mashal (torch) to youth representatives as a symbolic carry forward of the spark ignited in this programme reinforcing the messages of Dayanand Saraswati to the rest of India and the world.

Addressing the gathering, Modi to Maharishi Dayanand's ideal of making the world a better place. He said in this era of discord, violence and instability, the path shown by Maharishi Dayanand gives hope. He underlined that the auspicious occasion will be

'Ind vs Aus 3rd Test may



Prime Minister Narendra Modi hands over a torch to youngsters during the inauguration of the year-long celebrations to mark the 200th birth anniversary of Dayanand Saraswati, in New Delhi, Sunday, Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat and Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal are also seen

celebrated for two years and said that the Government has decided to celebrate the 200th birth anniversary of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati.

Recalling India's condition when Davanand Saraswati was born, the Prime Minister stated that India was marred and weakened after centuries of slavery and was losing its aura and self-confidence. He recalled the numerous efforts that were underway to crush the ideals, the culture and the

roots of India. "Swami ji dispelled the notion of any deficiency in the traditions and scriptures of India, he pointed out that their real meaning is

forgotten," said Modi. The Prime Minister said the time when the false interpretation of Vedas was being used to belittle India and traditions were being deformed, in such a time Maharshi Dayanand's effort installed hope and confidence. "Maharshi Ji started a strong campaign against social ills like discrimination and untouchability", said Modi. The Prime Minister underlined that the Maharishi also emerged as a logical and effective voice against the stereotypes that had flourished in society regarding women.

informed ly opposed discrimination against women and also initiated campaigns for the education of women while underlining that these facts are more than 150 years old.

Even in today's day and age, the Prime Minister said, there are societies which deprive women of their right to education and respect, but it was Maharishi Davanand who raised his voice when equal rights for women was a farfetched reality, even in the

western countries. He said that people's spirit and regard for him 150 years after Arya Samaj and 200 years after his birth is an indication of his prominent place in the journey of the nation. "In the Amrit Kaal, the 200th birth anniversary of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati has come with a sacred inspiration", he added. Continued on Page 2

Chief Justices appointed to 4 **High Courts**

PNS NEW DELHI

The Government on Sunday notified appointment of Chief Justices for Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Gauhati and Tripura High Court. Senior most Judge elevated as Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court and Justice N Kotiswar Singh of Gauhati High Court is posted as Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court.

Justice Sandeep Mehta of Rajasthan High Court is posted Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court and Justice Jaswant Singh of Orissa High Court is elevated as the Chief Justice of Tripura High Court, said notification issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice. Justice Sonia Gokani will be the first woman Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court and she will serve as Chief Justice only for a fortnight, as she retires on February 25. Newly posted Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court Justice N Kotiswar Singh has served thrice as acting Chief Justice of the Gauhati and Manipur High Courts.

Continued on Page 2

Cops fail to 'trace' undertrial murderer

Chhota Shakeel shooter shown by Mumbai Police as absconding for 20 years found in jail in another case

PTI MUMBA

It can happen only in India that a murder accused shown absconding for 20 years was found in jail as an undertrial in another case!

It's an "unrevealed mystery", a court here noted on Mumbai Police's failure to trace for 20 years an alleged sharp shooter of the Chhota Shakeel gang in a 1999 murder case, even as the accused was an undertrial prisoner lodged in jail for some of this period in

Special judge for the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) cases, AM Patil, made the observation in its made the observation in its order passed on February 3 while acquitting Mahir Siddiqui, accused of the killing Wahid Ali Khan, president of the Bombay Aman Committee, in 1999. The court cited multiple discrepancies in the prosecution's case.

As per the prosecution, Siddiqui and a co-accused had allegedly shot Khan near his house in LT Marg area of Mumbai in July 1999. The duo fled the spot after killing him. In May 2019, police traced Siddiqui and arrested him.

They got sufficient evidence against him and thereby filed a chargesheet against him. Continued on Page 2

be moved out of Himachal' **HPCA** stadium

may lose out to Bengaluru, Vizag as outfield not ready: **BCCI** sources

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $T^{\text{he third Test of the ongo-}}_{\text{ing series between India}}$ and Australia scheduled to be played in Dharamsala from March 1 to 5 is all set to be shifted to another venue as the relaid outfield is not match ready, according to BCCI

It is understood that BCCI curator Taposh Chatterjee visited the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association

(HPCA) stadium to inspect the

pitch and the outfield. He will



brass of the BCCI for a final Bengaluru Visakhapatnam are among the venues where the third Test can be shifted to. The HPCA stadium, one of the most picturesque venues in world cricket, hosted only one Test in 2017

involving India and Australia. Although it has hosted T20s and ODIs regularly, the HPCA had made plans to relay the entire outfield keeping the local weather conditions in mind. The relaying work start-

ed post-monsoon. "There are

one needs to fulfil, in order to host the match. No competitive game has been played on this ground and also the outfield isn't ready," a senior BCCI source said. While 16 days are left for

the match to begin, weather in washouts

and forecast of rain in next few

days could halt the work under

Dharamsala can also play spoilsport as back-to-back international games there were The outfield has bald areas

Truecaller to help Delhi Police fight cyber frauds PTI NEW DELHI cials of the force and extorted

The Delhi Police is all set to sign an agreement with caller ID verification platform Truecaller to help people identify verified numbers and protect themselves from cyber frauds and scams involving the impersonation of officials from Government agencies.

In addition to educating Delhiites and holding a joint awareness campaign against cyber frauds, Truecaller will also display official numbers of the Delĥi Police representatives on the app's Government direc-

tory services, police said.
"During the Covid pandemic, Truecaller helped us a lot as a lot of scams and frauds on the pretext of selling oxygen cylinders, concentrators, medicines and other essentials associated with treating the deadprogress. *Continued on Page 2* | ly virus were reported. So, our



numbers of fraudsters and alerted Truecaller which displayed those unverified numbers as spam," Suman Nalwa Deputy Commissioner of Police (Public Relations Officer), said.

"Now we are signing an MoU with them following which, they will verify all the official contact numbers of the

Delhi Police since fraudsters

have many times posed as offi-

money from the public by displaying picture of senior offi-cers on their WhatsApp profile," she said. This will help users identify verified numbers and protect them from frauds and

scams involving the impersonation of Government officials, Nalwa said, adding that all verified numbers of the Delhi Police will have a green badge and a blue tick mark, with a Government service tag highlighting that it has been verified for users. Pragya Misra, Director of Public Affairs, Truecaller, told

PTI, "We are very excited about our partnership with the Delhi Police that will create much wider awareness in community on ways to stay safe that will benefit citizens significantly and improve their digital safe-Continued on Page 2

Micro quakes helping release tectonic stress, say experts

'But India prepared for any eventuality

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Micro tremors have been helping release tectonic stress and protecting India from a devastating event, experts said and asserted that the country has seen a paradigm shift towards effective response and mitigation.

They said India is well-prepared to deal with the fallout of large-scale earthquakes as it has a dedicated, well-equipped and trained force in the form of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)

The impact of a large-scale earthquake can also be reduced if people and institutions strictly comply with the bylaws and codes to build resilient structures, they said.

"The triple junction on India's western side near the border with Pakistan is continuously releasing stress due to the occurrence of micro-level earthquakes. There are a few earthquakes of magnitude 4 and 5 as well," said OP Mishra, director at the Ministry of Earth Sciences' National Centre for Seismology.

A triple junction is a point where three tectonic plates meet and interact. These are important areas of geological activity and can be sites of significant seismic and volcanic activity.

The movement of the plates can cause significant build up of stress and strain in the Earth's crust that is eventually released in the form of earthquakes. "Triple junctions are rigid and compact and with-

stand a lot of stress. If it breaks,

the entire stress is released, causing a lot of damage," Mishra explained. There are two triple junctions in Turkiye. One of them is where the Arabian Plate, the African Plate and the Anatolian Plate meet. The breaking of this junction led to the massive earthquake that devastated Turkiye and Syria, leaving more than 25,000 dead, he said

Since there had been no small earthquakes in this region, a lot of stress accumulated there. Turkiye saw several powerful earthquakes within 24 hours because the couple zone area was quite big and it took time to break away, Mishra said.

A couple zone is a region where two tectonic plates horizontally slide past each other. "India iś located in a seismically active region but we are lucky that we have a lot of micro earthquakes occurring every day. So the store-up energy is being released," the scientist

He added that the impact of a large-scale earthquake can be reduced if people and institutions strictly comply with the bylaws and codes to build resilient structures. According to experts, the resonant frequency of a building can play a critical role in determining the level of damage it experiences during an earthquake.

Buildings have natural frequencies of vibration, also known as resonant frequencies, which are determined by their

mass, stiffness and size. The ground motion during an earthquake can excite these natural frequencies, causing the building to vibrate at its resonant frequency. If the frequency of the ground motion matches or is more than the resonant frequency of a building, the structure will experience significant amplifications of the ground motion, leading to more intense shaking and potentially causing significant damage.

"The frequency of the buildings in the affected region in Turkiye was less than the frequency of ground motion. Hence, the structures collapsed like a pack of cards," Mishra said. India is divided into four seismic zones based on the potential for earthquake activity in each region.

According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences, 59 per cent of India's land mass is prone to earthquakes. Zone V is seismically the most active region, while Zone II is the least. Around 11 per cent of the country area falls in Zone V, 18 per cent in Zone IV and 30 per cent in Zone IV and the cent in Zone III and the remaining in Zone II. The zones are used to guide building codes and construction practices.

Mishra said the ministry is further unifying the country's seismic hazard zonation map through seismic microzonation studies. At present, 30 cities with a population of five lakh and above and falling under seismic zones III, IV and V are being covered under the project.

The existing zonation map does not consider physical properties, heterogeneity and soil behaviour, among others, and compromises many engi neering parameters, he said. "The parameters will be shared with the Bureau of Indian standards (BIS) and the Ministry of Urban Affairs and municipalities will utilise them to create a new design code," Mishra said. ness and response, experts said the country has a dedicated, well-equipped and trained force -- the NDRF -- which has the wherewithal to reach the right

place at the right time.

"The NDRF and the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) under the overall guidance of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is also carrying out capacity development of the entire country and reaching down to the community level with the help of all stakeholders, including public enterprises, private organisations and NGOs," said Major General Manoj Kumar Bindal, former executive director at National Institute of Disaster Management, Ministry of

Home Affairs. Every state has its own disaster management authority and disaster response force. There is a total paradigm shift towards effective response and mitigation. Now, India is increasing the resilience of communities to enable people to rebound after a disaster. The country is very well prepared to deal with such emergencies, he

"Though new buildings are being sanctioned based on designs that adhere to seismic codes, the issue that we are facing is more than 90 per cent of the existing buildings are based on old technology and most of them are non-engineered structures, especially in rural areas, Major Gen Bindal said.

So it's a massive work to convert the old, non-engineered structures that do not adhere to seismic codes, like in Delhi, to earthquake-proof buildings, he

Public health experts pitch for higher taxes on tobacco products

New Delhi: Economists and public health experts have welcomed the duty hike on cigarettes in this year's budget and pitched for higher taxes on more tobacco products to make them unaffordable and India tobacco-free in "Amrit Kaal".

The hike in national calamity contingent duty on cigarettes by 16 per cent clearly shows the government's intent to further strengthen the tobacco control policy and levy higher tax on "sin" products that claim more than 13 lakh lives in the country every year, noted economist and BJP spokesperson Gopal Krishna Agarwal said. Participating in a discussion on "Amrit Kaal: A Journey towards Tobacco-Free India", organised by Tobacco Free India, a citizen group platform, Agarwal said a hike in prices on such harmful products through tax policy is the most effective way to reduce tobacco consumption.

This can be done by implementing 'triple A' con-cept: cutting down 'affordability and 'availability' of tobacco items by hiking tax while making people 'aware' of its harmful impact," he said. "The total tax burden is currently about 53 per cent for cigarettes, 22 per

cent for bidis and 60 per cent for smokeless tobacco. This shows that there is enough scope to enhance tax that will not have much impact on the earnings of the industry but will certainly help cut down tobacco consumption.

Revenue earned through taxation can be invested for providing alternative jobs to poor and tribal people associated in tobacco-related busi ness," he said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a uniform tax of at least 75 per cent for each tobacco product, he noted.

Truecaller to help...

"Our sophisticated caller identification and spam detection feature for calls and SMSs continues to play an important role in preventing people from frauds and scams. We stay committed to promoting safety in digital communications, especially for vulnerable sections like first-time internet users, women and senior citizens," Misra said.

According to officials, Truecaller will also mark the phone numbers furnished by the Delhi Police against whom it has received complaints regarding harassment, scam or other registered issues. This will help Delhiites protect themselves and alert them in case these numbers continue to remain active, the force said.

Earlier this week, a 22year-old Indian based in Italy was arrested for allegedly posing as the Vice President of India by creating a fake WhatsApp account using Jagdeep Dhankhar's picture as his profile display to dupe peo-ple and seek favours from senior bureaucrats.

The accused, Gagandeep Singh, who is living in Offanengo, Italy since 2007 with his family, got the idea of impersonation after watching several YouTube videos.

In another case, three men who posed as officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Crime Branch of Delhi Police, were arrested for allegedly extorting Rs 1.8 crore from a retired commandant of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force by threatening to post an obscene video of him on social media platforms "As per the MoU, we will

have to share our official contact numbers for inclusion in the government directory services feature. We will also need to alert Truecaller about the latest cybercrime threats and trends and share numbers on spam or scam on a regular basis," Nalwa said. Besides this, Truecaller will also help in cyber safety by conducting cyberwise training sessions with the assistance of Delhi Police. It will help educating the public about better ways to

tackle cyber fraud, police said. Last year, Truecaller trained about 1.6 million Indians with the goal of making digital communication safe, Misra said.

"This initiative is another step building on those efforts to empower many more netizens to protect themselves against harm and take advantage of the immense opportunities that the internet brings, she said.

Officials said Truecaller will also disseminate the Delhi Police-cyber safety videos through the online cyber safety curriculum created by Truecaller which will share push notifications to users within the app about Delhi Police's initiatives on cyber safety, important helpline numbers and their highlights.

From Page 1

While Acharya is a member of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council, Radhakrishnan is a two-time Lok Sabha member of the BJP from Coimbatore. He was the man behind forging the BJP-led NDA alliance in 1999. Former Minister of State for Finance, Shukla was the BJP's candidate in Rajya Sabha and retired in 2022, whereas Kataria is the sitting Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan Assembly.

Kataria had served as the Home Minister in the previous Vasundhara Raje Government. Other than Bais, Mishra and Harichandan,

Swami instilled hope in crores of Indians...

From Page 1 Modi said that the country

is following Swamiji's teaching with great confidence Referring to Swamiji's call 'Back to Vedas', the Prime Minister said "today the country is confidently calling for 'pride in our heritage'", as he noted the confidence of the people of India to lay the path of modernity while enriching the culture and traditions at the same time.

