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MAN CITY BEAT ARSENAL 3-1 IN PL CLASH
11 SPORT

Over 81% turnout in Tripura polls

Bru refugees cast votes for first time, three hurt in election related violence

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Tripura recorded over 81 per cent polling till 4 PM in the one-day election to the 60-member Tripura Assembly on Thursday, a senior EC official said. The voting percentage will increase as around 50,000 voters are still standing in queues at the polling stations to exercise their franchise, the official said.

"Till 4 PM, an average 81.11 per cent polling was recorded in all the 60 Assembly constituencies, while around 50,000 voters are still in queues when the report came in last," Additional Chief Electoral Officer UJ Mog told PTI. Voters who are in the queues and took tokens by 4 PM will be allowed to cast their votes even after 6 PM or beyond, he added. Final turnout figures will be known by Friday, the Election Commission said. No complaints have been received so far by the EC demanding repolling, EC officials said.

Bru refugees who resettled in the State recently took part in the polling for the first time. Of the total 37,136 Bru population in the State 14,005 are eligible to vote.

Voting began at 7 AM in all



Voters show their inked fingers after casting their vote at a polling booth during the Tripura Assembly elections, in North Tripura district, on Thursday. PTI

the 3,337 polling stations and gained pace as the day progressed. The election was marred by a few untoward incidents. Police said three CPI(M) activists were injured in two incidents.

"Three CPI(M) activists were injured in two separate attacks at Kakraban in Gomati district and Boxanagar in Sepahijala district. The EC received some complaints and reports of threats and intimidation to the voters. These were addressed in a professional manner," Mog said.

Continued on Page 2

EC notice to Cong, BJP for election-day tweets

New Delhi: The Chief Electoral Officer of Tripura on Thursday issued notices to the State units of the Congress and the BJP as well as BJP national general secretary Dilip Saikia for seeking votes on Twitter when polling was underway in the northeastern State.

The Election Commission said the tweets are violative of election law as they were made in the 48 hour "silence period"

which began on Tuesday evening. They have been given an opportunity "to take corrective action at the earliest". They have also been asked to explain their stands for the violation by 5 PM on Friday.

In its notice to Saikia, the Tripura CEO said, "... An appeal for vote in favour of BJP has been tweeted from your handle at 0950 hours on 16.02.2023." Contd on Page 2

Assembly polls: 20-fold rise in seizures in Tripura, Meghalaya; EC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) has seized cash, liquor, drugs, and freebies worth over ₹147.84 crore which is 20 times higher than the previous Assembly polls in 2018 in three States Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland. While Tripura went to polls on Thursday, Meghalaya and Nagaland will have Assembly elections on February 27. The poll body had seized ₹7.24 crore in the 2018 Assembly polls in these three poll-bound States.

The EC data showed that of the total ₹147.84 crore seizures, ₹14.05 crore are as cash, 309,817 litre liquor worth ₹9.31 crore, drugs worth ₹85.76 crore, freebies worth ₹34.39 crore and precious metals worth ₹4.32 crore. According to the EC, the seizures in the three States saw an increase of over 20 times as compared to the Assembly elections in 2018.

"Increased seizures are being witnessed under all heads—cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals and freebies," the EC said.

In Tripura, the enforcement agencies of the EC seized ₹44.67 crore including ₹3.44 crore cash and 140,693 litre liquor worth ₹2.58 crore. Continued on Page 2

There shall be a tomorrow only if there is water: PM

Modi launches 'Jal Jan Abhiyan', says we have to revive connect with nature

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday flagged water security as a major concern and called for the revival of the country's "emotional connection" with nature, what he said the world's calls "sustainable development".

Modi was launching the Jal Jan Abhiyan, a joint nationwide campaign by Brahma Kumaris and the Union Jal Shakti Ministry. The Prime Minister addressed the event through video conference at the Brahma Kumaris' Abu Road headquarters in Rajasthan's Sirohi district.

He said conserving water should be a collective concern, and raised concerns over water pollution and the depletion of groundwater.

The awareness campaign will be held across the country for eight months, targeting 10 crore people. "Due to such a large population, water security is an important concern for India. It is a shared responsibility of all of us," he said.

"There shall be a tomorrow only if there is water, and for



Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers a video message at the launch of 'Jal-Jan Abhiyan' by Brahma Kumaris on Thursday. PTI

this we have to make joint efforts from today," Modi said. He said water conservation has been a part of India's spirituality for thousands of years. "That's why we term water as god, call rivers mother."

"When a society makes such an emotional connect with nature, the world calls it sustainable development," Modi said. He said when the country is looking for solutions to the challenges of the future, this consciousness from the past has to be revived. "We have to recreate the same faith among countrymen towards the value of water conservation," he said. Without naming anyone, Modi said in the past

decades, there has been negativity towards issues like water conservation and environment protection. Some people had assumed that these tasks are so big that they cannot be tackled at all, he said. "But in the last eight or nine years, the country has changed this mindset and the conditions have also changed," he said, naming Namami Gange river conservation scheme as an example. The scheme has emerged as a model for different States, he added. Modi said falling groundwater level is a big challenge.

Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat attended the event.

Deal gets bigger as AI orders 840 planes with 370 optional buys

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Group-owned Air India's deal with the two aircraft makers, Airbus and Boeing, to buy 470 aircraft is being hailed as the largest deal in the history of civil aviation, but it seems like this number could go up to as high as 840.

The announcement by Air India's Chief Commercial and Transformation Officer Nipun Aggarwal comes a day after the airline said it has placed a firm order for 470 aircraft - 250 from Airbus and 220 from Boeing. In a post on the professional networking site LinkedIn, Aggarwal wrote that the airline has ordered a total of 840 planes from Airbus and Boeing including 370 optional buys.

This means Air India has the option to buy an additional 370 planes from the aircraft manufacturers Boeing and Airbus. "The order comprises of 470 firm aircraft, 370 options and purchase rights to be procured from Airbus and Boeing



over the next decade. The Airbus firm order comprises 210 A-320XLR / XLR and 40 A350-900/1000. The Boeing firm order comprises 190 737-Max, 20 787s and 10 777s. We have also signed up for long term maintenance of the engines with CFM International, Rolls-Royce and GE Aerospace," his LinkedIn post read.

"This order is also a testament to the tremendous economic potential unleashed by the Air India privatisation," he stated. "We would like to thank the teams at Airbus, Boeing, CFM, GE and Rolls Royce for their wonderful support during the campaign. We are proud to have built deep relationships and laid solid foundation for long-lasting partnerships," the

post read. This was also the first time in more than 17 years that Air India, which was acquired from the Government by Tata Group in January 2022, has ordered planes. The first A350 plane will be delivered to the airline by the end of this year.

Aggarwal on Thursday said the order demonstrates the vision and aspiration of Tata Group to transform Air India into a world-class airline and connect India "non-stop" to every major city in the world. "This order is also a testament to the tremendous economic potential unleashed by the Air India privatisation," he said, adding that it is indeed a landmark moment in the history of Air India and Indian aviation. This is Boeing's third biggest sale in dollar value and second biggest sale in terms of quantity.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Air India-Airbus transaction as a "landmark deal" that also reflects the deepening ties between India and France.

Continued on Page 2

IT 'survey' at BBC offices ends after 60 hours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The income tax "survey" at the BBC's Delhi and Mumbai offices ended on Thursday night after nearly 60 hours of officials going through digital records and files. Some 10 employees, including the senior editors of Britain's largest public broadcaster, returned home after spending three days at the office in central Delhi's Kasturba Gandhi Marg. The Income Tax Department is likely to give a statement on Friday. It has not issued any statement so far.

The tax officials have cloned the mobile phones of several BBC senior employees and scanned their desktops and laptops, sources have said.

The action is being undertaken to investigate issues related to international taxation and transfer pricing of BBC subsidiary companies in India, officials had said on Tuesday when the move was initiated.

The survey teams are gathering details and documentary trails on financial transactions, the company structure and other inputs about the news company, and are copying data from electronic gadgets as part of their task of collecting the evidence, officials had said.