The Prime Minister dwelled on the expansive notion of religion in India which goes beyond rituals and is defined as an entire way of life. 'With us, the first interpretation of religion is about duty, the Prime Minister said.

Swami, the Prime Minister said, took an inclusive and integrated approach and assumed responsibility and leadership of many dimensions of the nation's life.

The Prime Minister further elaborated on the wider role of the sages and saints in Indian life by referring to the achievements of Indian sages in philosophy, Yoga, Mathematics, policy, diplomacy, science and medical science.

Swami played a big role in reviving that ancient tradition, the Prime Minister added. The Prime Minister underlined that the country is witnessing progress with nondiscriminatory policies and efforts which were a priority for Swami Ji also. "The service of the poor,

backward and downtrodden is the first yagya for the country today", he said.

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STANDALONE UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 2022

SI No.	Particulars	Quarter Ended December 31 2022	Quarter Ended December 31 2021	For the Year Ended March 31, 2022
		Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
1	Total Income from Operations	4494	5001	19,978
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(2,712)	(2,866)	(11,306)
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(2,712)	(3,071)	(17,414)
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(2,033)	(2,296)	(13,503)
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(2,033)	(2,296)	(13,061)
6	Paid up equity share capital"(face value of Rs. 10 per share each)"	1,636	1,634	1,636
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	(14,015)	(11,982)	(9,152)
8	Securities premium account	1,739	1,739	1,739
9	Net Worth	(12,379)	(10,243)	(7,515)
10	Paid up debt capital / Outstanding Debt	52,822	52,546	52,235
11	Outstanding Reedeemable Preference Share	1.6	13-11	12
12	Earnings Per Share (of Rs. 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations)			
	Basic	(12)	(14)	(83)
	Diluted	(12)	(14)	(83)
13	Capital Redemption Reserve	12	-	
15	Debenture Redemption Reserve	1,210	1,210	1,210
14	Debt Service Coverage Ratio (DSCR) *	0.05	(0.3)	(0.3)
15	Interest Service Coverage Ratio (ISCR) *	0.05	(0.3)	(0.3)

1 During the period ended December 31, 2022, Principal payment which was overdue on Non-Convertible Debenture was not paid during the said period. The interest which was due on monthly basis has not been paid on due date and thereafter. 2 The rating for the listed non-convertible debentures of the Company as assigned by the CARE Ratings

Debentures are secured by way of first pari- passu charge by hypothecation of entire current assets, movable fixed assets of the Company both present and future, Corporate Guarantee of the Promoter Company and pledge of shares of subsidiary Company. These are to be secured against first pari- issue charge over total assets to the extent of total assets cover of atleast 1.5 times. The total

Notes 1: Adopted definitions for Ratios:

Ratios has been computed as follows

Debt Equity Ratio = Total Debt / Total Equity

Total Debt= Non current borrowings + current maturities of non-current borrowings Total equity = Equity share capital + Other equity + Compulsory convertible instruments to equity

Interest Service Coverage Ratio (ISCR)= (EBDIT-Current Tax)/Gross Interest Debt Service Coverage Ratio (DSCR) = (EBDIT-Current Tax)/(Gross interest + Principal Repayment of

long Term debts excluding repayment from refinancing of debt) Assets Coverage Ratio = (Total assets) / (Total borrowing excluding unsecured borrowings and compulsary

convertible instruments to equity)

asset coverage ratio is 0.73 times as on December 31, 2022.

a) The above is an extract of the unaudited interim financial results required to be filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 52 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations 2015 (as amended). As prescribed interim financial results are available on the Stock Exchange website www.bseindia.com and on the Company website www. feedbackinfra.com

b) For the items referred in sub-clauses (a), (b), (d) and (e) of the Regulation 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the pertinent disclosures have been made to the Bombay Stock Exchange website www.bseindia.com and on the Company's website www.feeedbackinfra.com

c) The above interim financial results as at and for the Nine Month ended December 31, 2022 have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors at their meeting held on February 09, 2023.

d) The Statement has been prepared in accordance with the Indian Accounting Standards ("Ind AS") as prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with relevant rules issued thereunder and in terms of Regulation 52(2) of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 (as amended) and SEBI's circular no. SEBI/HO/DDHS/CIR/2021/0000000637 dated October 5,

e) The Company is primarily in the business of consultancy. The Board of Directors of the Company, which has been identified as being the chief operating decision maker (CODM), evaluates the Company's performance, allocate resources based on the analysis of the various performance indicator of the Company as a single unit. Therefore, the Company's business activity falls within a single business segment in terms of Ind AS 108.

For and on behalf of Board of Directors of

Place : Gurugram Date : 09 February, 2023 Badrinath Behera Director DIN: 09655346

Govt appoints 6 new faces as Governors

From Page 1

In the 2018 Assembly elec-

tions, most seats in eastern

Rajasthan were won by the Congress. The BJP is looking to

strengthen its base in the

region. Before addressing the

rally, Modi inaugurated the

246-km section of the Delhi-

The Delhi-Dausa-Lalsot stretch

is set to reduce the travel time

between the National Capital

a remote to mark the founda-

tion laying/inauguration of a

total four projects, including the

first phase of the Delhi-Mumbai

Expressway, worth more than

Rs18,000 crore. "I take great

pride in dedicating the first

phase of the Delhi-Mumbai

Expressway to the nation today.

It is one of the largest and most

modern expressways in the

Modi pressed the button of

and Jaipur considerably.

the other transfers included the shifting of Anusuiya Uikye from Chhattisgarh to Manipur, La Ganesan from Manipur to Nagaland, Phagu Chauhan from Bihar to Meghalaya and Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar from Himachal Pradesh to Bihar. Cong underestimated valour of forces: PM

> Dausa and the countrymen,' Modi said. On the occasion he said when the Government invests in highway projects, ports, railways, optical fibre, and opens Central Government is continstrength to traders, small shopkeepers and industries. "Investment on infrastructure

country. This is another grand

picture of developed India. I

congratulate the residents of

Developed at a cost of more than Rs12,150 crore, this first completed section of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will provide a major boost to the economic development of the entire region. Modi said the new section will reduce the travel time between Jaipur and Delhi to half. He further said those who travel to Delhi for

attracts more investment," he

work can now come back to home in the evening after finishing their task. He said that rural 'haats' are being developed around the expressway where the local artisans can sell their

"For the last nine years, the ments in infrastructure. The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway and the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor are going to become two strong pillars of progress for Rajasthan and the country," he added.

Modi further said the expressway will benefit the Sariska National Park, Keoladeo National Park, Ranthambore National Park as well as cities such as Jaipur and Aimer. Rajasthan is already known for its tourism sector and the attraction will increase further

with the new infrastructure project, he said.

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, Union MoS VK Singh, Union Minister Gaiendra Singh Shekhawat and other leaders were present on the stage during the function.

than Cl Ashok Gehlot and his Harvana counterpart Manohar Lal khattar addressed the programme through a video link. While Gehlot joined the programme from the Chief Minister's residence in Jaipur, Khattar addressed the event from a function held in Nuh district.

The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will be India's longest with a length of 1,386 km. It will reduce the travel distance between Delhi and Mumbai by 12 per cent, from 1,424 km to 1,242 km, while the

cent, from the current 24 hours to 12 hours, it said. The expressway will pass through Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Guiarat and Maharashtra and connect major cities like Kota, Indore, Jaipur, Bhopal, Vadodara and Surat It will also serve 93 PM Gati Shakti Economic Nodes,

13 ports, eight major airports

and as many multi-modal logistics parks (MMLPs) along with

the new upcoming greenfield

airports such as Jewar Airport,

travel time will be cut by 50 per

Navi Mumbai Airport and JNPT port. It will have a catalytic impact in the developmental trajectory of all adjoining regions, thus contributing in a major way in the economic transformation of the country,

said a government Press release.

Cops fail to 'trace' undertrial murderer

From Page 1

During investigation, police found the involvement of six people, including Siddigui and Chhota Shakeel.

They also found that the crime took place at the behest of Chhota Shakeel, police had said. The court in its order said at the time of filing the supplementary chargesheet against Siddiqui, the prosecution claimed he was absconding since the date of the incident till his arrest.

But he was an undertrial prisoner in another case between 2014 and 2019 and he was arrested by the CID. How did the police fail to trace him, when he was in jail, the court asked.

"Police failed to find him, though they maintain the record of the absconding accused and UTP (undertrial prisoner). It is an unrevealed mystery for the reason best known to the police agency, the judge said. Further under-

lining discrepancies in the prosecution case, the court said no alleged eyewitnesses claimed to have seen the accused at the time of firing at the deceased.

mant is surrounded by many doubts and does not corroborate with other witnesses, the judge observed. The court also said the

The testimony of the infor-

police failed to prove the recovery of the pistol by which Khan was shot and did not recover the motorcycle on which the accused fled after committing the crime. The material evidence of

confession made before the Magistrate has also came under doubt because the accused "specifically denied" giving any such statement, it said. "Considering the above

discussion, it can be certainly said that the prosecution failed to prove the case against the accused beyond reasonable doubt," the court observed.

Chief...

From Page 1 Newly posted Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court Justice Sandeep Mehta is from Rajasthan High Court. Chief Justice of Tripura High Court Justice Jaswant Singh is currently working at Orissa High

Court and earlier worked as

Judge of Punjab and Haryana

High Court.

'Ind vs Aus…

From Page 1
"We have told that given

a chance we would like to host the game but it's up to the BCCI to decide. The curator's report would be based on parameters," a HPCA source privy to development said.

A Test in Dharamsala is one of most awaited matches as that is considered to be a track conducive for pacers and also a destination ideal for cricket tourism. A BCCI team has also inspected venue few weeks back. The likely shifting of venue out of Dharamsala will disappoint thousands of fans longing for a world class Test match there.

LG nod for Mayor...

From Page 1
The Supreme Court is expected to hear on February 13 the plea moved by two AAP leaders seeking timebound elections and challenging the decision by the presiding officer to allow the nominated members (aldermen) to vote in the mayor polls and hold elections to the posts of mayor, deputy mayor and members of the Standing Committee on a single ballot.

Three successive meetings of the House were adjourned in the last one month amid ruckus and commotion over the decision to give voting rights to aldermen without electing the mayor, deputy mayor and members of the standing committee of the civic body.

After the civic polls in December, the House was first convened on January 6 but was adjourned following acrimonious exchanges between members of the BJP and AAP.

The second municipal House held on January 24 was briefly adjourned after the oath-taking ceremony, and was

later adjourned till the next date by the pro tem presiding officer. After that, the House was adjourned on last Monday again for the third time, a month after the first municipal

House. The MCD on February 6 failed to elect a mayor following a ruckus over the decision to allow aldermen to vote in the mayoral poll, even as AAP alleged a "planned conspiracy" by the BJP to stall the process.

AAP has alleged that the mayoral election could not be held as the BJP was "strangulating democracy and the Constitution of India", while the saffron party accused the Aam Aadmi Party of coming out with excuses to stall the mayoral poll and blamed it for the stalemate.

AAP had emerged as a clear winner in the December polls, bagging 134 wards and ending the BJP's 15-year rule in the civic body. The BJP won 104 wards to finish second, while the Congress won nine wards in the 250-member municipal House.

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Protest against demolition at Mehrauli gets nasty on 3rd day

STAFF REPORTER NEW

The demonstration by the local residents against the demolition drive by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) continues for the third day in a row on Sunday in South Delhi's Mehrauli amid protests by the local residents of the area. An anti-encroachment drive turned ugly on Sunday after locals clashed with the DDA officials and police personnel.

It has also been claimed from the site that the raging protestors threw red chilli powder on the security personnel deployed at the protest site. The police also alleged that local women pelted stones at them. However, no one was to police, some women protesters were detained on Sunday in this regard.

The agitated protestors could be heard sloganeering against the government and the DDA with slogans of haave haave". Taanashahi nahi chalegi, nahi

On Sunday, a group of women staged a protest against the demolition drive and alleged that they were lathicharged by police personnel deployed at the spot. Denying the allegations, a senior officer said, "There was no lathicharge and no one was injured. They (protesters) were obstructing the DDA personnel and the

action will be taken against some women who allegedly threw red chilli powder on the police personnel. The local residents have alleged that authorities were hand in gloves when the buildings were built and now the administration had come with full force to demolish their houses. The residents, however, claim that they have got

Meanwhile, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday urged the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to stop its ongoing demolition drive in Mehrauli and demanded a fresh demarcation exercise in Meanwhile, the Delhi the area, officials said.

the land registered in their

name after paying hefty

Gahlot said that residents of the Mehrauli area can't be displaced until a fresh demarcation exercise is conducted in the area. The Delhi High court on Friday pulled up the DDA over demolition in South Delhi's Mehrauli despite a stay order till the next date of hearing. The DDA has been carrying out the drive since Friday amid police security, triggering protests from local residents and a blame-game between the AAP and the

An official statement from the DDA on Saturday said that the drive is intended to clear the unauthorised encroachments on the government's land that houses protected

India (ASI) among others was started by the DDA on Friday in co- ordination with Delhi Police at Lado Sarai in Mehrauli Archaeological Park.

Gahlot stated in his statement that the DDA has used the revenue department's demarcation as the primary tool in its demolition campaign. But the Delhi government made changes to the demarcation after finding several shortfalls in it. The locals had no knowl-

and the demolition process started without serving any notices to them, the minister Earlier, a demolition order

edge regarding demarcation,

dated December 12, 2022, was pasted on the walls of illegal

with markings with directions to the "encroachers to remove all the unauthorised construction from the land in question within 10 days", it said. According to the notice, the land on which the demolition is being carried out is part of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park and the "existing unauthorised encroachment is acting as a hindrance to the development of the Me Archaeological Park". Meĥrauli

The action was taken as part of a demolition drive that will continue till March 9, officials said on Friday. It comes a month ahead of a G20 meeting planned to be hosted at the archaeological park in





Sisodia kept proposals to raze unauthorised structures pending, alleges LG's office

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Lt Governor's office The Li Governor state alleged that despite the recommendations of a committee to remove "unauthorised religious structures" that have held up several key infrastructure projects, the Delhi government's Home Department headed by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has kept 78 such proposals from various agencies pending since May last year.

The projects include Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road, Mehrauli-Badarpur Road, Dhaula Kuan-RTR Marg, Ring Road at various sites, Loni Road and Vijay Nagar- Burari stretch, completion of works on the Delhi stretch of the Delhi-Saharanpur and Delhi_-Dehradun Expressway and beginning of construction of General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) housing for government employees.

Compelled by this inexplicable and inordinate delay and non-adherence to his two letters to the CM in this regard, the LG, in December last year, recalled 11 files from the Delhi Government that were pending the Minister of

Environment and Forest, Gopal

inexplicably pending since years together due to inaction on part of the AAP Government, although all statutory requisite formalities, procedures and permissions have been put in place, with regards to removal of unauthorized religious structures erected by land grabbers after 2009, when the Supreme Court barred any further occupation by such structures and ordered for their removal," the Raj Niwas said in a statement.