Denouncing the IT Department's action against Britain's national broadcaster, the Opposition has dubbed the move as "political vendetta". On Tuesday, the ruling BJP had accused the BBC of "venomous reporting" while the Opposition had questioned the timing of the action that came weeks after the London-headquartered broadcaster aired a two-part controversial documentary 'India: The Modi Question'.

The BBC, has been on record saying it was cooperating with the authorities. The survey operation has reportedly not affected the news broadcasting by the BBC.

Police verification for passport in 5 days for Delhiites: Shah

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

People residing in Delhi will no longer have to wait for 15 days to get police verification of their passports. Now, they will get passport clearance within five days.

"People living in Delhi will no longer have to worry about their passports as they will now get the police clearance within five days as against the earlier 15 days. A facility for passport verification through mobile phones and tablet computers has been launched. On an average, 2,000 applications for passports are received on a daily basis and their online processing will reduce the problems faced by people," said Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

At an event to mark the 76th Raising Day celebrations of the Delhi Police here, Shah inaugurated the complete online facility of passport verification — mPassport Seva —



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora inspects the 76th Raising Day parade of the Delhi Police, at the New Police Lines, in New Delhi on Thursday. Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

and also dedicated mobile forensic vehicles inducted in the Delhi Police to the people. He also paid tributes to ASI Shambhu Dayal, who was stabbed to death by a snatcher in west Delhi's Mayapuri last month.

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CAPSULE

ACTRESS RAQUEL WELCH DIES AFTER BRIEF ILLNESS

Washington: Raquel Welch, the US actress who starred in over 30 films including 'Fantastic Voyage' and 'The Three Musketeers' as well as some 50 television series in a career spanning 50 years, passed away on Thursday. She was 82. Welch helped reshape the traditional image of the Hollywood sex symbol in an era when the movie industry was still overtly defining an idealized version of sensuality for mass consumption. She "passed away peacefully" after "a brief illness," her manager said in a statement.

LOKAYUKTA APPOINTED IN DELHI, HC INFORMED

New Delhi: The Delhi Government on Thursday informed the Delhi High Court about the appointment of the Lokayukta in the national Capital and said with this a plea seeking a direction with regard to the appointment of the ombudsman has become infructuous.

SWARA BHASKAR TIES THE KNOT IN MUMBAI

Mumbai: Outspoken Bollywood actress Swara Bhaskar registered her wedding with politician Fahad Ahmad in Mumbai on Thursday evening in a low key affair.

Fans attack Shaw, car for refusing a selfie

Eight booked for extortion, rioting, says Mumbai Police

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Oshiwara police on Thursday booked eight people, including a woman, for allegedly attacking cricketer Prithvi Shaw after he refused to pose for a selfie with them near a five-star hotel in north-west Mumbai. The incident took place when Shaw and his friend Ashish Surendra Yadav had gone to a five-star hotel at Santa Cruz for dinner on Wednesday night. While Shaw and his friend were having dinner, two persons came to them and requested the cricketer to pose for a selfie with them, to which he obliged. Minutes later, more people from the same group came to Shaw and demanded that he pose for selfies with them too. However, Shaw refused, saying that they had come to the restaurant for a quiet dinner and they did



Cricketer Prithvi Shaw reacts towards a group of people who allegedly turned violent after Shaw refused them for selfies, in Mumbai, in the wee hours of Wednesday. PTI

not want to be disturbed. After the duo came out of the restaurant after finishing the dinner, the accused — who were waiting outside — attacked with them baseball bats and smashed the windows of the car in which they were leaving. Somehow Shaw managed to escape from the scene of the attack without any injuries.

After the cricketer's friend lodged a complaint with the Oshiwara police station, eight people, including a woman, were booked for various offences under Sections 143, 148, 149, 384, 437, 504, 506) for unlawful assembly, rioting, extortion, intentional insult and other offences against the eight accused. In his complaint, the cricketer's friend stated that one woman was part of the group that attacked the cricketer and him, demanding ₹50,000 from him, after threatening that she would file false charges against them if they failed to pay up the money.

Shaw, a right-handed opening batsman who plays for Mumbai in Ranji trophy and Delhi capitals in the Indian Premier League made his international cricket debut for India in 2018.



Folk artists perform during the inauguration of 'Aadi Mahotsav' - National Tribal Festival by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

Process to scrap 15-yr-old Govt vehicles starts: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has started the process for scrapping its vehicles that are older than 15 years and sought their details and registration numbers, officials said on Thursday.

In a meeting earlier this month, Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar had directed all departments to scrap government vehicles that were older than 15 years.

He had asked the general administration department to ensure that the process is done according to the policy of central government.

"The Delhi government onboarded on the national portal for establishing registered vehicle scrapping facilities," Delhi Transport Commissioner Ashish Kundra said in a tweet.

The Centre has asked states and union territories for scrap-



ping government vehicles older than 15 years, the officials said. They said all such vehicles will not be able to remain operational as their certificate of registration will expire.

Different departments have been asked to furnish details of such vehicles so that the next step can be taken, an official of the general administration department said.

The transport department has also urged the Centre for deputing an officer of the Metal

Scrap Trade Corporation for coordinating with it over scrapping of the vehicles, a senior officer of the department said.

The departments have been asked to appoint their nodal officers for scrapping work to be undertaken in the right earnest, he said.

There are no scrapping facilities for old vehicles in Delhi.

Officials, however, said there are eight such units in different parts of the National Capital Region (NCR) in Haryana and in Uttar Pradesh.

Some of these are registered with their respective state governments while the others are in the process of doing so, they said.

Kundra said Delhi is perhaps the biggest market for scrapping of old vehicles in the country, and scrapping units can be opened in the city after approval of the industry department.

ED launches raids in Divyang SC, ST scholarship scam

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Sleuths of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted raids at several places in connection with the Divyang Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes scholarship bungling case on Thursday.

The raids were being conducted at several medical institutions located in about 15 cities of Uttar Pradesh, including Lucknow, Sitapur and Farrukhabad.

Residential premises of Dr Om Prakash Gupta, a physician based in Farrukhabad, was also covered in the raid. ED officials also raided HYGIA Institute in Lucknow, which is owned by Lucky Jaffrey. In 2017, the Divyang SC and ST scholarship scam came to light and a probe was ordered into it.

The Vigilance Department



took up the investigation of the case after registering an FIR. Later, the case was taken up by the ED for further probe as their preliminary inquiry suggested possibilities of money laundering. After the registration of the case against the medical colleges charged under the scam, ED had issued notices to these medical institutions.

It is learnt the ED has sought documents pertaining to students enrolled between 2013 to 2017 and the fees paid by those students during their course of study in these institutions.

No desire to become PM, says Nitish

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday said that he has no desire to become Prime Minister voicing disapproval of slogans raised by workers of his JD(U).

Kumar, who has become a strong votary of opposition unity since he parted ways with the BJP in August last year, was replying to queries from journalists about chants of 'Nitish for PM' from JD(U) workers off and on.

"I keep telling them not to do so. I have no such wish," said Kumar, who is being accused by the BJP of having betrayed the mandate of the last Assembly polls for pursuing his own national ambitions.

Kumar, who is now with the multi-party Mahagathbadhan, was also asked about the possibility of expansion of his Cabinet in the near future.

Conman Sukesh held again in new money laundering case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested alleged conman Sukesh Chandrashekhar in a fresh money laundering case linked to duping former Religare promoter Malvinder Singh's wife by posing as Union Home and Law secretaries.

Chandrashekhar, 33, was taken into custody under criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) from a local jail on Thursday evening and a Delhi court later sent him to nine-day ED custody. The federal probe agency had sought 14-day custody of the alleged conman from the court of Additional Sessions Judge Shailender Malik.

Chandrashekhar's lawyer Anant Malik told the court that



custodial interrogation of his client was not required as the case was registered in September 2021 and he had been called to unearth the money trail in the case at a "belated stage"

Political crisis like Maha's erupts when elected Govt is toppled: Uddhav Sena tells SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena told the Supreme Court on Thursday the constitutional issues that the June 2022 Maharashtra political crisis raised were not merely academic as they will arise time and again when elected Governments are toppled. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Shiv Sena Thackeray faction, argued before a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud that manipulations are being allowed within legislative parties to topple governments which is contrary to Tenth schedule.