A committee was formed in 2014 following the Supreme Court judgement to consider and recommend removal of such unauthorised religious structures upon receipt of request from the land owning agency concerned. The committee is headed by the Home Secretary of Delhi and comprises senior representatives from the Delhi Police and land owning agencies.

"Despite the recommendations of the Religious Committee, to remove "unauthorized religious structures" that have held up several key developmental infrastructure projects in Delhi, the Home

nected to the sewerage net-

work while work is underway

in 573 others. Sewage from

unauthorised colonies not

connected to the sewerage

network flows directly into

Yamuna Cleaning Cell Construction of new STPs,

and DSTPs, upgradation of

existing STPs up to 10/10

and capacity enhancement,

laying of sewerage network in

unauthorised colonies, sep-

tage management; Desilting

of trunk/peripheral sewer

lines, providing sewer con-

nections in pre-notified areas,

trapping of drains under ISP,

in-situ treatment of drains,

etc., so that Delhiites do not

face any sewer related prob-

lem and get better facilities."

has promised to clean the Yamuna to bathing standards

The river can be considered fit for bathing if biochemical oxygen demand

(BOD) -- the amount of oxy-

gen required for microbial

metabolism of organic com-

pounds in waters -- is less

than 3 milligrams per litre

and dissolved oxygen is

greater than 5 milligrams per

by February 2025.

The Delhi government

The main objective is

the Yamuna.

Department of Government headed by "These files have been Manish Sisodia has kept 78 such proposals from various agencies pending since May 2022, prompting Lt. Governor, VK Saxena to recall these files".

"Invoking his powers to recall files under Rule 19(5) of the Transaction of Business of the GNCTD Rules (ToBR), 1993, the LG has ordered to recall from the Home Department all such files that are pending for more than a month at the level of the Minister (Home), i.e. Manish Sisodia. The said Rule 19(5) of the ToBR, empowers the LG to recall files pending inordinately with Ministers / CM, in public interest. This rule forces the Government to send files to the LG, irrespective of whether they approved it or not", it said.

of unauthorized religious structures pertain to the construction of Delhi - Saharanpur Expressway, government residential flats under General Residential Accommodation (GPRA) at 07 locations pending since 2018 and decongestion of 77 corridors. Decongestion of the 77 corridors, which is pending for almost 5 years

The proposals for removal



since 2017 due to the inaction of the Delhi Government, is extremely critical for smooth traffic flow and mitigation of air pollution in the Capital. As per the note of the

Home Department submitted to the LG, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, had submitted proposal for removal of 53 unauthorized religious structures for construction of the Govt residential flats under GPRA. Out of this, the religious committee recommended the removal of 51 such structures. Similarly, the religious committee had received proposals for removal of 20 unauthorized religious structures on the 77 corridors, out of which 15 were recommended for removal. Also, the religious committee recommended removal of 09 out of the 23 unauthorized religious structures that were creating hurdles in construction of the six-lane access controlled Delhi Saharanpur Expressway.

"Various other proposals have been recommended by the Religious Committee. These files have been submitted to the Minister (Home), GNCT of Delhi for further approval of the Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Delhi...Hon'ble Minister (Home) has been requested on 16.12.2022, to forward the cases to Hon'ble LG for approval of the recommendations of the Religious Committee. However, the cases are still pending," the Home Department note read.

Sisodia terms Saxena's allegations as baseless

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Perming the Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena's allegations baseless, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday questioned why Lieutenant Governor is so keen to run bulldozers over temples across Delhi? Because it will create law and order problem everywhere?

Lambasting the Lt Governor, the Deputy chief minister said that on one hand he has withheld and created hindrance in every single file of the Delhi Government and on the other he is accusing us of delaying files related to demolition of temples across Delhi. Sisodia further said that LG and his office should stop interfering and impending upon the works of the elected government. "There are dozens of files pending for the LG to clear, he should look into those files instead of using his position to play politics," he



"Any decision over making any amends to temples can not be taken in haste, let alone allowing them to be demolished. It is unfortunate that the Lieutenant Governor is choosing to play politics over such a sensitive matter of demolishing temples and law and order.Is demolishing temples more important for the LG than sending government school teachers to Finland? LG calls himself the "local guardian" of Delhi, why doesn't he clear projects of public interest? Approval for appointment of principals, DERC Chairman, legal counsels pending with the

LG. I fold my hands and beseech the LG to let the elected government function peacefully," Sisodia said.

He stated that the Delhi LG has issued a statement saying that he has called for files relating to demolition of religious structures. "The LG has claimed that the said files have been held up by my department. It is deeply unfortunate that the LG is choosing to play politics over such a sensitive matter. The matter in question concerns giving clearance for demolition of several religious structures including many big temples that have existed for decades in the city".

"Any decision over making any amends to such structures can not be taken in haste, let alone allowing them to be demolished. We have been assessing all the factors concerning this matter. We do not want to hurt citizen's religious sentiments and are studying the impact of such punitive action," he said.

Sisodia approves 34 Km-long sewer line for Najafgarh



Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday approved a project to lay a 34-kilometre-long sewer line in 39 unauthorised colonies of Najafgarh. The Rs 41-crore project will benefit 55,000 people in these unauthorised colonies.

In a statement, Sisodia said that free sewerage connections will be provided to 1,607 households in Najafgarh under the Mukhyamantri Muft Sewer Connection Yojana. At present, due to the lack of a sewerage system here, sewage is released in the local pond, septic tank, or storm water drains, which fall into the Yamuna river. This increases the pollution level of the river. In such a situation, every house will be connected to sewage to reduce these water-polluting elements. The sewage gener-ated from here will be sent through sewer lines to the nearest treatment plant, after which the treated water will flow into the Yamuna. He also instructed Delhi Jal Board officials to complete the work

within the stipulated time. There are 1,799 unauthorised colonies in Delhi. Of Delhi-based doctor held from Bengaluru airport for giving triple talag to wife ANJALI PILLAY NEW DELHI

A Delhi-based doctor was arrested from the Bengaluru airport for allegedly pronouncing instant "triple talaq", an offence under a law enacted in 2019 to protect Muslim women from this menace, on his wife, police said on

The 40-year-old man was scheduled to leave for the United Kingdom from Bengaluru, they added.

The Delhi Police said the man has committed an offence under the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 by uttering "talaq, talaq, talaq" in one go.The incident took place on October 13, 2022, but came to light earlier this month when the 36-year-old wife of the man approached police officials in east Delhi's Kalyanpuri.

Following enquiries and technical surveillance, the accused was traced to the Bengaluru airport, from where a Delhi Police team apprehended him on February 9 and subsequently, placed him under arrest. Police have not revealed the accused's name to protect the victim's identity.

According to an FIR registered on February 1, the woman said she filed the complaint against her husband for pronouncing "triple talaq" on her on October 13, 2022. In her complaint, the

woman said she met the accused in 2018. He had introduced himself to her as a doctor preparing for a foreign medical graduates' examination, police said.

The couple got married in 2020 and had no children. A few months after their marriage, the accused told his wife that he wanted to prepare for certain exams and hence, wanted to stay away from her in a different part of Delhi to concentrate on his studies. Within a year of their marriage, the accused shifted to East Vinod Nagar in Kalyanpuri, while the woman continued to stay in

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW

 $A^{
m fter}$ leading a walkout over the issue from the Rajya Sabha earlier this week, the Sunday hit the streets in Delhi with its demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into businessman Gautam Adani's alleged misdemeanours. AAP workers led by Delhi convenor Gopal Rai and MLAs Saurabh Bhardwaj and Durgesh Pathak gheraoed BJP Headquarters at ITO, leading to massive jam in

Addressing workers, the party's Delhi convener Gopal Rai said a joint parliamentary committee comprising mem-

should probe the matter. "BJP Adani reaches behind him. is running away from the probe. There is only one

Rai further said that if PM Modi doesn't order an investigation into this scam, it will become evident that he is part of this nexus. "Why doesn't PM Modi have the guts to take Adani's name? The kind of scam Adani has done, the country is standing on the verge of an economic crisis," he

Criticising the PM Modi, AAP MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj said that Prime Minister speaks all day and all night but he does not speak on Adani

bers from various parties but wherever PM Modi goes,

"Adani has got coal mine in Australia, defence deal in leader, Chief Minister Arvind Israel, green energy in Sri Kejriwal who is not scared of Lanka and electricity contract to prove that what level of ties he harbours with the PM. Hindenburg has exposed many companies before also, after two years of research, Hindenburg rightly told the world that Adani's stock will sink," Bhardwaj added.

Adani Group stocks have taken a beating on the bourses after the US-based Hindenburg Research made a litany of allegations against it, including fraudulent transactions and share price manip-



The business conglomerate has dismissed the allegations as lies. Opposition parties, including the Congress, have alleged that the meltdown in Adani Group shares is a scam that involves common people's money as LIC and SBI have invested in them. The party has also been demanding a joint parliamentary committee probe into the issue.

Raahgiri Day set to make comeback at CP on Feb 19



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Raahgiri Day is set to make a comeback to Connaught Place with the Delhi Police and the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) organising its relaunch on February 19, albeit against the wishes of the local traders.

Raahgiri Day, to be held next Sunday, is part of the Delhi Police Week, which will be observed from February 16 to February 22. The New Delhi Traders' Association has opposed the move saying it will lead to littering in the area and parking chaos. According to a statement, with the observation of the day, Raahgiri organisers aim to focus on creating sustainable and liveable cities.

The event's main focus will be road safety, walkability in cities, and women's safety. Raahgiri Foundation, Nagarro and Sustainable Mobility Network (SMN) will serve as the knowledge partners for the event.

Delhi Traffic Police and other enforcement units such as SPUWAC/SPUNER, Armed Police, and Crime Branch will hold painting competitions, street plays, rally by girls students for road safeawareness, self-defence train-

ing demonstration, dog show,

a rendition by Delhi Police Women Pipe Band, and many other activities.

Supporting organisations will also host events such as yoga, Zumba, creation of a fitness zone, sports activities, and open mic performances. In a series of tweets, the New Delhi Traders' Association (NDTA) condemned the move.

"WHY IS @Raahgiri_Fdn doing this @CP_Heartofdelhi, it is a market complex not public park, they leave it littered & disturbed, better plan such public events at Kartavya Path so public can enjoy without disturbance to markets & no chaos," it said.

Police ask Rai CM OSD to appear for questioning in 2020 phone tapping case

STAFF REPORTER NEW

Delhi Police has served a notice on Lokesh Sharma, the OSD to the Rajasthan chief minister, asking him to appear on Monday for questioning in a phone-tapping case going back to the July 2020 political crisis.

The notice comes days before Delhi High Court is scheduled to hear the Delhi Police Crime Branch's application seeking vacating of an interim order staying coercive action against Sharma.

Hearing on the Crime Branch application and a petition by Sharma — the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot — seeking quashing of the FIR against him is scheduled for February

On March 25, 2021, the Delhi Police registered an FIR against Sharma for criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and unlawfully intercepting telegraphic signals (telephonic conversation) on a complaint lodged by Union Minister Gajendra Singh

Shekhawat, the BJP MP from

Jodhpur. An interim order to stay coercive action against Sharma was passed on June 3, 2021, after he approached the high court seeking quashing of the FIR. According to sources, this is the sixth notice to Sharma under Section 41.1 (A) of the CrPC.

Sharma has appeared for questioning twice — on December 6, 2021, and May 14, 2022 - and submitted reasons for not being able to appear on three other dates. Last month, the Crime

Branch moved an application in Delhi High Court seeking vacating of the interim order on the grounds that Sharma has been misusing the inter-im protection and delaying the investigation.

The phone-tapping controversy dates to the July 2020 political crisis in Congress-ruled Rajasthan. Audio clips of alleged telephonic conversations between Shekhawat and Congress leaders surfaced amid a rebellion against Gehlot by his then deputy Sachin Pilot and 18 party MLAs supporting him.

Op Dost: India sends 7th flight of relief supplies to Turkey, Syria

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Continuing its rescue and crelief mission for earth-quake hit Turkey and Syria, India sent its seventh flight to these countries carrying more than 35 tons of relief material as part of 'Operation Dost.'

The latest flight reached

Syria on Sunday with over 23 tons of relief material which was received by Deputy Minister Local Administration Environment Moutaz Douaji at Damascus airport.

"7th #OperationDost flight reached Syria with over 23 tons of relief material, including gensets, solar lamps, emergency and critical care medicines, & disaster relief consumables. Received at Damascus airport by Deputy Minister Administration Environment Moutaz Douaji, tweeted Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam

The flight departed on Saturday for earthquake-hit Syria and Turkey. The Indian Air Force C17 carrying relief material, medical aid, emergency and critical care medi-



NDRF personnel load relief materials to C-17 Globemaster, that are being sent to earthquake-hit Turkive and Syria by India as part of humanitarian assistance under 'Operation Dost', at Hindan Air Force Station, in Ghaziabad

cines, medical equipment and consumables took off from Hindon Airbase in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad.

The aircraft with relief materials, medical aid, and emergency and critical care medicines first landed in Syria and unload materials and then head to Turkey. Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar also took to his Twitter handle to talk about the flight departing from Ghaziabad.

He tweeted, "The 7th #OperationDost flight departs

for Syria and Turkiye. Flight is carrying relief material, medical aid, emergency and critical care medicines, medical equipment and consumables."

The Indian Army also tweeted, "An #IAF C-17 aircraft got airborne last night for #Syria and #Turkiye, bearing relief material and emergency equipment."

The Ministry of External Affairs said the earthquake relief material and equipment were sent to Syria and Turkey.
The flight is headed to

Damascus and after offloading relief material there, it will

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the flight is carrying more than 35 tons of relief material, of which over 23 tons is headed for relief efforts in Syria, and around 12 tons to

The assistance being sent for Syria comprises relief materials, sleeping mats, gensets solar lamps, tarpaulins, blankets, emergency and critical care medicines, and disaster relief consumables.

The material for Turkey consists of team supplies for the Army field hospital and NDRF, medical equipment such as ECG, patient monitor, anaesthesia machine, syringe pumps, glucometer, blankets and other

A 99-member team from the Indian Army has established a 30-bed field hospital at Iskenderun in the Hatay province of Turkey that has already treated hundreds of

people.

The team at the field hospital includes medical and critical care specialists and surgeons. It is equipped with an operation theatre, X-ray machines and ventilators.

NIA arrests 2 in terror conspiracy case after searches in Bengaluru, Thane

PNS NEW DELHI

Aday after conducting searches in Bengaluru and Investigation Agency (NIA) ON Sunday arrested two accused in the AQIS case relating to conspiracy by terrorist organizations based in India and abroad to radicalize youth and provoke them to indulge in acts of violence and terrorism.