"This is not about today. This is about tomorrow. It will arise time and again. This issue will arise time and again. Elected governments will be toppled. No democracy in the world allows this to happen. So please don't say this is academic. I beg of you. Do not allow Tenth schedule to topple an elected government. It is not just a narrow interpretation," Sibal told the bench which

also comprised justices MR Shah, Krishna Murari, Hima Kohli and PS Narasimha.

The top court, which reserved its judgment on the issue of reference to a larger bench, said one of the aspects to be considered is whether the 2016 Nabam Rebba judgment was applicable at all to the case at hand. "The resignation of the Chief Minister (Thackeray) obviated the floor test...So the voting pattern was not revealed...So does Nabam Rebba arise? ... Of course, interesting proposition... But can the court venture into this area without facts?" the CJ observed.

Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, appearing for the Shinde faction, submitted that the 2016 Nabam Rebba judgment was the correct law and there was no reason to refer it to a larger bench in the facts of this case. In 2016, a five-judge constitution bench, while deciding the Nabam Rebba case of Arunachal Pradesh, had held that the assembly speaker cannot proceed with a plea for disqualification of MLAs if a prior notice seeking removal of the speaker is pending decision in the House.

Police verification for passport in 5 days for...

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"I pay tribute to ASI Shambhu Dayal whose supreme sacrifice brought tears to everyone's eyes," he said.

Dayal (57) was stabbed multiple times by a man he nabbed for allegedly snatching a mobile phone in Mayapuri. Dayal fought for his life for four days, but succumbed to injuries on January 8. "The year 2023 is very important for the Delhi Police. From the point of view of security and traffic system during the G20 summit, the city police will have to stay alert since the heads of several countries will be here," he said.

Pointing out that the city police has received mobile forensic vans now, Shah said, "In the coming days, the Delhi Police will become the first police force in the country to investigate every crime punishable with six years in jail and more by the visit of a forensic team.

"There is a great need to strengthen the country's judicial system on the basis of forensic science evidence. When this vehicle, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and 14 different types of forensic kits, would visit the crime scene, the conviction rate will significantly increase."

The Home Minister pointed out that a modern building built at

a cost of Rs 34 crore for educational facilities on the NFSU's Delhi campus has also been inaugurated.

"This building, spread over an area of more than 5,000 square metres, would help the students and provide them a good environment for studies and research. Ninety modern hostel rooms are available in the building. In the coming days, forensic investigation would play a very important role in the process of justice dispensation," he said.

Shah said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Government is going to introduce "radical" changes in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Evidence Act in the days to come.

"These three laws would be brought in accordance with the time and spirit of the Constitution and would be further strengthened with the availability of forensic and other evidence to strengthen internal security. For this, the network of forensic science has to be spread across the country," he said.

Shah said the Delhi Police has started the trial of one of these reforms, under which a forensic science team's visit is being made mandatory for every crime punishable with six years in jail and more.

The Home Minister also said after the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution in 2019, Jammu and Kashmir has seen a huge change with a reduction in terror activities and resumption of tourism.

Deal gets bigger...

From Page 1

The Prime Minister, along with US President Joe Biden, also welcomed the landmark agreement between Air India and Boeing as a shining example of mutually beneficial cooperation.

The current 470-aircraft order is the largest placed by an airline in one go anywhere in the world, beating the 2011 order by American Airlines for a combined 460 aircraft. The biggest order by an Indian carrier before this was IndiGo's 300-aircraft order in 2019.

Air India, earlier under the ownership of the Government, had acquired new aircraft more than 17 years ago. The airline's last order was for 111 planes -- 68 from Boeing and 43 from Airbus -- and that deal was worth USD 10.8 billion. The order was placed in 2005.

Currently, in India, around 470 commercial aircraft of Airbus are in service and the European major's order book for Indian airlines is around 850 planes. Indian carriers operate around 159 Boeing planes.

The country's airline industry is poised for expansion with more than 1,100 planes on order by various domestic carriers.

Lt-Gen MV Suchindra appointed new Vice Chief of Army Staff

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Lt Gen MV Suchindra Kumar has been appointed as the new Vice Chief of Army Staff, while incumbent Lt Gen B S Raju will take charge as South Western Army Commander, official sources said on Thursday.

Lt Gen Rashim Bali has been appointed as the commander of Leh-based 14 Corps which takes care of security along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in the Ladakh sector, they said.

Lt Gen Anindya Sengupta, the current commander of the 14 Corps, will become the new Chief of Staff of Udhampur headquartered Northern Command, the sources said. They said Lt Gen Raju, at present serving as the Vice Chief of Army Staff, has been appointed as South Western Army Commander.

Lt Gen NSR Subramani, currently the Chief of Staff at the headquarters of the Northern Command in Udhampur, has been promoted to the rank of Army Commander and appointed as the next Central Army Commander.

The sources said Lt Gen Kumar too has been promoted as the Army Commander and appointed as the new Vice Chief of Army Staff. He is serving as the Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) in the Army Headquarters at present.

They said Lt Gen Raju will succeed Lt

Gen Amardeep Singh Bhinder when he retires from service by the end of February.

Lt Gen Subramani will take over as the Central Army Commander from Lt Gen Yogendra Dimri, who also superannuates by the end of this month, the sources said.

Lt Gen Kumar, Lt Gen Raju and Lt Gen Subramani will assume their new responsibilities on March 1, the sources said.

Lt Gen Kumar, is an alumnus of National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla. He was commissioned into 1 Assam Regiment in June 1985.

He has commanded 59 Rashtriya Rifles Battalion, an Infantry Brigade and an Infantry Division on the Line of Control. Lt Gen Kumar has also commanded the highly active White Knight Corps. He has held the posts of Additional Director General Military Intelligence and Director General Military Intelligence at the Army headquarters.

Lt Gen B S Raju was commissioned into the 11th battalion of the Jat Regiment in December 1984. He later commanded his battalion during 'Operation Parakram' in Jammu and Kashmir.

He also holds the distinction of commanding the Uri brigade along the Line of Control, the Counter Insurgency Force and Chinari Corps in Kashmir Valley. The general officer was also Commandant, Indian Military Training Team in Bhutan.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is informed that the cars with the following car numbers which have completed their life Petrol Cars 15 Years Diesel Cars 10 Years. The MCD drive was confiscated by Pine View Technology Pvt Ltd and has not been claimed by anyone till now. All these vehicle owners are informed to come to the company's office and claim the scrap value of the vehicle. Otherwise, all these vehicles will be scrapped in the next three days.

DL2CAG9707	DL10CC1790	DLIC6335
DL2CAE4751	DL1K17011	DLIC62999
DL9CE0108	HR61A7971	DLIC60827
DL6CK4470	DL9CD54318	HR26BW5492
DL6C2246	DL2CAG8979	DL4C55898
DL1CL4670	DL7CF4982	DL8C01432
MA3ESKD1-S00359160	SB3081N-1023553	MAKGD852-F5N22864
DL9C91069	DL1YC7681	DL3CBF0210
DL4CND0617	DL3CBP3876	DL3CAB1256
DL9CH3550	DL1C16171	UP16R7957
DL1CG1205	DL4CAE162	DL6CH9472
DL2CAG2933	DL10CB4329	DL8CR1368
DL8C2431	DL9CP5190	PB10DN6095
DL4CAG8733	DL2CAG0634	DL8CJ1109
DL8C01714	DL4CAA280	HR26BF4970
DL5CDS149	HR69A5474	MH03AM5153
DL9CE6721	10811012153	DL2C26110
DL8C0676	DL3CAZ2148	CH03R0666
HR01P9773	HR13G0110	DL3CA09829
DL4CE370	DL4CP0914	DL8CL1226
DL8C10777	DL4CS9755	DL3CAA6691
DL8CN9856	DL2C22170	DL4CND2279
AP10AC2490	DL2CQ3180	UP80BD0137
DL3C919787	DL8CK2361	DL9CK8720
DL8CG6059	DL9CP0537	3118310
DL4CP9267	DL3CAK3378	DL4CAJ0608
DL3CAB7497	DL3CA03064	DL1CJ5495
UP14A8605	DL4CR3097	DL4CAB7877
DL4CAF8510	HR26AF4863	DL9CJ0573
DL9CL3256	UP16AK6933	

PUBLIC NOTICE - AGENCY TERMINATION

ICICI Bank Regd Office: ICICI Bank Limited Plot No.7 community center 2nd floor SD tower Sec-8 Near Kendriya Vidyalaya New Delhi-110085

Notice is hereby given that ICICI Bank Limited, having its registered office as stated above, has terminated the services of M/s. KRISHNA ENTERPRISES, as its collection agency having its place of business at C-59/1, 2ND FLOOR JEEVAN PARK, UTTAM NAGAR DELHI-110059, and is no longer associated with it in any way. All persons coming into contact with the said Collection agency or its representatives are hereby notified that neither Mrs. RITU KANSAL, nor the partners/directors and/or any of its employees/representatives have any authority to represent ICICI Bank Limited in any manner whatsoever. ICICI Bank Limited is henceforth not responsible in any manner for any acts done or representations made by the said agency.

Date: February 17, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

This is to bring to your notice that KAMLESH RAI/ MEENA RAI (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number LBGHZ00002244257 located at UH-108 1ST FLOOR, TOWER-K URBAN HOMES, VILLAGE SHAHPUR BAHETA, GHAZIABAD, GHAZIABAD. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated February 09, 2023 informing that SUBHHOMES REALCON PRIVATE LIMITED, has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication.

Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: February 17, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR
For ICICI Bank Limited
Sd-

Assembly polls: 20-fold rise in seizures in...

From Page 1

They also seized drugs worth Rs 26.77 crore, precious metals worth Rs 3.41 crore and freebies worth Rs 8.47 crore. During the last assembly polls in 2018, the poll body has seized Rs 1.79 crore only.

In Tripura keeping in mind the sensitivity of drugs and illegal ganja cultivation, special team consisting of district police, forest officials, BSE, anti-narcotics unit and other agencies was formed in Sepahijhala and West Tripura district after the announcement of elections. In Sepahijhala, total destruction of the ganja plantation and seizure of dry ganja amounts to Rs 9.27 crore. In the West Tripura district, the figure for ganja destruction is Rs 3.75 crore.

In North Tripura also, seizure of ganja of 529 kg amounting to 1.10 crore was made, it said.

The enforcement agencies has seized Rs 39.19 crore which include Rs 4.41 crore as cash, 68879 litre liquor worth Rs 4.41 crore, drugs worth Rs 27.78 crore and freebies worth Rs

3.74 crore. In 2018, the EC has seized Rs 4.30 crore from the state.

Similarly, Rs 63.98 crore has been seized from Meghalaya which include Rs 7.36 crore cash, 100299 litre liquor worth Rs 2.31 crore, drug worth Rs 31.21 crore, precious metals worth Rs 0.91 crore and freebies worth Rs 22.19 crore. During the previous assembly polls in the state, Rs 1.15 crore was seized.

According to the poll body, 64 Expenditure Observers deputed in the three states for stricter vigil and monitoring; 80 ACs marked as expenditure sensitive constituencies. The concerned agencies were also directed to send choppers and passengers arriving at heli-

announcement of elections. In Sepahijhala, total destruction of the ganja plantation and seizure of dry ganja amounts to Rs 9.27 crore. In the West Tripura district, the figure for ganja destruction is Rs 3.75 crore.

In North Tripura also, seizure of ganja of 529 kg amounting to 1.10 crore was made, it said.

The enforcement agencies has seized Rs 39.19 crore which include Rs 4.41 crore as cash, 68879 litre liquor worth Rs 4.41 crore, drugs worth Rs 27.78 crore and freebies worth Rs

pads and makeshift airports in addition to regular checking at operational airports. The Commission has also deployed 19 Expenditure Observers in Tripura, 21 in Meghalaya and 24 in Nagaland as also two special expenditure observers. 80 Assembly Constituencies have been marked as Expenditure Sensitive. The Chief Electoral Officer of Tripura on Thursday issued notices to the state units of the Congress and the BJP as well as BJP national general secretary Dilip Saikia for seeking votes on social media platform Twitter, even as polling was underway in the state. The EC said that the tweets were written in the 48-hour "silence period", which began on Tuesday evening.

KATHUA GANGRAPE HC orders to give victim amount deposited by media houses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed Registrar to transfer the amount deposited by media houses which were pulled up for disclosing the identity of the eight-year-old gangraped and killed in Kathua to a fund for sexual assault victims.

Two media houses recently deposited ₹10 lakh each with the court and others had done so earlier. In a recent order, the court said the money should be given to the Victim Compensation Fund of the Jammu and Kashmir State Legal Services Authority.

"The Registrar General of this court is directed to transmit the amounts so deposited by respondents no.8, 28 (two media houses) and by other respondents (media houses) in the present case, if any such amount is still lying with the court, to the Victim Compensation Fund maintained by the Jammu and Kashmir State Legal Services Authority for disbursement of funds to the victims/families of the deceased victims of sexual violence," a bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad said.

कार्यालय नगर निगम, भोपाल
विद्युत शाखा

प्रथम तल, आई.एस.सी.टी. भवन, होशंगाबाद रोड, हबीबगंज, भोपाल-462023

निविदा आमंत्रण घोषणा-पत्र

भोपाल दिनांक 15.02.2023

क्र. 784/वि.शा./2023

निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु दो लिफाफा पदार्थ के अनुसार मोहरबंद निविदाएं निर्धारित प्रपत्र पर ऑनलाइन आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र.	ऑनलाइन टेंडर नं.	कार्य स्थल का नाम	अनुमानित राशि	घरोहर राशि	निविदा प्रपत्र की कीमत	टेंडरदार की श्रेणी	कार्य हेतु निर्धारित एस.ओ.आर.	कार्य की अवधि
1.	2023_UAD_253038_1	Providing LED street light, network (cable) and street light pole, High Mast (RSJ) in Zone No. 10, 11, 12, and 17 under BMC, Bhopal	1,99,56,770/-	99,784/-	12,500/-	As per Tender Document	MPUADD ELECTRICAL SOR 2021+ SOR & NON SOR ITEM	03 Months

निष्कर्ष व शर्तें :-

- निविदा प्रपत्र को निर्धारित राशि एवं घरोहर राशि एवं अन्य आवश्यक दस्तावेज ऑनलाइन प्रस्तुत करने होंगे अन्य समस्त विस्तृत जानकारी www.mptenders.gov.in पर देखी जा सकती है।
- किसी भी निविदा को स्वीकार अथवा अस्वीकार करने का अधिकार विभाग के पास सुरक्षित होगा।

कार्यालय नगरी (विद्युत) नगर निगम भोपाल

क्र.क. 1590/022/023

Nikki's killer taken to crime scene in Kashmiri Gate

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police took Sahil Gehlot, accused of killing his girlfriend, to the crime spot on Thursday to recreate the sequence of events leading up to the incident.

Police have also found out that the accused had deleted chats and other data from the victim's mobile phone after the incident, officials said.

Police also took Gehlot to his dhaba (eatery), where he had allegedly kept the body of his girlfriend Nikki Yadav (23) inside a refrigerator.

The victim's family has demanded that the trial of the accused be held in a fast-track court.

Gehlot was taken to the crime scene in north Delhi's Kashmiri Gate area, where he had allegedly strangled Yadav to death inside a car with

a mobile phone cable. Subsequently, Gehlot was taken to the dhaba.

Police are scanning the CCTV footage obtained from nearby areas and have also summoned Gehlot's brother Ashish for questioning. The car used in the commission of the crime belonged to Ashish, sources said.

Police will also take Gehlot to the Nizamuddin and Anand Vihar railway stations, where he had taken the victim in the car on the fateful day. The sequence of events is being recreated to ascertain the exact place and time of Yadav's killing, the sources added.

The incident came to light on February 14, four days after the crime was committed, when Gehlot confessed to the crime in police custody and led police to the refrigerator in his eatery where the victim's body



was hidden.