The arrested accused persons are Mohammad Arif, resident of 5th Cross, Manjunatha Layout, Thanisandra Main Road, Bengaluru (Karnataka) and Hamraz Worshid Shaikh of

Nagar Saravali, Thane (Maharashtra), the NIA said in a statement. "Preliminary investigations have revealed that the two accused, Mohammad Arif and Hamraz Worshid Shaikh, were in contact with foreign based online handlers affiliated to proscribed terrorist organisations. They had also made elaborate plans to leave for Afghanistan to progress their terrorist activities," the agency said. On Saturday, the NIA had conducted searches at two locations in connection with the

AQIS Case. "After conducting

While there are various ongo-

ing cases in courts for prohi-

bition of online sale of drugs,

the DCGI in its notice quoted

the order by the Delhi High

Court in the matter of Dr.

Zaheer Ahmed Vs Union of

ed from online sale of medi-

cines without licence and the

respondents are directed to

ensure that the same is pro-

hibited forthwith until further

orders," the court order said.

order, epharmacies were found

to be engaged in sale of drugs

online without licence, the

Even after the issue of the

"Respondents are injunct-

India and others.

Bangalore and Mumbai on Saturday (11.02.2023), NIA is probing two suspects in a terror conspiracy case. Searches were conducted at

Thanisandra, Bengaluru and Palghar, Thane in Karnataka and Maharashtra respectively in NIA case RC-46/2022/NIA/DLI with the active help of Internal Security Division (ISD), Karnataka and local police," it had said.

Inputs had revealed that these two suspects were in contact with foreign based online handlers affiliated to proscribed terrorist organisa-

tions over encrypted communication platforms. They were allegedly involved in a conspiracy to radicalize youth over social media platforms and provoke them to indulge in acts of violence and terrorism, it had said. The case was initially registered as FIR No. 158/2022 dated July 24, 2022 at Tilaknagar Police Station, Bengaluru, Karnataka and reregistered by NIA on November 30, 2022.

During these searches, various digital devices and documents have been seized. Further investigations in the case are in progress, it added.

BJP to establish an 'authoritarian dominance' in Parliament: Opp



ongress alongwith like Cminded Opposition parties are to mount more pressure on the Centre over the expunction of remarks by top leaders including Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and thereafter suspension of another member in the Ràjya Sabha Rajni

Patil last week pertaining to the recent ongoing controversy around the Adani Group. Barring two days to debate the Motion of Thanks on President speech, both the Ràjya Sabha and Lok Sabha, remained nonfunctional.

Congress said "blatant partisanship" was witnessed in the expunction of remarks of its leaders and suspension of its Rajya Sabha MP, and alleged the BJP-led government wanted to establish an "authoritarian dominance" in Parliament by "terrorising" the Opposition.

Opposition parties have convened a meet on Monday before the resumption of session to devise a strategy, incidentally to be the last day of the first part of the Budget Session. Parliament will resume thereafter a month long break on

Sources said the meeting has been scheduled in Parliament in the chamber of Congress President and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, who has alleged that the Centre was conspiring to hide the truth by exerting undue pressure on the presiding officers.
"The (Narendra) Modi

government is conspiring to hide the truth by exerting undue pressure on the presiding officers of both the Houses of the Parliament, and is con-

spiring to suppress the JPC inquiry demand," Kharge said after parts of the speech of Rahul Gandhi and Kharge made in the House were expunged by the presiding offi-

Kharge said questions will asked both inside Parliament as well as in the 'people's parliament'. "Should here not be an inquiry into the Adani scam? Shouldn't the falling value of LIC's money, invested in Adani's companies, be questioned? Shouldn't questions be asked about the Rs 82,000 crore loan given to Adani by SBI and other banks," asked Kharge. After Mallikarjun Kharge's parts of speech were expunged and Congress MP Rajani Patil was suspended. Rajya Sabha MP and Shiv Sena leader who is part of the Opposition camp, Priyanka Chaturvedi, said the demand of Opposition are gen-uine and we shall not compromise on our demand of a JPC probe in the aftermath of Hindenburg Report over stock manipulation and over valuation of the Adani Group.

"We need answers from the treasury benches as why were SEBI, ED & RBI found sleeping at the wheel? Why is GoI defending it all? We demand answer as well explanation from the ruling party who keeps on boasting that they are party with a difference. I says they are party of arrogance which has no place in a vibrant democracy like India," Chaturvedi told The Pioneer.

At a Press conference on Sunday, Senior Congress spokesperson and a member in the upper house Abhishek Manu Singhvi claimed the BJP does not want Parliament to run through consensus, col-

LS Secretariat asks Rahul to respond by Feb 15 to notices on remarks on PM Modi

MP Rahul Gandhi to respond by February 15 to notices given by BJP members regarding his remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the

In a letter to Gandhi, dated February 10, the secretariat has asked him to furnish his reply on breach of privilege notices against him by BJP MPs Nishikant Dubey and Pralhad Joshi -- also the Parliamentary Áffairs Minister -- by February 15 for the Lok Sabha speaker's consideration. Following

or undignified in those addresses," he said at a press laboration and concordance, but through "clash, chaos, and conflict". The "autocratic and conference at the AICC headdictatorial face" of the BJP and the ruling dispensation was in full show in each House of Parliament in the "undemoc-

ratic and unparliamentary' expunction of several remarks of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, and in the suspension of Rajani Patil from the Rajya especially within the temple of Sabha, he said.

The BJP government, he alleged, is moving towards establishing an "authoritarian dominance in Parliament by terrifying, terrorising, tormenting, and tyrannizing the Opposition".

Alluding to the expunction of words from Rahul Gandhi and Kharge's speeches in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively while participating in a debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address last week, Singhvi said not a word stated therein justifies the use of the power of expunction. "There is no use of unpar-

liamentary language, no expletives, no debasement of any institution, no objectionable or abusive word or phrase. There is absolutely nothing which is remotely defamatory or indecent or unparliamentary

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha Gandhi's speech in Lok Sabha Secretariat has asked Congress on the 'Motion of Thanks on the President's Address' on Tuesday, in which he commented on the Hindenburg-Adani issue, Dubey and Joshi had moved the notices against

Both the BJP leaders in their notices to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla have alleged that Gandhi's comments were baseless and that he made "contemptuous, unparliamentary and dishonourable" allegations. Several remarks made by Gandhi were expunged by

The Rajya Sabha MP said the Speaker and the Chairperson are constitutional office holders and the custodians and defenders of freedom of speech inside the Houses "which is a fundamental pillar of our democracy,

democracy viz Parliament. Singhvi also lashed out at the government over the suspension of Patil on Friday, calling the action disproportionate, excessive and actuated purely by political malice at the behest of this government.

The MP was in a 15minute "surgical strike" suspended for alleged video recording of House proceedings during the prime minister's speech in Rajya Sabha on February 9, Singhvi said. He pointed out that no showcause notice was issued and no prior intimation was given. Singhvi said the Chair

ought not to have acted on the one-sided and unilateral" proposal of the ruling dispensation, without awaiting even a preliminary inquiry, when the conduct of the ruling party and government smacks of "one-

flouting Drugs Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

The Drugs Controller ☐ General of India (DCGI) has issued a show cause notice to online pharmacies, including Tata1mg, Flipkart and Amazon seeking an explanation on why action should not be taken against them for selling and distributing drugs in contravention of provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act

The pharmacies have been asked to explain why action should not be taken against them for selling and distributing drugs in violation of rules If the companies don't reply to the notice, necessary action shall be initiated against them without any further notice, the DCGI said in a notice issued to the errant pharmacies.

The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 regulates the import, manufacturing and distribution of drugs in India.

In the notice, the DCGI said that the sale, or stock or exhibit or offer for sale or distribution of drugs through online, internet or other electronic platforms without a licence have potential impact on quality of drugs and pose risk to public health due to potential misuse of drugs through self-medication and indiscriminate use of the drugs.

"In view of above, you are hereby asked to show cause within 02 days from the date of issue of this notice, why action shall not be taken against you for sale, or stock or exhibit or offer for sale or distribution of drugs in contravention of the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules made thereunder," the notice dated February 8 said. If the companies don't reply to the notice, necessary action shall be initiated against them without any further notice, it added.



RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

alvanising spiritual salva-Galvailising spiritum. ITBP has embarked on an ambitious mission to complete 75 lakh Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) asanas in a little over a month in Haryana. Racing to complete per-

formance of 75 lakh Surya Namaskars to mark the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence, the Basic Training Centre (BTC) of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) at Bhanu, Panchkula in Haryana has crossed the milestone of 51 lakh yogic asanas.

The campaign inaugurated on January 11 is being conducted by the ITBP in collaboration with the Education, Ayush, Sports departments and Haryana Yoga Commission. The event was inaugurated by Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya on January 11.

"Under this campaign, a target has been set to perform 75 lakh Surya Namaskar till February 14, 2023 in the entire state of Haryana. Continuing this campaign from January 11, a total of 51,75,024 lakh Surya Namaskars have been performed by BTC, ITBP, Bhanu till date-February 12, in which a total of 2,469 officers of the center are doing Surya Namaskar every day.

Surya Namaskar is performed 101 times daily by the jawan. The target of doing 51 lakh Surva Namaskar was set by BTC, ITBP Bhanu which has been completed, this campaign will continue. By February 15, 2023, 58 lakh Surya Namaskars will be completed," Inspector General of ITBP at BTC, Bhanu, Ishwar Singh Duhan said.

Duhan highlighted to the officers that practicing all kinds of yoga asanas is beneficial for health. Surya Namaskar is especially beneficial for the practitioners. "To boost energy, Surya Namaskar is very beneficial and helps in removing many physical and mental

The best time to do Surya Namaskar is before sunrise. It helps in increasing physical and mental strength, better control over the body, peace of mind, balanced energy and inner peace," Duhan said. Continuous performance of Surya Namaskar helps in establishing a deep connection between the body, breath and

consciousness. It helps in reducing weight, keeping the body disease free and healthy besides maintaining the balance of the body and mind. The Surya Namaskar exercise strengthens the heart and aids digestion, the IG has said in his exhortation to the officers and men.

It is helpful in improving the system and blood circulation and everyone should include Surya Namaskar in their daily exercise regimen, he added. The ITBP is the Lead Intelligence Agency and the designated paramilitary force to secure the Indo-China frontier.

Smoking, vaping both injurious, may lead to long Covid: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

It's not only smoking tobacco but vaping electronic cigarettes also injurious to health and both may increase the risk of developing severe Covid illness among healthy young people, a new study has said.

According to the study published in the Journal of Molecular Medicine, smoking as well as vaping, may predispose people to increased inflammation and the development of severe Covid-19, as well as the lingering cardiovascular complications that can occur after a virus infec-

Though Covid is declining in India and many other countries but there are still a few nations where the virus is still a menace. "The key message is that smoking is the worst, but vaping is not innocent," said Dr. Theodoros Kelesidis, the study's lead author and Associate Professor of medicine at the US-based University of



"This has been shown for many lung diseases but not for Covid. It was quite an interesting and novel finding that vaping changed the levels of key proteins that the virus uses to replicate," he added. Using plasma collected

prior to the pandemic from 45 non-smokers, 30 electronic cigarette vapers and 29 tobacco smokers, the researchers measured the levels of proteins needed to replicate the virus SARS-CoV-2, which was at the centre of the pandemic. These proteins are ACE2, furin, Ang II, Ang 1-7, IL-6R, sCD163, and L-selectin. The three latter proteins are collectively regulated in cells by a

protein known as ADAM17, study mentioned. Researchers found that plasma from healthy young people who smoke tobacco or vape had higher levels of furin, sCD163, and L-selectin than plasma from non-smokers.

The data suggests that in young smokers and vapers, furin and ADAM17 may be more active in immune cells and surface cells, such as those lining the lungs.

'E-cigarette vapers may be at higher risk than non-smokers of developing infections and inflammatory disorders of the lungs," Kelesidis said. He further added: "Electronic cigarettes are not harmless and should be used for only the shortest time possible in smoking cessation, and not at all by non-smokers.

India is among a few countries in the world which has already banned e-cigarettes while efforts are being taken to curb tobacco consumption which kils over 13 lakh people

Asian Waterbird Census 2023: Diversity, number at Okhla sanctuary less than last yr

PNS NEW DELHI

The Asian Waterbird Census ▲ (AWC) 2023 at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary has recorded a decreased total number of water birds and overall species diversity in relation to previous

Wetlands International's largest annual waterbird census Asia Australasia, "Asian Waterbird Census" (AWC) 2023 was carried out on February 5 at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary in active participation of the volunteers from Wetlands International South Asia, Aditi College, Delhi, Delhi Technological University in presence and coordination of T K Roy Ecologist and AWC Delhi State Coordinator, Wetlands



Okhla Bird Sanctuary located on river Yamuna in NCR of Delhi falls in Central Asian Flyway usually attracts good number and species diversity of long distant winter migratory water birds but being most degraded, polluted and disturbed wetland habitat by various factors fluctuate and decline the number and species diversity every year, Wetlands International said in a statement. Although global climate change impact is the prime issue, delayed winter, migration, slow migration, lesser number of migration of the long distant winter migratory

water birds from far Central Asia, North Asia including Russia and Siberian part almost everywhere in Indian sub-continent as being recorded since past several years, it said. "Apart from climate change impact, several other factors contribute to the declining number of water birds and species diversity at any particular wetland.

Okhla Bird Sanctuary is the most degraded, polluted and disturbed habitat in all respects, decreasing overall water birds number and species diversity including migratory birds every year," it said.

The wetland habitat severtimes in a year remains completely dried, the latest being the recent migration season in October-November, 2022 which impacts on the

breeding of the resident birds, and lesser arrival of winter migratory water birds. Till December, 2022 the sanctuary witnessed the least number of migratory water birds, resulting in overall decreased popula-The AWC 2023 recorded

further decreased species diversity:from 47 (2022) to 36 (2023) and total number: 9,143 to 6,083 (2023) dominated the total number by common winter migratory species Northern Shoveler and then Eurasian Coot in comparison to previ-

Out of 36 species (18 resident species including local migratory species and 18 long distance winter migratory species) includes two species (2023) from four species (2022)

of IUCN Red-listed threatened birds in comparison to previous years. Several resident species

and regular migratory species were not at all found during the census. Now as usual, with a partially increased number of migratory birds for some days, they flock together as soon as the climate starts warming in February onward on their way

Among the regular winter migratory water birds recorded in larger number this time but comparatively lesser than revious years are Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Coot, Common Teal, Gadwal and least number of other migratory birds as Greylag Geese, Bar-headed Geese, Northern Pintail, Black-headed Gull,

back to native countries.

Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Garganey and Pallas's Gull. While the Northern

Shoveler: (1,872), Common Teal: (744) and Northern Pintail: (455) migrates from North Asia, Eurasian Coot: (1,200) migrates from Temperate Asia.