The post-mortem examination of the body went on for more than two hours at the Deen Dayal Upadhyay hospital here on Wednesday and according to the doctors' preliminary opinion, the cause of death was strangulation.

The victim and the accused had a fight around 20 metres away from the Nigambodh



Ghat, following which he killed her, the sources said.

With her body lying beside him, Gehlot deleted the data from Yadav's phone and drove to his dhaba.

He drove through the Majnu ka Tila bypass, the Madhuban chowk, Paschim Vihar, Janakpuri and Uttam Nagar to reach Mitraon village, the sources added.

'Gehlot deleted all data from victim's phone'

New Delhi: The Crime Branch of the Delhi Police has reported that fresh details have emerged in Nikki Yadav's murder case, suggesting that Sahil Gehlot deleted all the data from the victim's cell phone.

Knowing that his WhatsApp chat with Nikki Yadav could be used as evidence against him, the accused chose to delete all the data. He had previously argued with Nikki Yadav multiple times through this mode of communication, which further motivated his decision to erase the messages.

SR

Family seeks trial at fast track court

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The family of 23-year-old Nikki Yadav, whose partner had strangled and stuffed her body inside a refrigerator, has demanded a trial at a fast-track court.

Nikki's uncle, Praveen Yadav, alleged that the police are "misleading" the family and the public. He also demanded that the accused, Sahil Gehlot, "should be hanged."

"The case should be heard at a fast-track court and the



culprit should be hanged. The police are trying to mislead us. Nikki was living at a hostel, she was not in a live-in relationship," Yadav claimed.

He further claimed that after Nikki went missing, her father too had approached Gehlot but was not given any information.

Nikki Yadav was allegedly strangled to death by Gehlot who stuffed her body inside a refrigerator of his dhaba (eatery) in Mitraon village of southwest Delhi.

NCW chief seeks police report, blames families

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Rekha Sharma, Chairperson of National Commission for Women (NCW) has sought a police report in the case of the murder of Nikki Yadav by her live-in partner, Sahil Gehlot, and blamed families for such crimes.

Sharma said, "We feel that women are not safe in live-in relationships. Not only girls, but families are also responsible for such incidents. If women have the right to select their partners, these incidents will decrease, NCW chairperson Rekha Sharma told a news agency.

BJP's Jahan new head of Delhi Haj Committee

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a major setback to the Aam Aadmi Party, BJP's Kausar Jahan has been elected as the new chairman of the Delhi Haj Committee.

She is the second woman to be elected to the post. This is only the second time in the history of the national Capital that a woman has been elected to the position of the panel chief. Former Delhi Congress chief Tajdar Babar was the only woman till now to have held this post.

Jahan on Thursday got three of the five votes cast by the panel's members in the poll held at the Delhi Secretariat. The committee's members are BJP MP Gautam Gambhir, AAP MLAs Abdul Rehman and Haji Yunus, Congress councillor Danish, Muslim theology expert Mohammad Saad, and Jahan as a member from Muslim voluntary organisations. Danish skipped Thursday's meeting and did not vote. AAP MLAs



Abdul Rehman and Haji Yunus are also members of the committee.

The BJP has called her election a "big step forward towards encouraging women empowerment amongst the Muslim community". "Congratulations to Kausar Jahan on being elected as the Delhi Haj Committee chairperson. The victory of the BJP-affiliated candidate in the Delhi Haj Committee makes it clear that now the Muslim community is also eager to join the country's development stream. Shri @narendramodi (Prime Minister Narendra Modi)," Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva said in a

tweet in Hindi.

The AAP alleged Jahan was elected because of the "complicity" between the BJP and the Congress. AAP national spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj at a press conference accused Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena of indulging in "utter dishonesty" while nominating members for the Delhi Haj Committee.

"He has no powers to nominate members but he did and indulged in dishonesty with the people of Delhi," Bhardwaj alleged. Saxena nominated Congress councillor Nazia Danish to the committee and "this was not right", and in the end, she abstained from voting in the election, thereby ensuring the "BJP candidate's victory", he alleged.

"I have been seeing the news that it is for the first time that BJP worker Kausar Jahan has become Haj committee chairperson. It is being portrayed that the BJP has won a

big election. It is an election comprising six members," Bhardwaj said.

Bhardwaj claimed that had Danish voted for the BJP, she would have been questioned by her community. "Had she voted for the AAP there would have been a tie. But she abstained from voting. This means that there was complicity between the Congress and the BJP that ensured that a woman who follows the BJP ideology is elected to the top post," he said.

Senior AAP leader Atishi lashed out at the LG, saying Saxena has been taking decisions "unconstitutionally" despite not holding "independent decision making powers." The three votes received by Jahan included those of Gambhir, Saad and Kausar herself.

"Even the scholar, Mohamad Saad, when he was asked today at the meeting about his degree, he said that he will get it within two-and-a-half years," Bhardwaj claimed.

Intensive drive to clean Yamuna floodplains launched

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena on Thursday launched an intensive campaign to clean the Yamuna floodplains as part of a mega drive to rejuvenate the river.

He also inducted a 94-member company of the territorial army into the Yamuna cleaning operations. The personnel will ensure that the cleaned stretches of the floodplains do not get encroached upon again.

The territorial army, provided by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), will take over the operations from Friday.

"We will ensure that there is a visible change in the river in the next six months. One of the major sources of pollution in the river is drains, particularly the Najafgarh drain. We have tapped 13 major drains."

Court denies bail to 5 accused in Delhi excise policy scam

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Thursday dismissed the bail applications of five accused, including AAP communication in charge Vijay Nair, in a Delhi excise policy-related money laundering case, noting it was not possible to hold they will make no attempt to tamper with the evidence if released. Special Judge M K Nagpal denied the relief to Vijay Nair, Sameer Mahendru, Sharath Reddy, Abhishek Boinpally and Benoy Babu, saying that further investigation, including the role of other persons involved in commission of alleged offences and to trace the complete trail of ill-gotten money, was still pending.

"Keeping in view their (accused) conduct as reflected on record it will not be possible for this court to hold that they will make no attempt to tamper with the evidence of this case in case they are permanently released on bail as serious allegations of tampering with evidence by way of destruction or change of their mobile phones various times have already been made by the ED against them..."

"And further even the specific allegations of destruction of digital data have also been levelled against the accused Reddy," the judge said. The court said the fact that the accused were



involved in a case of economic offence could not be "totally ignored as the economic offences have been held to be constituting a class apart as the same tend to destroy the economic fabric of the nation".

Further, the above fact assumes more importance when the accused is found to be involved in a case of money laundering as the Prevention of Money Laundering Act imposes certain restrictions on powers of the court to release an accused on bail in such a case, the judge said.

Regarding the role of Vijay Nair, the court observed there was prima facie evidence to show he had emerged as the "sutraddhar" (one who holds the strings in a play) of the entire criminal conspiracy that came into existence between various accused persons, some of whom are yet to be identified, in connection with formulation and implementation of the above excise policy.

Sisodia writes to DU VC, seeks cancellation of faculty interviews

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday wrote a letter to DU Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh asking him to cancel interviews for permanent faculty, scheduled in some of the 28 colleges funded by GNCTD. I understand the importance of conducting interviews for filling up important teaching posts but any financial decision taken for these colleges creates a financial implication on GNCTD as well.

"Therefore, scheduled interviews must be cancelled with immediate effect," the letter read.



held in some of the 28 colleges funded by GNCTD. I understand the importance of conducting interviews for filling up important teaching posts but any financial decision taken for these colleges creates a financial implication on GNCTD as well.

"Therefore, scheduled interviews must be cancelled with immediate effect," the letter read.

Sisodia in the letter also instructed Yogesh Singh to not take any financial decision without the approval of a full-fledged governing body which has adequate representation from GNCTD.

"In light of the importance of filling up teaching positions, the process for forming governing bodies in 28 GNCTD colleges shall be expedited. Any decision with financial implications, including on hiring for the permanent posts in the colleges, must be taken after approval from a fully functioning governing body," he said.

4 decamp with Fortuner, keep driver hostage for miles

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Four men decamped with a businessman's Toyota Fortuner car on MG road, keeping its driver hostage for miles, police said on Thursday.