Likewise, Gadwal: (338), Garganey, Tufted Duck and Eurasian Wigeon migrate from North Asia, the Bar-headed Geese, Greylag Geese, Blackheaded Gull and the Red-crested Pochard migrate from Central Asia. IUCN Red-listed Threatened Species recorded on this wetland are Common Pochard (VU) that migrates from Central Asia and Painted Stork (NT) Indian resident and local migratory species.

UP ready to be India's growth engine: Murmu

Hailing the Uttar Pradesh Government for successfully holding the Global Investors Summit, President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday said the State is "capable and ready" to become India's growth engine.

Addressing the valedictory session of the Global Investors Summit here, President Murmu said she was glad to note that so many countries showed their interests in the growth and development of Uttar Pradesh.

"Uttar Pradesh, which is at the top population wise, is also the first in the country in economic contributions. I appreciate farmers and entrepreneurs of the state for this. To play the role of India's growth engine, UP is 'saksham' (capa-



ble) and 'taiyar' (ready)," Murmu said.

She said that after success of the previous investors summit in 2018, the latest meet was organised on a large scale.

Murmu reached Lucknow earlier in the day on a two-day visit. She will attend a civic reception to be hosted in her honour by the Government of Uttar Pradesh at Lok Bhavan

On Monday, the president will grace the 10th convocation Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University in

Before returning to Delhi, she will visit the famed Kashi With the rural polls likely Vishwanath Temple and attend a "Ganga Aarti" in Varanasi. to be announced anytime soon and with the general elections

Didi mother of corruption in Bengal: Nadda **SAUGAR SENGUPTA** ■ KOLKATA scheduled to take place little more than a year ahead Nadda $B_{\text{Mamata Banerjee was the}}^{\text{engal Chief Minister}}$ and Union Home Minister is

lies in the State.

Attacking the State Government for institutionalizing corruption Nadda said, "Mamata Banerjee has brought the State to a standstill," adding though the BJP had tried but failed to bring the TMC Government down in 2021 "I ask the people to get united and prepare for a second push ...it needs another push to bring this government down," he

likely to address about 30 ral-

Alleging how the funds sent by the Centre were being misappropriated by the people in power Nadda said "massive irregularities have been found in the implementation of Prime Minister Awas Yojna ... not only that the name of the project has been stolen by the State Government as Bangla Awas Yojna but also audits have shown that the people who have two-three storey houses

Alleging that though the State had a woman Chief Minister Bengal topped the list of crime against women. 'The Chief Minister is a womanbut Bengal tops in acid attacks and woman-trafficking this is a shame on the

have secured houses for them-

State's administration," he said. The State ruling outfit was prompt to hit back with TMC

spokesperson Kunal Ghosh

calling Nadda a "failed teacher." The BJP was led by a "failed teacher" who despite coming to Bengal on a daily basis in 2021 failed to see his party through in the Assembly elections,

Ghosh said. Saying that the BJP leadership only came to Bengal to peddle bundles of lies Ghosh said, "it is the same central Government run by the BJP that has awarded Bengal for

running the Duare Sarkar

(Government at door steps scheme and it is the chief of the same ruling party that is calling us a failed government."

Bengal TMC vice president Jayprakash Majumdar who left the saffron outfit last year to join the TMC said, "the BJP is a party which practices lie ... in fact when I was in that party it is the same leader who used to brief the state leaders saying even if we were to tell lies we should forcefully do so."

PM Modi's \$5 trillion economy target a joke, says KCR

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Dubbing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious goal of India achieving USD 5 trillion economy as a "joke" and "silly", Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Sunday said the target should

have been much bigger. Replying to the debate on the Appropriation Bill in the State Assembly, Rao, also known as KCR, hit out at Modi saying that the whole country expected that the Prime Minister would speak something on the Adani issue in the Parliament but people were disappointed.

The Chief Minister, referring to an article in an international magazine, said there was "License Raj" during the Congress rule while it was government.

"By 2023-24, Modi said India will become a USD 5 trillion economy. That 5 trillion (economy) itself is a joke. Really silly. At least, our aim should be big. We should dare to dream. That 5 trillion (economy aim) itself is very very less, out of which only USD 3.5 trillion was achieved,' KCR said.

Meanwhile, BJP Telangana unit president and Lok Sabha member Bandi Sanjay Kumar found fault with the Chief Minister for allegedly misusing the State Assembly to "hurl abuses" at PM Modi.

Instead of explaining about the development done in Telangana and the promises made by the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), KCR sought to abuse and attack the BJP and

"Silence Raj" in the present Modi on the floor of the august House, Kumar said, according to an release.

According to the BJP leader, Rao was trying to mis-lead the people by whipping up Telangana sentiment all over again by accusing the Centre of not giving any funds to the state.

Throwing a challenge, Kumar said the BJP was ready for a comprehensive debate on what the Centre had done for Telangana and how much money it had released to the state vis-à-vis what the BRS government had done for the people of the state in the last

KCR, comparing the governments of UPA and NDA, said the country lost miserably in every sector and Telangana in particular lost about Rs 3 lakh crore in terms of Gross

State Domestic Product (GSDP).

"mother of corruptions" in

Bengal, BJP national president

JP Nadda said on Sunday por-

tending a Parivartan (political

Dubbing the ruling Trinamool Congress or TMC that stood for "Tolabaj and

Terror (extortionist), Mafia

and Money-laundering and Corruption," Nadda --- who addressed two massive rallies at

Purbasthali in East Burdwan

district and Ramnagar in East

Midnapore district said --- the

fall of Mamata Banerjee was

Raj perpetrated by the TMC led

by Mamata Banerjee," Nadda

asked the people to get pre-

pared for another big push to

bring her "oppressive regime"

Vowing to end the "Jungle

imminent.

change) in the State.

"Indian banks and also LIC have invested in that company (Adani Group). The whole world was looking at Modi as to what he would say (on Adani's issues). He did not even utter a word on that subject. He was beating around the bush," KCR said tearing into the NDA govern-

that India has become the fifth largest economy in the world, Rao said it is the per capita that has to be taken into consideration to assess any country's performance. He said when it comes to

Ridiculing the argument

per capita income, countries like Bangladesh and Bhutan are ahead of India.

Rao denounced some people approaching the

Supreme Court seeking a ban on BBC which recently aired a controversial programme on the 2002 Gujarat riots.

Alleging that the NDA government is engaged in "endless privatisation of public sector enterprises," KCR said the Central government's policy appears to be "socialisation of losses and privatisation of profits".

"Modi says the government has no business to do business. I say the government has every right to do business wherever it is required. Government has no business means it is escaping from the responsibility entrusted by the people of India. We should share the responsibility. You cannot shrug it off," he said.

KCR claimed that 20 lakh people have given up their Indian citizenship during the



NDA regime.

The Chief Minister also mocked Modi for launching Vande Bharat Express when ever a new train was introduced and said there are better trains like Rajdhani Express

Highlighting the alleged failures of the NDA government at the Centre,

Rao questioned why there are "water wars" in the country when it is available in excess and credited the successive governments at the Centre with "bad water policy" He also alleged that the States were forced to import coal even when the commodity was abundant in the country. Meanwhile, Telangana Assembly was adjourned sine

in Erode East, make DMK raise pitch

PTI CHENNAI

The Congress and DMK may have had a head start in launching the poll campaign in Erode East Assembly constituency, but the AIADMK and its ally the BJP, intensified their campaign constituency balanced

The campaign will reach a high decibel level next week when BJP State chief K Annamalai is expected to take up a blitzkrieg campaign against the ruling DMK, which is supporting the Congress (former Union Minister E V K S Elangovan) in the February 27 by-poll.

Tamil Nadu Chief

Minister M K Stalin is also set to hit the campaign trail and raise the pitch as the opposition has been targeting the alleged unfulfilled poll promises of the DMK government

AIADMK interim general secretary K Palaniswami has been training his guns on the State government, and local civic issues appear to virtually dwarf his campaign. Even the state government's proposal to establish a pen monument in the sea off the coast of Marina beach has been made an election issue



asking the government to have the monument erected at the DMK State headquarters - Anna Arivalayam - instead of destabilising the marine ecosystem. The CM is likely to counter the charge during his campaign in the constituency where his son and State Youth Welfare and Sports Development Minister Udhayanidhi, and Parliamentarian sister

Kanimozhi, who is DMK's deputy general secretary, are expected to join. The hike in property tax

and power tariff have affected the common man and industries as well. People find the steep revi-

sion burdensome," says AIADMK candidate and forlawmaker K

Thennarasu, who is assisted

former AIADMK Ministers, BJP leaders and legislators from both the parties, in the campaign.

The opposition canons have increased their presence in the constituency to counter the claims of the State Ministers who have been garnering votes on the good performance card of the Chief Minister.

While introducing his candidate, Palaniswami said the results of the Erode East by-election would turn out to be in favour of the AIADMK and it would indicate the party's victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The powerloom sector in Erode, which flourished during the AIADMK regime is in deep crisis now due to the steep hike in power tariff upto 52 percent, he had said.

AIADMK, allies intensify poll campaign | US delegation to Aero India-2023 one of the biggest ever: US Ambassador

PTI BENGALURU

United States Chargé d'Affaires Ambassador to India Elizabeth Jones on Sunday said her country's delegation to Aero India-2023 is one of the biggest ever in the premier aviation exhibition's and the US are crucial partners in many ways to ensure a free, open and resilient Indo-Pacific region where democracies can thrive.

According to Jones, India is the partner of choice for US to address various issues ranging from climate change, improving global health, tackling cyber challenges and building sustainable supply chains.

She also pointed out that two weeks ago, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval met his US counterpart at the White House to launch the US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) where they pledged to accelerate joint development and production through a bilateral defence industrial cooperation roadmap.

"It's an honor for me to be here with you today for Aero India-2023. The size of this year's US delegation to Aero India is one of the biggest ever," Jones said in a press con-

The diplomat said she will open the USA Partnership Pavilion at Aero India-2023 on Noting that Saturday was

the first anniversary of US President Joe Biden's Indo-Pacific strategy that underpins ship to ensure a "free and open prosperous, connected, rulesbased and resilient Indo Pacific region where our democracies

Speaking on the occasion, Jedidiah P Royal, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, said a free and open Indo-Pacific region requires a strong and militarily capable India and the US is excited to partner with India promoting this shared vision for the future.

"The Biden-Harris administration is focused on putting maximum effort into bolstering India's military capabilities and rise as a defence industrial power," Royal said.

According to him, the US companies have established engineering centres and manufacturing hubs and have also invested in building research and development centres that harness India's talented scientists and engineers to advance



cutting edge R&D projects. American firms have also

played a major role in supporting India's growing aerospace and defence exports, he

Referring to Indian export data, Royal said the US accounts for one of the largest destinations for Indian defence exports in aerospace and defence products. In the last five years alone,

US investments in India had generated roughly a quarter of India's defence exports, he added.

Major General Iulian Cheater, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of the US Air Force, said India has the largest C-17 military transport aircraft fleet outside the US, which was extensively used for providing critical aid and supplies as part of 'Operation Dost' for the earthquake relief efforts in Turkey and Syria.

Through the US-India Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), the United States and India are working together on co-production and co-development of defence equipment, Major General Cheater said.

"Under DTTI, we signed the first ever UAV co-development project agreement in September of 2021. This was the largest research and development effort between our two militaries," he noted.

The US and India are also increasing emphasis on startur space cooperation, which includes sharing space situational awareness information. It will help set the conditions for a stable, secure and accessible space domain and future discussions on areas of potential space defense cooperation, the military officer said.

J&K doctors assist in childbirth over WhatsApp call in snow-covered Keran

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

With snowfall ruling out the possibility of airlift, a pregnant woman who had a history of labour complications in the remote Keran in Jammu and Kashmir was ing a healthy baby over a WhatsApp call. "On Friday night, we received a patient in labour at the Keran PHC (primary health centre) with history of complicated delivery with eclampsia, prolonged labour and episiotomy," Block Medical Officer of Kralpora Dr Mir Mohammad Shafi said.

An air evacuation was required to take the patient to a hospital with maternity facilities as Keran remained cut off from the rest of Kupwara district during the winter.

Continuous snowfall on Thursday and Friday prevented the authorities to arrange an air evacuation, forcing the medical staff at the Keran PHC to look for an alternative way to assist in the delivery.

A gynaecologist in Kralpora subdistrict hospital, Dr Parvaiz, guided Dr Arshad Sofi and his paramedical staff at the Keran PHC over a WhatsApp call on the procedure to deliver the baby.

Child marriage: Assam civil society says arrests not only solution, need to address causes

PTI GUWAHATI

The recent arrests of over **1** 3,000 people allegedly involved in child marriages in Assam has created a divide in the civil society, with a section asserting that mere law enforcement cannot be the solution while some arguing that at least the law is being discussed and may prove to be a deterrent.

More than 3,000 people allegedly associated with child marriages have been apprehended so far across Assam, and lodged in temporary jails, sparking protests by women who decried the arrest of sole breadwinners of their families.

Human rights lawyer Debasmita Ghosh said that once a marriage is consummated, the law considers it to be valid and children born out of such unions enjoy all legal

"The law states that a child marriage is voidable only if a petition is filed before a district court by the person who was a child at the time of the marriage and if the petitioner is a minor, it can be filed through his or her guardian," she told

If the petition is being filed by the person who was married as a child, it must be done so within two years of the person attaining adulthood, Ghosh

"In most of the arrests made, the couples may be adults now and if they have not filed petitions for annulling their marriages, the state has no business to interfere in their

personal lives," Ghosh added. Besides, the law was enacted in 2006 and the name itself suggests marriages should be prohibited' but why was it not lone so by agencies responsible for it? she questioned.

Eminent academician Manorama Sarma said child marriages must end but this is a social evil, not a law and order problem.

"Taking care of women's education, health facilities and access to livelihood is the way to end it and not by implementing a law retrospectively. It should be strictly implemented prospectively," the retired professor said.

Women rights activist Anurita Pathak Hazarika said a sociological analysis of child marriages must be looked into from the "gender lens and how inequality has an impact on

these practices". Awareness on such issues, including sexual reproductive

health rights, must be institutionalised by including it in the school curricula, she added.

Child rights activist Miguel Das Queah said, "The state government definitely wanted to send out a strong message that child marriages must stop but it should have taken into consideration the protests that would take place following such action.

"Police face stiff resistance when they try to prevent a child marriage. In this case, so many people have been arrested, there were bound to be protests. The campaign should have been better planned," Queah, the founder of Universal Team for Social Action and Help (UTSAH)

A long-term sustained campaign is required to completely eradicate the menace of

child marriage, he said.

The activist said that there are certain limitations in the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006, under which a court can sentence an offender to two years imprisonment and slap a fine of Rs 1

"According to the law, if both the girl and the boy were minors during their marriage but are now adults, they won't be penalised but action will be taken against the adults who arranged the wedlock.