The incident happened Wednesday around 8 pm when driver Shyam Sunder, a native of Bihar, was in the car, they said. Sunder was released by robbers near Chhwa village in southwest Delhi.

The robbers also made off with a laptop, a mobile phone and Rs 75,000 cash which were in the car belonging to Sumit Somnath Harjai.

The incident happened

outside the Grand Mall when Sunder, who is working for Harjai for the last nine months, was sitting in the car parked by a roadside.

"A man came and showed a photo of a person on his mobile to me and said 'Do you know this man?' I said 'no' but just then three other men came, opened the door and sat inside the car," Sunder said in his complaint, according to police.

The robbers dragged him to the backseat and thrashed him, he said. They also snatched his cell phone and car keys and drove away with him in the back, he said.

'LG pushed Capital's criminal justice system into huge crisis'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Alleging that bypassing the law department's opinion in granting prosecution sanction may lead to a 'legal crisis', the Delhi Government's sources said Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena pushed the criminal justice system of Delhi into a huge crisis by illegally giving Prosecution Sanctions under Criminal Procedure Code.

Sources said that prosecution sanctions by Lt Governor in seven cases, including the one against Delhi riots accused Tahir Hussain, could lead to the alleged perpetrators going 'scot-free' as he is not the approving authority. The seven cases also include matters involving Aumkareshwar Thakur, who is accused of auctioning pictures of Muslim women on Twitter; Abhishek Mishra, who is accused of hurting sentiments of the people on social media and spreading enmity in the name of religion; nine persons allegedly involved in pelting stones and glass bottles at a temple in Old Delhi and Zafar Islam Khan, who is accused of posting instigative and provocative posts.

The sources claimed that the executive powers to issue a valid sanction for prosecution under the section 196 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) are solely vested with



the elected government. "... This act of LG V K Saxena has rendered such sanctions invalid enabling the accused criminals to go scot free," a source claimed.

There was no immediate reaction from the office of the Lt Governor (LG) on the claims. The seven cases registered under the CrPC include the one against Hussain in connection with the 2020 northeast Delhi riots as well as a matter involving former JNU student leader Shehla Rashid for her alleged tweets against the army.

Under the section, in cases of crimes committed against the State such as hate speech, hurting religious sentiments, hate crimes, sedition, waging war against state, promoting enmity, any court can take cognisance of such cases only after the approval or sanction of the "state government".

In a statement last month, the government had alleged that the LG gave "approvals" in

some cases though he is not the approving authority. "Therefore, in all such criminal cases in the last few months, sanctions given for prosecution are invalid. When the accused will raise this point in the courts, they will be released," it had said.

"It was a settled law and practice in Delhi for over three decades and followed by all the previous LGs that prosecution sanction under section 196 of the CrPC are 'transferred subjects' falling squarely under the domain of the elected government," the source said.

This means that the minister-in-charge is the competent authority and the minister's approval was supposed to be taken in all these cases, the sources claimed. The source said that "after taking the minister's approval, the file would be sent to the LG to decide whether he differed from the decision of the minister and whether he would like to refer it to the President of India."

Provide tents, food to those affected by DDA demolition drive in Mehrauli: City Govt to admin

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Thursday directed the South district administration to provide tents, food and other basic amenities to those who were rendered homeless due to demolition, are being provided on the directions of the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

The DDA, which comes under the BJP-led government at the Centre, had launched the demolition drive in the Mehrauli



tents, food and other basic amenities to those who were rendered homeless due to demolition, are being provided on the directions of the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

The DDA, which comes under the BJP-led government at the Centre, had launched the demolition drive in the Mehrauli

Archaeological Park area on February 10, triggering protests by locals. "CM Arvind Kejriwal has issued directions to provide affected families with tents, food and blankets along with other basic amenities. He has directed the district administration to immediately jump into action and ensure that no family is hassled," a government official said.

The demolition drive came a month ahead of a proposed G20 meeting in South Delhi. According to officials, the area has about 55 monuments under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India, the state archaeology depart-

ment and the DDA.

Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot said the matter of demarcation of Mehrauli Archaeological Park in Latha Sarai came to his notice when he received a representation signed by two residents of the area. "I held a meeting with DM (South) on February 10 when it (I) was informed that the demarcation was carried out in December 2021 on the request of the DDA," he said in an official communication.

"The file is now pending with the LG. The move is a welcome step for the victims who have been struggling to make

ends meet amidst the demolition drive. The government's swift action in response to the crisis serves as an example of proactive governance with emphasis on social welfare and social justice," he said.

Gahlot also directed the DM (South) to intervene and conduct a fresh demarcation of the land on 11th February 2023. The DM was directed to conduct the demarcation in view of observations made by the Delhi High Court in a related case as well as those of the Supreme Court in the recent Haldwani Railway Land Encroachment Case.

Govt submits status report before NGT, says solid waste consistently increasing

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has filed a status report before the National Green Tribunal, saying the quantity of municipal solid waste was "consistently increasing" because of various factors, including a rapid population growth and mass migration.

In October last year, the NGT had directed the Delhi government to pay Rs 900

crore environmental compensation for improper management of solid municipal waste, saying citizens cannot be faced with an emergency situation due to lack of governance.

It had also formed a committee to find the factual situation and determine the future course of action, including suggestions for disaster management plans, regarding the incidents of fire at the Bhalswa dump yard and Ghazipur landfill.

Court pulls up police for giving clean chit to ASI for beating street dog to death

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court has pulled up the police for giving a clean chit to an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) seen beating a street dog to death in a viral video even before registration of an FIR, observing that this could have "disastrous consequences" quelling the faith of the common man in the administration of criminal justice.

The court also observed that police often resort to "bypassing" the law by preparing closure reports under the title of inquiry, prior to the registration of an FIR. In this case, the ASI

from Jafrabad police station was seen on January 10 in a video beating a street dog with his lathi as the animal lay motionless.

Metropolitan Magistrate Bharat Aggarwal was hearing two applications seeking directions for the registration of an FIR against Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Ravindra, posted at the Jafrabad police station here, for "mercilessly" beating up a dog with a lathi on January 10 last year. A video purportedly of the incident had gone viral on social media platforms.

"Preparation of closure reports prior to registration of an



FIR with the title of 'inquiry' is impermissible, yet often resorted to by the police, bypassing the procedure prescribed under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)," the magistrate said in an order passed on February 13.

accused without even registering an FIR and without conducting an investigation in the prescribed manner can lead to disastrous consequences, further quelling the faith of the common man in the administration of criminal justice," the magistrate said.

Rapping the Delhi Police, he said, "It appears that in the garb of inquiry, the police has rather conducted an investigation after the receipt of the notice issued by this court for the filing of a status report or an action-taken report."

"Conducting an investigation in cognisable offences prior

to the registration of an FIR is neither recognised nor permissible under the law," the court added. It further said the inquiry report reflected that police had "overstepped into the shoes of the adjudicator" while concluding that the ASI had exercised his right of private defence and committed no offence.

"The station house officer (SHO), Jafrabad is hereby directed to register an FIR in the present case and file a compliance report by February 20," the court said. It added that it was a case where police had presented several aspects in the inquiry report to defend the ASI.

PM: Tribal welfare is personal for me

Modi inaugurates Aadi Mahotsav tribal festival

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The country is working for the tribal population with a pride that was not seen earlier and their welfare is a matter of "personal relations and sentiments" for me, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said after inaugurating a 12-day 'Aadi Mahotsav', a mega national tribal festival to showcase the tribal culture on a large scale here.

For the first time, a tribal in Droupadi Murmu has occupied the top constitutional post in the country, he said, adding the budgetary allocation for the community has risen manifold since 2014. Modi said while calling upon the people of Delhi and neighbouring States to visit the festival to witness the rich tribal culture and nutritious food products being showcased from across the country.

The Government is now

going from Delhi to those considered remote and bringing them in the mainstream, he said. Tribals played a big role in India's freedom movement but attempts were made for decades to ignore these golden chapters and the sacrifices made by men and women from the community, he said, adding his Government is now bringing them to light in the "Amrit Kaal".

Modi said his Government has worked to boost the demand for tribal products, noting that over 1.25 crore tribals, especially women, are part of over 80 lakh self help groups across the country.

"Aadi Mahotsav celebrates India's glorious tribal culture and traditions. It is taking our strength of 'unity in diversity' to new heights. It makes our

idea of 'vikas and virasat' livelier," he said. Modi recalled his long association and work among the tribal community as he worked in different capacities, starting from a RSS pracharak to BJP organisation leader and then heading government first in Gujarat and then at the Centre, and said their welfare has been a matter for personal relations and sentiments for him.

He said he has tried to ensure that gifts given to foreign leaders include the works of tribals.

The Prime Minister has often highlighted the traditional lifestyle of tribals who have traditionally practised sustainable development and which offers solutions to the challenges of climate change and global warming.

Cong seeks probe into Israeli firm's 'use' in polls in India

'BJP IT cell, Israeli contractors spreading fake news to influence country's elections'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Congress on Thursday demanded a probe into the alleged use of an Israeli team of contractors to interfere in Indian elections and asked the government to break its silence on the matter.

Congress spokespersons Pawan Khera and Supriya Shrinete drew similarities between "Team Jorge", the Israeli team of contractors, and the IT cell of the ruling BJP in spreading misinformation and "fake news" in order to influence the country's electoral process.

They also alleged that the data of Indians is being compromised.

"Team Jorge", which is feared to have interfered with more than 30 elections around the world, has been linked with a software to operate fake social media campaigns across countries, including India, a report said on Wednesday.

"We have seen a pattern in

India. We want the government to break its silence and say what has been its contribution in saving democracy in the country," Shrinete said, asserting that it is the Centre's job to give a reply when an international agency has made out such a serious allegation.

"This impacts India's electoral process directly and there should be a probe," she said. "If the government is not doing anything on this, it means it is seeking help to interfere in the country's democracy and elections. The data of Indians is being compromised by handing it over to a foreign firm," the Congress's social media department head alleged.

Shrinete said this is not the first time that allegations of data theft have been levelled against the Narendra Modi government. "One of the serious charges that this government faces is data theft and data manipulation to actually tamper with the electoral process. You saw what happened in Karnataka.

"This government is known to play with big data to its advantage. This is nothing but a murder of democracy, she alleged.

Shrinete also accused the BJP's IT cell of often indulging in such activities by "militarising or weaponising" rumours by spreading those further and said this is leading to bad results in the society and hence, questions will be asked. Khera alleged that India's democracy is being "hijacked" by the country's ruling party.

"An Israeli agency's help is being taken to influence the country's democracy. Sitting in India, they are conspiring against India's democracy along with other countries," he said.

Khera also wondered if the BJP used a network of foreign hackers to interfere in Indian elections and recalled that there were allegations of using Cambridge Analytica (CA) and then Pegasus by the Modi government to meddle in the country's political system by spreading misinformation on digital media.

Al-Boeing 3.4 bn deal opportunity to deepen ties with India, says US

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

Days after Air India inked a deal with Boeing for buying 220 of its aircraft worth over 34 billion dollars, the US has said the mega commercial deal between the two companies is an opportunity to deepen an already profoundly intertwined relationship between India and the United States.

"It's an opportunity to deepen what is already a profoundly intertwined relationship based on shared interests, based on shared values, based on our deep economic ties. And with the announcements between Boeing and Air India yesterday, those ties are all the deeper," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price told reporters at his daily news conference in Washington late Wednesday.

The "landmark" Air India-Boeing deal, according to US President Joe Biden, will create up to 1 million jobs across 44 states in the US.

"It is something that we've heralded. It is an opportunity not only for the American economy and for workers here in this country, but it's an

opportunity for the Indian people as well," Price said in response to a question, a day after the historic airplane deal between the two countries.

"The United States is engaged around the world — not just in India but around the world — in what we refer to as commercial diplomacy, seeking to find concrete, tangible, practical ways to deepen our economic ties with countries around the world in a way that benefits the American people back here at home," he said.

"I think the agreement that was announced yesterday between Boeing and Air India is a vivid example of that — the number of jobs it creates here, the number of opportunities it creates in India, and the possibility it provides to deepen that partnership even further," Price said.

On Tuesday, Air India announced its agreement to purchase 190 Boeing 737 MAXs, 20 Boeing 787s, and 10 Boeing 777Xs — a total of 220 firm orders valued at a list price of USD34 billion which will support more than one million American jobs across 44 states, many of which will not require a four-year college degree.

HAL inks deal with Argentinian Air Force for supply of helicopter spares

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

Public sector aerospace conglomerate Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has inked a contract with Argentina to supply spares and provide engine repair services to Argentinian Air Force's two-ton class helicopters. Argentina has already evinced interest in procuring a batch of India's Light Combat Aircraft Tejas. Egypt is also keen to procure the indigenously designed and manufactured Tejas jets.

"The HAL signed a contract with Argentinian Air Force (AAF) for supply of spares and engine repair of legacy two tonne class helicopters," an official of HAL said on Thursday.

The contract was signed by Brigadier General Xavier Issac,

Chief of AAF and Chairman and Managing Director of HAL C B Ananthkrishnan on the sidelines of Aero India 2023.

Brigadier General Issac said the contract for support service is a stepping stone for the future engagements and defence cooperation between India and Argentina.

Ananthkrishnan said this contract will further pave the way for giving new impetus for defence exports in the Latin American region, according to the official cited above.

In a related development, the HAL said it has received the Indian Technical Standard Order (ITSO) authorisation from Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for its indigenously developed Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and Flight Data Recorder (FDR).

Jaishankar may take up temple attacks with Oz during his visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/MELBOURNE

The attacks on Hindu temples by alleged Khalistani supporters continue with a temple threatened of an attack in Australia some days ago, reports from there said on Thursday. Kaali Mata temple in Melbourne was targeted by so-called Khalistanis. Incidentally, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will visit Sydney on Saturday and may flag the issue during his talks with the leadership there.

This would be his third visit to Australia since February 2022 when he first visited Australia as the external affairs minister, ministry of external affairs (MEA) said. He will have meetings with the leadership of Australia. Jaishankar will also attend the Raisina@Sydney Conference to be held in Australia for the first time,



MEA said on Monday.

As regards the latest incident, in a call made to the temple priest, an unidentified person said the 'bhajans' at the temples should be cancelled or there would be consequences to face.

Talking to the local media, temple priest Bhawna said, "I pleaded with him, bhaji ji this is Ma Kali's (Hindu Goddess Kali) place, even Guru Maharaj (Guru Govind Singh) used to pray here. Why would someone come and fight here. The caller said his job was to warn about

consequences," the temple priest further said. As per reports in local media in Australia, the Kali Mata Mandir got the call three weeks ago when the management of the Kali Mata Mandir was preparing for an upcoming religious programme.

Shocked after hearing the caller's threat, the temple's priestess Bhawna said the management has been preparing for the event for months, and have spent a lot of money for the same, hence it cannot be cancelled.

India privileged to partner with Fiji in nation-building efforts: EAM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/SUVA (FIJI)

Underlining the close relations between the two countries, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday India is privileged to partner with Fiji in the nation-building efforts in the South Pacific country. He also said the two nations have "close and long-standing ties" shared between two countries through people-to-people linkages.

His visit comes at a time when China has adopted an assertive stance in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region.

At a joint press event with Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka in Suva, Jaishankar said India and Fiji have signed and exchanged the visa waiver agreement. "It will certainly be helpful in encouraging greater travel



between our two countries," he said.

He further said "India and Fiji have close and long-standing ties and I think a large part of that is really built on our people-to-people linkages."

"We have been privileged to partner with Fiji in its nation-building efforts across various sectors, in working with it in capacity building; in areas like health, education, agriculture; we've done projects in the Sugarcane industry; we've worked together in renewable energy; and I think

today one part of our discussion looked at areas like IT and support for Medium and Small enterprises. So there is really a very very substantive bilateral agenda before us," he said.

Jaishankar said "I am very assured after discussions with the Prime Minister that this relationship will scale greater heights, that it would deliver for the mutual benefit of the peoples."

The two leaders also discussed regional and global issues of shared interest, including the Indo-Pacific.