The couple, even after becoming adults, will be considered as children in conflict with the law and will be prosecuted under the Juvenile Justice Act," Queah pointed

Moreover, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), under which

those marrying children below the age of 14 would be booked as per the state cabinet's decision, criminalises all sexual acts between adults and children below the age of 18.

'According to POCSO Act, any sexual act between an adult and a minor is rape. The criminal angle will be considered only in cases of trafficking and use of deceit in marriages, Oueah added.

Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (ASCPCR) chairperson Sunita Changkakoti claimed that after the "strong message sent out by the state government, people are now discussing the law about which many were unaware that resulted in child marriages"

"People are now aware that a law exists under which child marriage is punishable," she



The police may not have responded to the issue earlier but they alone cannot be blamed as even the health department did not report teenage pregnancies while teachers did not report whether girls dropping out of schools had got married, she

"All stakeholders, including

school management committees, ASHA, Anganwadi workers and panchayat representatives, have responsibilities in preventing child marriages. "We have initiated aware-

ness campaigns in districts where there is a high incidence of child marriage and asked authorities to register a few cases to send a message," Changkakoti added.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Overreach

The Assam Government's campaign to curb child marriages is excessively harsh and unnecessary

The Assam Government's drive against child marriages, though well-intentioned, has triggered chaos across the state, with over 2,700 persons arrested and the lives of many more people thrown off the gear. Those behind bare have been booked under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act. The crackdown, which began last week, is a ham-handed attempt to eradicate a problem, for social problems can only be solved by social means. Administrative and legislative measures at best play a supplementary role. For instance, Governor-General Lord William Bentinck brought the Bengal Sati Regulation which banned the Sati practice in all jurisdictions of British India on December 4, 1829. But it was



primarily the socio-religious reforms by Raja Ram Mohun Roy that resulted in the eradication of the evil practice. Apart from reforms, general socio-economic progress curbs social ills. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), which was released in May last year, 25.4 per cent of women aged 20-24 years were married before the age of 18 during 2020-21. This was a sharp decline vis-à-vis the results of NFHS-4, which was conducted during 2015-16. In the earlier survey, 35.4 per cent of these women were married before 18. The Covid pandemic, however, is feared to have reversed the trend. but in normal circumstances the incidence of child marriages is decreasing. Quite apart from the improve-

ments in social, educational, and economic indices, efforts by government agencies and civil society organisations have also helped curb the menace.

When such progress is being made all over the country, including in Rajasthan where it is more prevalent than in most other places, it was a case of overreach by the Himanta Biswa Sarma Government to crack down on child marriages in Assam. Over 8,100 people have reportedly been named in police complaints, including the parents of the children married and the priests who performed the nuptial ceremonies. This is excessively harsh, especially as most of them are uneducated and poor; often the men arrested are sole or primary breadwinners for their families. This is unacceptable in a poor state. It may be mentioned here that the per capita income of Assam is less than that of the national average. Chief Minister Sarma should be concentrating on reducing poverty in his state instead of launching a programme that has brought immense misery to people, and that too the most vulnerable sections of society. There are a zillion things that a state government can do—from making the attractive to investors to improving policing and education. Unfortunately, Sarma has chosen to enforce the laws no other state is enforcing because, as we mentioned above, there is no need to do that. Worse, there is an impression that Muslims are bearing the brunt of enforcement, though Hindus have also been arrested. Sarma must stop the drive as soon as possible.



Double standards

The Supreme Court dismisses plea to ban BBC, says the plea is 'misconceived'

here is no limit to which people can go to please their leaders and get in their good books even if they sound ridiculous. The plea by Hindu Sena chief Vishnu Gupta in the Supreme Court was summarily rejected for being 'misconceived'. Gupta pleaded for the ban on BBC, not on the documentary but the entire news organization! The Court rejected it outright and questioned how a documentary could bring down the country. The plea was made after the BBC documentary 'India: The Modi Question' was released that questioned the role of Narendra Modi,

The documentary is not banned in the country but the Government does not want people to see it and has made all efforts to dissuade people from watching it. While it is an embarrassment for the ruling party, it cannot be said that the film

the then chief minister of Gujarat, in the riots that led to 2000 deaths.



has been released as a wider conspiracy. If that is the case, then what about the plethora of articles appearing in the western press which is highly critical of the BJP and Prime Minister Modi's style of functioning? By this logic, they all fall into the conspiracy to destabilize India. The same BJP would showcase any article written in their favour in the Western press as a trophy. We are a free democracy and should respect different viewpoints even if they happen to be inconvenient to us. The best defence for letting the film be shown in the country is the Prime Minister Modi's own statement that he made after uproar that followed the release of Kashmir files. Prime Minister Modi

while endorsing 'Kashmir Files' had said that those who thought that this film was not right should make their own film; and that those who live for the truth have a responsibility to stand with the truth at such a time. This applies to the BBC documentary as well. We rank quite low at the moment in the 'freedom of the press' index and it would have been better for the Government to just ignore it, rather than taking it down from public platforms. Using emergency powers under the Information Technology Rules, 2021, to block multiple YouTube videos and Twitter posts sharing links to the documentary rekindles the memories of the infamous Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. Certainly BJP would not like to be seen imposing the Emergency and that too when elections are not very far.

Budget give the social sector a miss



The public welfare schemes which provide assistance to millions of people living on the margin, got inadequate financial support in the budget

he recent budget is contradictory to what is expected from the government's last full budget before facing the national elections, especially at a time when the country is experiencing an economic slowdown affecting the poor. The strategic vision of the government while presenting the budget shows that economic recovery and job creation rest on increased capital expenditure and welfare spending is not a priority. The Finance Minister exhibited her commitment to reaching a fiscal deficit below 4.5% by 2025-26 which indicates that essential schemes that provide a safety net and contribute to better human development outcomes have been compromised. Any big welfare announcement in the budget is missing. This is apparent from the slashing of allocation for the flagship rural jobs scheme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural **Employment Guarantee Scheme** (MGNREGS) in the Union Budget. Only Rs 60,000 crore has been allocated for this scheme in 2023-24 which is 18% lower than the Rs 73,000 crore budgetary estimates for the current year and 33% lower than Rs 89,000 crore revised estimates. In the previous budget also the allocation saw a 25% cut to Rs 73,000 crore which led to an unpaid balance and the Ministry of Rural Development demanded an additional Rs 25,000 crore to meet the shortfall of the scheme. Out of which, the Finance Ministry approved only Rs 16,000 crore taking the revised budget for the financial year to Rs

Despite the higher revised estimates, less than 3% of the households employed under the MGNREGA completed the 100 days of work they are legally entitled to and the average days of employment provided per household is at a five-year low in this financial year. Till January 20, the average days of employment provided per household was only 42 while it ranged between 48 and 52 in the preceding four years. According to the consortium of activists and academicians, to provide the legally guaranteed of "Accountability Initiative",

households in the current vear, the scheme required an allocation of Rs 2.72 lakh crores and even giving each active household just 40 days of work would require Rs 1.24 lakh crores more than a double the current allocation.

Other programs which provide nutritional support to women and children have also been allocated inadequate and lower allocation in the current budget. The Saksham Anganwadi scheme which includes Anganwadi services, Poshan Abhiyan, and a scheme for adolescent girls, remains almost the same at Rs 20,554 crore compared to the Rs 20,263 crore last year (BE and RE). The Poshan Abhiyan, renamed as PM-POSHAN, has been sanctioned Rs 11,600 crore compared to RE of Rs 12,800 crore for 2022-23. Another maternity entitlement scheme, Samarthya, along with a few other women empowerment schemes has been allocated Rs 2,582 crore compared to the previous year's allocation of Rs 2,622 crore (BE).

All these schemes concern some of the most vulnerable communities and provide services that are critical to improving nutritional status. According to the recent report 100 days of work to all eligible the budgets for Anganwadi ser-



PROGRAMS THAT **PROVIDE** NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE ALSO BEEN **ALLOCATED** INADEQUATE AND **LOWER ALLOCATION IN** THE CURRENT **BUDGET**

vices and mid-day meals were slashed to over 30% more than in 2011 in real terms. This indicates that the number of beneficiaries is declining, per beneficiary allocations have not changed for years and the contribution towards honorariums for Anganwadi workers, helpers, and mid-day meal cooks has been stagnant. The allocations for old age, widow, and disabled pensions under the National Social Assistance Programme have also remained stagnant at around Rs 9,600 crore. The important areas in the social sector like education and health have also not seen a substantial increase.

As is evident during the last few years, the rural economy is under stress and the purchasing power of the rural population has not improved. The low investment in welfare schemes and low investments in these critical areas would have a negative impact on the lives of people living in rural areas. Expenditure on the different social sectors would contribute towards economic revival which would lead to the improvement in the lives of vulnerable sections of society. Over the years, it has been observed that spending on MGNKEGA, 1000 subsidies, or pensions has revived demand which is the need of

the hour. It is a tested fact that providing public services in health and education improves human development outcomes, increases productivity, and creates employment opportunities. The increase in budget and focus of expenditure so far has been on highways and railways which are capital-intensive technologies with small wage components. It is a matter of scrutiny to what extent this capex contributes to job creation, especially for the job workers.

Undoubtedly, we see a lot of development in terms of infrastructural development around us and many large budget projects are being executed, but, the point is whether it is leading to equitable distribution of resources and benefiting the lower strata of society. We should keep in mind that social welfare schemes are important in a country where half of population is struggling for access to quality education, health, and social security. These issues need to be uppermost in the minds of the people who matter in the system.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman of the Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Praaesn. The views expressea are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHAT'S IN A NAME. AFTER ALL?

Sir —In response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on the Gandhis not using the Nehru surname, Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala has taken potshots at Modi, saying that in India it is not usual to use maternal grandfather's surname. It is true that the paternal side counts for using the surname. However, it is in practice that Indian women exercise the choice of using father's or husband's name as surname. Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, opted to take her husband's name as surname. There is nothing wrong with that.

It is widely known that Indira was married to Feroze Jehangir Ghandy. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, Feroze Ghandy, a Parsi from Gujarat by birth, subsequently changed the spelling of his surname 'Ghandy' as Gandhi. Therefore, it is not wrong if the descendants of Indira use 'Gandhi' as their surname. As for Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's son Rehan writing his name as 'Rehan Rajiv Gandhi' (Rajiv Gandhi was his maternal grandfather), the suffix has been taken from the maternal side which is nothing but an aberration. The use of surname from the maternal side has not been forbidden; it is the prerogative of every individual to identify himself/herself with any chosen name.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

CHINA MUST MEND ITS WAYS Sir — The editorial 'Ballooning crisis' has rightly analysed that China's espionage balloons are part of an aggressive strategy; therefore the shooting down of a Chinese spy balloon off the Carolina coast by the American military has only strained the relations between the superpowers. Though China accused the US and strongly retaliated in words that America has violated international practice, it is unlikely to change course due to the fact that there is a second spy balloon flying over Central and South America. Thus, it is quite clear from the balloon incident that Chinese spy tech is getting increasingly sophisticated which is also proof of Beijing's growing

espionage capabilities.

Declining parliamentary democracy



he ongoing Budget session is clearly indicative of deteriorating standards of democracy in India and, for that, all political parties are equally responsible. The major indicators of this decline are shortening sessions, time lost due to disruptions in proceedings by the Opposition and violation of norms and precedents by the Government, rampant absenteeism, actual hours of sitting as a percentage of available hours, phenomenon of weak legislative federalism via Rajya Sabha in the overall setting of parliamentary-federalism, chal-

For its part, China must also understand that it cannot forcefully or by deceit occupy the sovereign lands belonging to other countries. The time has come for China to stop its high-handed behaviour and attempts to gobble up territory belonging to other countries. All in all, as India shares a land border with China and has serious differences with Beijing on the border issue, there is an urgent need to step up counter-intelligence cooperation with the US and other democracies to counter China's nefarious plans.

KR Srinivasan | Secunderabad

CLINICAL FINISH BY ASHWIN Sir — The legendary off-spinner from Tamil Nadu, Ravichandran Āshwin, did a lot of hard work against the Aussies as a striking force. Generally, spinners mature with age and Ashwin displayed his variety in bowling to a great measure and foxed the Australian batsmen in trouble

right from the start. All along, he was rel-

lenges of new extra-parliamentary mass movements and judicial activism. Last week, several words used by Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikariun Kharge during heated speeches over the Adani-Hindenburg row were

The Congress claimed that they had not said anything "unparliamentary or accusatory" for the remarks to be expunged. But the main issue was the way the Opposition members tried to disturb the House and chanted slogans all the time during the reply of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Rajya Sabha. No one has ever seen such irresponsible behaviour from the Opposition with any Prime Minister. Interestingly, this uproar could not stop Modi from speaking for 80-odd minutes and, without naming anyone, he attacked leaders of the Congress and reminded them of their misdeeds and corruption. In Parliament, it must be ensured that MPs have a check on the "good sense" and the Speaker must control the proceedings

Yash Pal Ralhan I Jalandhar

egated to warm-up benches and never given the new ball. But this time, he sparkled with the new ball and a five-for-37 show with an eight-wicket haul. In the process, he had his 31st five-wicket haul and surpassed the 450-wicket tally.

Despite a lion-hearted showing with the bat and ball, he received inadequate recognition for his manifold achievements. Ashwin's mesmeric spells with the ball have at times camouflaged his superb work with the bat as well. It is a tribute to Ashwin's skill and application to various aspects of the game that he has lasted so long despite tough competition. He has a rich variety with various angles and theories. He is a master spinner and a trump card bowler for Team India, which he has proved time again with stellar showings.

Ashwin is an all-weather bowler! CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneér@gmail.com

The LG has started a new trend of reversing decisions taken by the elect-

> **Delhi Deputy CM** Manish Sisodia



US would welcome any effort that could lead to an end of hostilities in Ukraine

White House National Security Council spokesperson — John Kirby

Nawaz sir is being humiliated like this outside his home...he gave his everything to his family...Only last

year he bought this bungalow and now his ex-wife came to claim it, so sad.

> - Kangana Ranaut Good to see legal



taken and a precedent is set for the future. There should be 0% tolerance for any kind of harassment. Football blayer

 Aditi Chauhar We are talking about becoming

vishwa guru. shouldn't the employees of ou country feel secure? This approach should change.

Rajasthan CM

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FIRST COLUMN

UP CHASES INVESTORS BUT PROBLEMS STAY

Poverty and unemployment are still big problems for the state



SHIVAJI SARKAR

nvestment 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 \$1trillion 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

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 Ayadityanth 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 polit-

ical 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



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

ndia's economic resilience lies in the reach of the cooperatives. In the past several decades, the cooperatives have done stellar jobs in empowerwith Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah is 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 for-mulated, involving the relevant stakeholders such as experts, representatives from national, state, district, and primarylevel 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.

(The author is a policy Notably, Sitharaman said in her



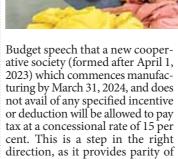
MINISTER OF **FINANCE** NIRMALA SITHARAMAN IN THE BUDGET HAS PROVIDED FOR A MAJOR **PUSH FOR** COOPERATIVES. BUDGET **PROPOSALS** HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO QUALITATIVELY CHANGE THE SCOPE AND IMPACT OF THE **COOPERATIVES**

analyst)

IN THE OVERALL

ECONOMY OF

THE COUNTRY



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-old the weaker

cooperatives.

Now that the startup successes have taken the entrepreneurship to the tier-II and tier-II 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 selfsufficiency and self-reliance in edible oil by promoting the adoption of the Central Governments 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.

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

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 fea-tures, 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



(The author is an

internationally acclaimed

management consultant)

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 defini-

tion 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 evadefforts 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 ed because of the scientific nation-building, or, for that more than nine per cent of the

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 ne majority.

Taking this elaboration further, each conglomerate has its own unique elements, and those too have to be recognized. For example, in India,

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 nation-

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 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 defi-nitions 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.

Russia continues to shell Ukraine | Putin implicated in MH17 flight amid grinding push in east

Russian forces over the week-end continued to shell Ukrainian cities amid a grinding push to seize more land in the east of the country, with Ukrainian officials saying that Moscow is having trouble launching its much-anticipated large-scale offensive there.

One person was killed and one more was wounded on Sunday morning by the shelling of Nikopol, a city in the south eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, Gov. Serhii Lysak reported.

The shelling damaged four residential buildings, a vocational school and a water treat-

In Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, one person was wounded after three Russian S-300 missiles hit infrastructure facilities overnight, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

The Russian military said they hit armored vehicle assembly workshops at the Malyshev machinery plant in the city.

Ukrainian forces also downed five drones - four Shahed killer drones and one



Soldiers of the Ukrainian 3rd Army Assault Brigade of the Special Operations Forces (SSO) 'Azov' rest in a blindage after night fight near Bakhmut. Donetsk region. Ukraine on Saturday

Orlan-10 reconnaissance drone over the partially occupied Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions on Saturday evening, Kyiv's military reported.

Overall, Russian forces carried out 12 missile and 32 air strikes in Ukraine over the past 24 hours, as well as over 90 rounds of shelling from multiple rocket launchers, Ukraine's

General Staff reported in its daily update.

The attacks come as Russian forces push to take over more land in the eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, comprised of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Ukrainian and Western officials have warned that Russia could launch a new,

broad offensive there to try to turn the tide of the conflict as the war approaches the onevear mark

But Ukrainian officials say that Moscow is having trouble mounting such an offensive.

"They are having big problems with a big offensive," Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council, told Ukrainian television on Saturday night.

"They have begun their offensive, they're just not saying they have, and our troops are repelling it very powerfully. The offensive that they planned is already gradually underway. But (it is) not the offensive they were counting on," Danilov said.

A U.S.-based think tank noted that it is also Russia's pro-Kremlin military bloggers who question Moscow's ability to launch a broad offensive in Ukraine.

They "continue to appear demoralised at the Kremlin's prospects for executing a major offensive," the Institute for the Study of War said in its latest

downing, why probe shutting down?

PTI CALLAGHAN

The investigation into the The investigation into the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 has found "strong indications" that Russian President Vladimir Putin authorised the supply of the missiles used by separatists to shoot down the plane. However, the joint investigative team leading the investigation said it has reached the limits of its investigation, largely due to Russia's refusal to cooperate. At this time, it will not initiate further prosecutions.

What investigators looked at On July 17 2014, flight MH17 was travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it was shot down over eastern Ukraine. All 298 peo-

ple onboard were killed. This atrocity shocked the international community and raised many questions of legal responsibility that are still being grappled with today.

One early response was the formation of the joint investigative team, which brought together investigators and prosecutors from five countries most affected by the Russian separatists.

tragedy - The Netherlands, Ukraine, Malaysia, Australia and Belgium. İts role was to carry out the "full, thorough and independent international investigation" called for by the UN Security Council.

The team's work was complex and protracted, particularly as the crash site was located in a conflict zone. It was mid-2015 when the investigators gained proper access to the site in Ukraine. They subsequently ques-

tioned 200 witnesses and intercepted and analysed 3,500 conversations. The team also stud ied 20 weapons systems and scrutinised five billion internet

Ground samples were taken in various international locations and missile launch sites were simulated in the five countries leading the investigation. Thousands of parts from the plane wreckage were examined.

The key initial finding was the plane was shot down by a missile launched by a BUK-TELAR system, located on farmland in an area of Ukraine controlled at the time by pro-

The investigators determined the missile and launcher were transported from Russia before the attack and returned there afterwards.

Dutch criminal prosecution

One important outcome of the team's work was the prosecution of four separatist fighters in the Netherlands. Three of them - Igor Girkin, Sergey Dubinskiy and Leonid Kharchenko - were found guilty last year of bringing down the plane and murdering all 298 people onboard.

Prosecutors did not allege the men had pressed the launch button for the missile, but that they played significant roles in transporting, positioning and returning the missile launcher to Russia. The men received sentences of life imprisonment and were ordered to pay more than 16 million euros (AUSD 24.7 million) in compensation to the victims' families. But since they were tried in absentia, it is highly unlikely any of them will face a real penalty.

(Amy Maguire, Associate Professor in Human Rights and International Law, University of Newcastle.)

between East and West and developed ties with Moscow

during and after the Cold War.

the first Western European

country to import gas from the

In 1968, Austria became

Coolant leak in Russian spacecraft, **ISS** crew safe

AP ■ MOSCOW

An uncrewed Russian supply ship docked at the International Space Station has lost coolant pressure, the Russian space corporation and NASA reported Saturday, saying the incident doesn't pose any danger to the station's

Roscosmos said the hatch between the station and the Progress MS-21 had been locked so the loss of pressure didn't affect the orbiting out-

"The temperature and pressure on board the station are within norms and there is no danger to health and safety of the crew it said in a statement.

The initial statement from Roscosmos left it unclear whether the entire cargo ship or just some of its systems lost pressure, but Sergei Krikalev, head of Roscosmos' crewed programs, later clarified that there was depressurisation of the craft's coolant loop.

NASA said its specialists are assisting their Russian counterparts in the troubleshooting of the coolant leak.

"Officials are monitoring all International Space Station systems and are not tracking any other issues," NASA said. "The crew, which was informed of the cooling loop leak, is in no danger and continuing with normal space station operations."
"Roscosmos didn't say

what may have caused the cargo ship to lose pressure.

"It noted that the cargo ship had already been loaded with waste prior to its scheduled disposal. The craft is set to be undocked from the station and deorbit to burn in the atmosphere on February 18.

The announcement came shortly after a new Russian cargo ship docked smoothly at the station on Saturday. The Progress MS-22 delivered almost three tons of food, water and fuel along with scientific equipment for the crew.

"Roscosmos said that the incident didn't affect the docking of the new cargo ship and will have no impact on the

"The depressurisation of

Neutral Austria under pressure to get tougher on Russia

AP VIENNA

ustria has come under Aheavy criticism for granting visas that will allow sanctioned Russian lawmakers to attend a Vienna meeting of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The issue highlights the

delicate balancing act the European country has engaged in while trying to maintain its longstanding position of military neutrality during the war in Ükraine. The Austrian government

has condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine almost a year ago but also stressed the need to maintain diplomatic relations with Moscow.

Austria hosts several UN agencies and international organisations such as the OSCE, which was established during the Cold War as a forum for dialogue between East and West. Russia is one of the 57 nations in North America, Europe and Asia that participate in the Vienna-based

Moscow plans to send delegates to the February 23-24 meeting of the OSCE's parliamentary assembly, including 15 Russian lawmakers who are under European Union sanctions. Among them are Deputy Duma Chairman Pyotr Tolstoy and fellow parliament member Leonid Slutsky. In a letter to Austria's

chancellor, foreign minister and other officials, 81 OSCE delegates from 20 countries, including France, Canada, Britain, Poland and Ukraine, called upon the Austrian government to prohibit the participation of the sanctioned Russians. "It is important to remem-

ber that Russian parliamentarians are an integral part of the power system and complicit in the crimes Russia commits every day in Ukraine," read the letter, which was seen by The Associated Press.

"They have no place in an institution tasked with promoting sincere dialogue and opposition to the war."

The US delegates to the Parliamentary Assembly were not among the letter's signato-US Ambassador to the

OSCE Michael Carpenter told reporters on Friday that the Russian delegates "are not people who deserve to be able to travel to Western countries". However, Carpenter added that it was "up to the Austrian

government to determine

whether they are going to grant

visas or not". Austrian officials haven't commented on the letter. On February 5, Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg defended Austria's decision to allow the sanctioned Russians to enter the country, arguing it was important to keep channels of communication with Moscow open despite the "bru-

The Austrian Foreign Ministry also insisted that as host to the OSCE headquarters in Vienna, it is legally obliged

Ukraine".

tal Russian attack against



to grant visas to representatives of participating nations who want to take part in meetings

Austria, which became a European Union member in 1995, has criticised Moscow and joined the sanctions the EU imposed against Russia over the invasion of Ukraine. But unlike Finland and

Sweden, which decided to abandon their neutral stances in May by applying to join NATO, Austria remains committed to the military neutrality it adopted in 1955.

The Austrian government has sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine but no weapons. Chancellor Karl Nehammer became the first and so far only President Vladimir Putin faceto-face after the war started. Nehammer travelled to Moscow in April 2022 in a fruitless attempt to persuade the Russian leader to end the Support remains strong for Austrian neutrality among the

EU leader to meet Russian

public and political establish-"I believe that Austrian neutrality can still play a pos-

itive role today," saysid Ralph Janik, an expert in international law and researcher at the Sigmund Freud private university in Vienna. The alternative would be to join NATO, but every single

Austrian politician is very well aware that this is not supported by the majority of the Austrian public."

Austria, which was annexed by Nazi Germany in the run-up to World War II, declared neutrality after the war under pressure from Western allies and the Soviet Union. It sought a role as a mediator Soviet Union, and its dependence on Russian energy increased in the following

decades. Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, 80 per cent of Austria's natural gas came from Russia. It has since reduced the share to just over 20 per cent by turning to Norwegian gas, according to Austria's regulator for electricity and gas. The Austrian banking system is also closely connected to

Russia. Austria's second-largest bank, the Raiffeisenbank International, earned more future station program." than half of its profits in 2022 the cargo craft's coolant loop from Russia. The bank has come under intense pressure follows a similar incident in for continuing its business in

December with the Soyuz crew capsule, which was hit by a tiny meteoroid that left a small hole in the exterior radiator and sent coolant spewing into

Israeli police seal up home of Jerusalem attacker's family

AP ■ JERUSALEM

S ecurity personnel sealed up the family home of a Palestinian man who careened his car into a Jerusalem bus stop, killing three Israelis and injuring several others, Israeli police said on

Police released a video showing police and soldiers welding the doors and windows of the apartment in east Jerusalem shut. The action came after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the dwelling sealed immediately after the Friday attack. It was the first step ahead of the possible demolition of the apartment.

Three Israelis, including brothers aged 8 and 6, were killed Friday when Palestinian driver Hussein Qaraqa



careened into a bus stop in the east Jerusalem settlement of Ramot. Asher and Yaakov Palev's father was one of five people injured in the incident. Qaraqa, 32, was killed by police at the scene.

Addressing the Cabinet on Sunday. Netanyahu said that the "appropriate response to terror is strike it with force and further deepen our roots in our land." He said the government would discuss an "even broader operation

Police had arrested and interrogated Qaraqa's family almost immediate-

against the perpetrators of terrorism" in

ly after he carried out Friday's deadly attack. It said that a court had extend ed the detention of his two brothers and

that the investigation was ongoing. Qaraqa's family said he had been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder and had been released from a hospital just two days before the incident.

Israel says demolishing Palestinian attackers' homes serves as a deterrent meant to prevent future attacks. But human rights groups say the practice amounts to collective punishment and leaves relatives who had nothing to do with the attack homeless.

Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its the occupied West Bank and east undivided capital, while the Palestinians seek east Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, as capital of a future state.

Pope worried about Nicaraguan Bishop sentenced to 26 years

Russia despite Moscow's war

against Ukraine, and is cur-

rently evaluating strategic

options, including an exit from

AP VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis on Sunday expressed sadness and worry at the news that Roman Catholic Bishop Roland Álvarez, an outspoken critic of the Nicaraguan government, had been sentenced to 26 years in prison in the latest move against the Catholic Church and government opponents.

Álvarez was sentenced Friday, after refusing to get on a flight to the United States with 222 other prisoners, all opponents of President Daniel

In addition to his prison



term, Álvarez was stripped of his Nicaraguan citizenship.

"The news that arrived from Nicaragua has saddened me no little," the pontiff told the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square for the traditional Sunday blessing, expressing both his love and concern

He called on the faithful to pray for the politicians responsible "to open their hearts.

Álvarez was arrested in August along with several other priests and lay people. Ortega ordered the mass release of political leaders, priests, students and activists widely considered political prisoners and had some of them put on a flight to Washington Thursday.

Ortega said Álvarez refused to board without being able to consult with other bish-

Harley-Davidson

becomes priciest

Arare Harley-Davidson motorcycle built in 1908

has become the most expensive

motorcycle ever sold at auction,

according to data compiled by

a website that tracks vintage

motorcycle sales. The Strap

Tank Harley-Davidson was

recorded on vintagent.Com as being sold for USD 935,000

after auction fees last month at

the Mecum Auction in Las Vegas, The Milwaukee Journal

Tank because its oil and fuel

tanks are attached to the frame

The bike was named Strap

Sentinel reported Friday.

bike at auction

from 1908

AP MILWAUKEE

Tens of thousands of Israelis join anti-govt protests

AP TEL AVIV

rens of thousands of Israelis **⊥** took to the street in several cities across the country Saturday, protesting judicial overhaul plans by Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

Critics say measures introduced by the new hard-line government would weaken the Supreme Court, limit judicial oversight and grant more power to politicians.

Protesters say that would undermine democracy

The rift over the power of courts is deepening as the government is set to introduce some of the legislations in parliament Monday amid calls for partial strikes by businesses and professional groups. For the sixth week, protesters pressed on with large rallies, with the main one in the central city of Tel Aviv and several smaller gatherings in other cities.

Diplomats battle it out in runoff for Cyprus' presidency

AP NICOSIA

Polls opened on Sunday in a runoff to elect ethnically split Cyprus' new president, pitting a former foreign minister who campaigned as a unifier eschewing ideological and party divisions against a popular veteran diplo-

Some 561,000 citizens are eligible to vote, and both Nikos Christoulides, the ex-foreign minister, and Andreas Mavroyiannis are hoping for a higher turnout than the 72 per cent who cast ballots in the first round a week ago.

Christodoulides, 49, garnered 32 per cent of the vote in the first round, while Mavroyiannis, 66, clinched second place with a surprisingly strong 29.6. Per cent. Key to who will emerge the ultimate win-

ner will be which way voters of the country's largest center-right Democratic Rally (DISY) party will swing after their leader, Averof Nephytou, failed to make it into the runoff. The DISY leadership decided not to for-

mally back either candidate and left it to members to vote as they saw fit. The party appeared divided over the two

GOP poll tactics no surprise to Wisconsin's **Black voters AP** MILWAUKEE

R ecent revelations about Republican election strategies targeting minority communities in Wisconsin's biggest city came as no surprise to many Black voters.

Á Wisconsin election commissioner bragged about low turnout in predominantly Black and Latino neighbourhoods during last year's elections. Weeks later, an audio recording surfaced that showed then-President Donald Trump's Wisconsin campaign team laughing behind closed doors about efforts to reach Black voters in 2020. Many people who voted this past week in the state's primary election said they had long felt targeted by Republicans. The difference now is the public display of strategies that at best ignore the priorities of Black voters and at worst actively look to keep them from voting.

"It's a plan that they devised and carried out with quite a lot of precision," said lifelong Milwaukee resident Dewayne Walls, 63. "It's a repeatable pattern that's going to continue to happen over and over as long as they have that plausible deniability and as long as they have the power in Madison" — the state capital.

4 city inspectors slain at Mexico's Playa del Carmen resort

AP MEXICO CITY

The tortured bodies of four The tortured bodies of four municipal employees were found on Saturday stuffed into a vehicle in Mexico's Caribbean coast resort of Playa del Carmen.

Prosecutors in the Caribbean coast state of Quintana Roo said identified the victims as city employees, but gave no additional details. Local officials later con-

firmed the four were municipal inspectors, and said their bodies showed signs of torture. Playa del Carmen has long had a problem with illicit busi nesses, drug sales at shops and

beach front restaurants taking over the beach zone. City inspectors are supposed to enforce local codes at such establishments

London resident group pledges to fight on for Indian man facing deportation

PTI ■ LONDON

Aresidents' group from south-east London has pledged to fight on after a beloved community member" lauded by the late Queen's representative for his services over the Covid pandemic lost a legal visa battle and now faces deportation to India.

The Rotherhithe Residents group have gathered over 177,000 signatures through an online petition in support of Vimal Pandya, who came to the UK from India on a student visa but was left in limbo after his education institution lost its licence to sponsor foreign stu-

The 42-year-old lost a hearing at the immigration lawyers for a way forward.

tribunal recently and is now said to be in talks with his We are devastated. He is

UK Border Force officials informed him that the college at which he was enrolled had

informed him of this

devastated. But we will not give up the fight, if any path forward can be found," the residents said in a Change.Org petition update last week

"Vimal has always shown how much he cares about the Rotherhithe community where he's lived for 11 years. So many of us have benefited from his help and support over the years, which is why we are fighting to stop him being unjustly deported," they say.

Having arrived in the UK from India in 2011 to study, Pandya was refused re-entry following a return home in April 2014 to take a seriously ill relative back to her parents.

with nickel straps. The bike is believed to be one of only 12 lost its right to sponsorship, but neither the college nor the Home Office had reportedly

USD 715,000 after fees but didn't go for as much as the record-setting 1908 Strap Tank because it was never restored.

such models in the world. A 1907 Strap Tank sold for

Turkiye Govt detain building contractors

Toll crossses 33K mark

Turkish justice officials tar-T geted 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 includes an area of Syria that was already suffering from years of civil war.

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



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

Turkish Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag 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.

Bozdag 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

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.

B'desh president

Negligence of security forces reason

for rising terror attacks in Pak: Imran

'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 vernment 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

transgender was killed and Atwo 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.

China Sea amid tensions with China **AP** ■ BEIJING he U.S. Navy and Marine

US holds drills in South

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

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 governmentbacked 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

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.

▼mran Khan has said the out-

allowed to flourish because of

the "negligence" of the country's security forces, as the for-

April 2022, made these com-

In the interview, Khan, 70,

strongly defended his govern-

TTP, and we're talking about

30, [30,000] to 40,000 people,

you know, the families includ-

ed, 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

lawed Pakistani Taliban was

"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 tweet-

"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 build-

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



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

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

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 threemonth 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

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

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 in delivering assistance to the hardest-hit region for what they suspect are both political and religious reasons.

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

At the same building complex, Abdullah Tas, 66, said he Turkiye's government was late near the building where his son, daughter-in-law and four grandchildren were buried.

Shahabuddin In Adiyaman, southeastern Chuppu set to Turkiye, Élif Busra Ozturk become next

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

for the top post.

President Mohammad Abdul Hamid, whose tenure ends on

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

September in Samarkand,

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

China is a major buyer of Iranian oil and an important source of investment in the Mideast country. In 2021, Iran The two leaders met last strategic cooperation agreement that covered major eco-

Bolsonaro says he may return to Brazil in coming weeks

Brasilia: Former President Jair the following weeks.

The comment during an that Bolsonaro has made a returning home.

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

Bolsonaro said Saturday he intends to return to Brazil "in

event at an evangelical church in Florida was the first time statement in public about



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

Standing under a portrait 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 mem-

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-



ferences 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 gover-nors in ball gowns, tuxedos and sparkles. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer sat near Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. Maryland Gov. Wes Moore and New York Gov. Hochul, both Kathy 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-

Cambodian leader shuts down independent media outlet

AP ■ PHNOM PENH

ambodia'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 organisa-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 unin-

tentional 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 inde-



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

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

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

nationally known rivals and is likely to become one of the most expensive Senate 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 lowerincome neighbourhoods. She said such areas are often over-

California 2024 US Senate contest kicks off at furious pace

Porter, a leader in Congress' progres-

sive wing, built a reputation for her tough questioning of CEOs and other witnesses at congressional hearings — often using a

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

looked in Washington and Sacramento, where residents' complaints about unhealthy conditions go unheard.

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

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.

her future has created a publicly awkward

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 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

 $N^{\mathrm{ew}\, \mathrm{Zealand's}}$ 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

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,

downgraded as the cyclone slowed. Gusts

"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

strong winds and large waves.



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

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

Tndia'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

The earthquakes also caused damage to the infra-structure 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 Kahramanmaras 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.

In 2021-22, India's exports to Turkey stood at about \$9 bilon, while imports aggregated at \$2 billion in the same fiscal.

The major Indian exports to Turkiye include mineral oils and fuels, man-made filaments and staple fibres, automotive spare parts and accessories, organic chemicals.

Turkiye's exports to India include broken/unbroken poppy seeds; machinery and mechanical appliances, iron and steel articles thereof, inorganic chemicals, pearls and precious/semi-precious stones and metals (including imitation jewellery), and marble.

The Indian community in Turkive is small, mostly working in business establishments and universities in Istanbul

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined valuation of The complined valued 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.

crore to stand at ₹5,95,885.63 The mcap of HDFC Bank dipped by ₹1,255 crore to

₹9,23,933.45 crore and that of

ICICI Bank lost ₹6,863.37

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

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

'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 glob-al markets and foreign fund movement, analysts said.

Participants will also mon itor developments related to the Adani Group crisis, which has been a major overhang recent-ly, 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

 $S_{(\text{OIL}) \text{ reported its highest}}^{\text{tate-owned Oil India Ltd}}$ 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 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

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

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

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 I 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

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



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

rose 14 per cent to ₹28,500 Dwarka in the national

from ₹25,000 per month. 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

The equity ownership of **■** domestic investors, including institutions and high networth 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 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 dom-

Net inflows from domestic institutional investors (DIIs) stood at ₹27,134 crore during 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 lower than FII holding.

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

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

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

crore, 110 per cent higher than its earning in the third quarter of the previous fiscal. Two other lenders whose profit growth was higher than

which posted a profit of ₹653

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

102 per cent increase at ₹1,396

crore for the October-December period of 2022. All 12 PSBs cumulatively

earned a profit of ₹29,175 crore in the third quarter of the current financial year, as against ₹17,729 crore in the same period a year ago, recording a jump of 65 per cent. For the first nine months of

the current financial year, PSBs have earned a cumulative profit of ₹70,166 crore as compared to ₹48,983 crore in the year-ago period, an increase of 43 per

cumulative profit of about ₹15,306 crore in the first quarter, which increased to ₹25,685 crore in the September quarter and ₹29,175 crore in the three months to December.

subsidiaries with Tata Steel to be complete by FY24' PTI ■ NEW DELHI

'Merger of seven

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

In September 2022, Tata Steel board had approved a proposal to merge six of its sub-sidiaries 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 financial year, the CEO

"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

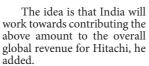
enablers that support integrating technologies using digital as the catalyst including Artificial Intelligence (AI), hydrogen, and energy storage, will become an important growth driver. We aim to have a higher double-digit profit to the overall Hitachi's consolidated



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 bil-



"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 has been playing a significant role in accelerating India's journey towards achieving a carbon-neutral environ-

"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

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

 $F^{\text{oreign investors continue to}}_{\text{desert Indian stock markets}}$ 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 depositories showed.

net investment of ₹11,119 crore in December and ₹36,238 crore in November.

Prior to that, they made a

Going ahead, FPIs flow are expected to remain volatile as

Indian equities given the

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



increase in rate by central banks, Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities, said.

"I expect this flow (out-

flow) 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," Srivastava, Himanshu Associate Director - Manager

Research, Morningstar India,

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.

bookings and cash flows have

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

Hyundai Motor India is looking to tap growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

opportunities in the rural areas with rise in demand for aspirational products like sports utility vehicles and featurerich models, according to company's Chief Operating Officer Tarun Garg.

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

more sales outlets and also initiatives like deployment of mobile service vans. The automaker's sales out-

er towns and rural areas with

lets 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

"Almost 18 per cent of our



16.5 per cent. So, we have

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

improved on that front. We

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.

 $R^{\mathrm{ealty}\ \mathrm{firm}\ \mathrm{Macrotech}}_{\mathrm{Developers}\ \mathrm{Ltd}\ \mathrm{will}\ \mathrm{deliv}}$ er 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



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 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 On debt, Lodha said sales

been very strong so far this fiscal year, resulting in reduction in debt by ₹753 crore in the December quarter to ₹8,042 "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 some-

time 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.

sent Kumar Kartikeya (6), Avesh Khan (0) and Gaurav Yadav (0) packing to bag a superb fivewicket 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 Thereafter, Pramanik also 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

With Karnataka looking poised to defend a paltry 100plus 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

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- the second innings.

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

But, thereafter, the 22-yearold 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

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.

and Koushik.

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



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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Pace bowler Jaydev Unadkat 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.

31-year-old The 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 Unadkat 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 now join the Saurashtra squad, which

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.

Unadkat 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, Unadkar 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. Unadkat was the highest wicket-taker during the season with 67

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ustress 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 threegamer 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-yearold told Badminton World Federation.

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

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

"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. India, who did not make the knockout stages at the previous edition in 2019 in Hong Kong, have been drawn in Group B alongside hosts UAE, frontrunners Malaysia and Kazakhstan.

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

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 Indian Shai Hoe to bolster its batting

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

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 due to his commitment with the Afghanistan national team.

Englishman Sam Billings and West



However, Lahore has drafted in 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

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

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

Englishman James Vince might not

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 All 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 against Lahore on Monday.

South African pair of Rilee Rossouw and David Miller, Shan Masood and skipper Mohammad

the batting lineup, but its bowling resources look thin this year with Shahnawaz Dahani and tall legspinner 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 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-Rizwan carry enough experience in offs and the final on March 19.

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

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

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

NAMES: DC, MI, RCB, Gujarat Giants	s,	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	

NAME OF AUCTIONEER: Malika Sagar Nb: 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

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

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

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



Real win record fifth Club World Cup title

 $R^{\rm eal\ Madrid\ lifted\ the\ Club}_{\rm World\ Cup\ for\ a\ record}$ 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

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 cham-

pions 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

xperienced 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

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

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 widish deliveries to the

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

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

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

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 aggres-

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.

as well. We want to try to go hard up front and today was a big step to do that in a big tournament.'

to do," said Knight.

"That's exactly what we want

"We want to be fearless and

If England were impressive,

Australia were even more so as they shone in all departments. They overcame tricky batting conditions on a pitch showing

Alyssa Healy top-scored with take the game on - and entertain 55 off 38 balls with skipper Meg

days of the tournament.

signs of wear to make 173 for nine,

the highest total of the first two

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 offspinner 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

erplay 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 over.

AP ■ WELLINGTON

the game.

of his daughter.

Veteran England seamer

V Stuart Broad says coach Brendon McCullum's focus

reduced to 58 for 3 at the halfway

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

Broad hails McCullum's

England impact

Alcaraz plays catch-up after four months out

Carlos Alcaraz returns to Caction 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

The 19-year-old Spanish sensation captured a maiden Grand Slam title at the US Open last year before going ie the younge 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

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 500level trophies in Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona.

was a very 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 for-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

Wu Yibing stunned topseeded 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

Nagpur Test exposed Australia's weakness against spin: Chappell

 $T^{\text{he legendary Ian Chappell}}_{\text{feels Australia's capitulation}}$ 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

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 "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

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



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

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

win the Border-Gavaskar

Trophy suffered a big blow after

Australia's aspiration to

on Sunday.

Labuschagne and Steve Smith showed, but Australia failed to post a testing first-innings

Delhi Test: Reports

"The media making allega-

by an innings and 132 runs

inside three days on Saturday.

poor form in the subcontinent

continued as he got out for 1

and 10 in the two innings as

Australia struggled to get a

Seasoned opener Warner's

nothing new. Players need to ignore this little game or else it has a debilitating effect on the visiting team.
"Far too much emphasis is

tions about pitch-doctoring is

put on how pitches are going to play and on doctoring. It's worth remembering that both teams have to play on the same pitch," he added.

He said India currently the ability to win in any condi-

"The reality is that India have developed into a very strong side all round the world, with a special feel for how to win at home," the 79-year-old

for 91 in the second essay, their

Australian team confirmed

those discussions were contin-

uing after Warner's double fail-

ure in the first Test," reported

arm finger spinner Matt

Kuhnemann also has a

"chance" to make his Test debut

in New Delhi after being sum-

moned to India as a replace-

ment for reserve leg-spinner

It further added that left-

'Sydney Morning Herald'.

"Sources close to the

lowest total in India.

returning to the England setup under former Black Caps captain McCullum had been a pleasure. Riding high on the back of **Head may replace Warner**

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

The 36-year-old said

"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



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 cap-

tain, 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.

the visitors lost the Nagpur Test good start and were bowled out Mitch Swepson. ATP final in the Open Era. improve and to be able to start unexpectedly, it turned out to 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 preplanned 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.

"If we play three spinners then we clearly want back-up here and available in the squad if that's the way we

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 realy excited to get over there.

"I was fortunate enough to stay with the Test guys and bowl to them in the nets in Sri Lanka, so that's still



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 said. 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

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,

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

McDonald said.

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

"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 expec-