BSES BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi

TENDER NOTICE Date: 17.02.2023

Sealed tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) are invited for following jobs from all the bidders.

NIT No.	Brief Tender Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/CR/AS/1096	RENEWAL OF GROUP TERM LIFE & OTHER RELATED INSURANCE POLICIES FOR THE EMPLOYEE OF BRPL FOR FY: 2023-24	5.5 Crore	09.03.2023 15:00 HRS	09.03.2023 15:30 HRS
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/CR/AS/1097	RENEWAL OF VARIOUS GENERAL INSURANCE POLICIES IN BRPL FOR FY: 2023-24	10.00 Crore	09.03.2023 15:00 HRS	09.03.2023 15:30 HRS

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1180/- (Inclusive GST)

For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission of tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com

Head (Contracts & Materials)

Regd. Off.: BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 | Corporate Identification No.: U40109DL2001PLC111527
Telephone No.: +91 11 4910 7235 | Website: www.bsesdelhi.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Pratap Singh/ Vimla Choudhary- LBJAIO0001135566- Plot No.-640, Type II (2), Spg Complex, Dwarka, Sec.-8, Delhi- 100018	Plot No. E-170, Scheme Balaji Vihar- 6, Ext- 1st, Near Benar Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan- 302001	January 14, 2023 Rs.6,29,379.8/-	10/10/2022

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date: February 17, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Office of Principal Chief Materials Manager
Headquarters Office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001
Mail ID: salenr365@gmail.com

No: 117/S/Auction Programme/Sale/2022-23 Date: 16.02.2023

Extra date in Auction Program of Northern Railway

Following extra dates of the auction program for the month of February 2023 will be as under:

Sr. No.	Depot	Extra date for e-auction
1.	Alambagh/Lucknow 0522-2451257	25.02.2023
2.	Shakurbasti 011-27015387	25.02.2023
3.	Jagadhari 01732-252388	25.02.2023

All other auction dates advised earlier will remain same. For further details regarding e-auction please visit Railway website 'www.ireps.gov.in'

(Om Kumar)
Dy. CMM/S&P
For Principal Chief Materials Manager

504/2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Drone carries medicines from AIIMS Rishikesh to remote village



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Drones are being increasingly and successfully used for healthcare services delivery in the country, particularly reaching out to the patients in the remote and inaccessible terrain. Latest to join the bandwagon is Rishikesh-based All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) which on Thursday successfully deployed an unmanned aerial vehicle to carry vital medicines to a remote place of Uttarakhand's hill state.

The Vertiplane X3 drone

carried 3 kilograms of TB medicines from AIIMS Rishikesh to New Tehri PHC, covering 36 kilometers in 2 kilometers in 29 minutes. It is 6X faster than ground transportation, as the road journey is 72+ kilometers long and takes 2.5-3 hours.

"Several medicines & samples came via drones from AIIMS Rishikesh for TB patients in 28 mins. We have sent our medicines & samples back. This is helpful as sometimes we need medicines urgently," said Damayanti Darbal, Lab Technician, District Hospital said.

CBI recovers ₹3.09 cr during probe against fake call centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has recovered over Rs 3,09,64,100 during searches at four locations in Delhi-NCR in connection with an ongoing probe against a call centre allegedly involved in cheating US-citizens.

The agency also busted a fake tech support call centre in the case relating to cyber-enabled financial crime against victims in the US.

The CBI also seized 15 mobile phones and seven laptops containing remote access application, Textnow apps, fake international calling numbers, incriminating documents pertaining to US nationals, cryptocurrency investments, chats containing details of the fraud and scripts for talking to US citizens, the CBI said in a state-



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Nursing students told to develop skill & right attitude



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Commandant of Army Hospital (Research and Referral) here, Lt General Ashok Jindal in Thursday urged the nursing students to develop skill and right attitude to meet the future challenges of nursing profession.

He was addressing the nursing students of College of Nursing on the occasion of Lamp lighting ceremony of IX Batch held on February 2023 at Army Hospital. The event witnessed the commencement of the professional journey of 30 nursing students.

Cong rushes Kerala leader to faction-ridden Maha unit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

A week before the Congress plenary session at Raipur in Chhattisgarh, its Maharashtra unit facing dissidence and the Central leadership of the grand old party on Thursday rushed senior party leader from Kerala Ramesh Chennithala to assess the latest political situation in the State and report back immediately.

The Maharashtra Congress is faction-ridden with State chief Nana Patole and legislative party leader Balasaheb Thorat at loggerheads with each other.

The party is still struggling to settle down the long pending feud between Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his former deputy

and State chief Sachin Pilot who has been time and again reckoning the leadership to settle the issues sooner as the State goes to polls this year end.

Rahul to visit UK, lecture at Cambridge

NEW DELHI: Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi will be visiting the United Kingdom later this month and will also deliver a lecture at the Cambridge University's business school. Sharing information about his visit to the UK, Rahul said he is looking forward to visiting his alma mater and that he will be engaging with some of the brightest minds in geopolitics, international relations and democracy. "Happy to engage with some of the brightest minds in various domains, including geopolitics, international relations, big data and democracy," the Congress MP said.



After SC direction, Health Min working on 'One Nation, One Organ Allocation' policy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Months after the Supreme Court directed the Government to expeditiously examine the lack of uniformity in rules regarding cadaveric organ transplant across states with the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Rules, 2014, it is learnt that the Union Health Ministry is working on a 'One Nation, One Organ Allocation' policy in consultation with states to

come up with uniform guidelines for registration, allocation and other aspects of the process.

Working towards firming up the policy, the ministry has already recommended states to remove the domicile criterion for registering those seeking organs from deceased donors for transplant procedures.

Further, it has done away with the 65-year age limit for registration of patients seeking organs from a deceased donor.

NON-PAYMENT OF 38% DA Centre starving WB of funds, claims Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In an apparent bid to pass the blame of non-payment of 38 per cent dearness allowance to the State Government employees, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday slammed the Centre for starving her State of funds required to discharge its financial liabilities.

Addressing a meeting at Midnapore, Mamata said her Government is running a plethora of social welfare schemes for which availability of funds was a big problem because the Centre was not paying its dues to the State.

Without referring to the term "DA" the Chief Minister said, "demands are being raised from all quarters for increased pay without considering the fact that the Government is running a number of social-welfare schemes and it is not



possible to meet all the expenses at a time... I am not a magician to arrange for funds for every thing in one go... particularly when the BJP is blocking funds."

With her Government having lost legal battles on implementation of proper DA regime in the State Administrative Tribunal and the Calcutta High Court, Banerjee had been under intense pressure from the joint-forum of State Government

employees unions — which has been staging a sit-in for the past several weeks asking for the prescribed 38percent DA.

While the Government employees have presently been getting 3 percent DA, Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya on Wednesday declared that the Chief Minister had decided to grant an additional 3 percent from the month of March. The Government employees' forum has rejected the Government's proposal.

Blaming the Centre for blocking funds that legitimately belonged to the State Banerjee said, "everyday the BJP leaders from Bengal go to the Centre and ask them to stop funds meant for construction of roads, houses, hundred-days' work and other projects making it very difficult for the Government to run the welfare schemes."

Heavily armed infiltrator killed in Kupwara

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SRINAGAR

A heavily armed terrorist, apart of the three member group of infiltrators, was neutralised by the alert army troops along the Line of Control in the Tangdhar sector of North Kashmir's Kupwara district in the early hours of Thursday.

According to ground reports, alert Indian troops deployed along the anti-infiltration grid detected a suspected movement of a three member group of infiltrators late last night.

As the infiltrators tried to move closer to the barbed wire fence they were challenged by the troops. As an intense firefight ensued between the terrorists and the troops one of the terrorists was neutralised and another received injuries. The injured terrorist, however,



managed to flee to PoJK, alongwith the third terrorist, taking advantage of darkness.

Defence sources said, a thorough Joint Search Operation was launched along with JKP in the morning, resulting in recovery of one dead terrorist, one AK series rifle, one light automatic weapon, six magazines, two grenades and large quantities of war like stores.

Defence sources claimed, despite the ceasefire agreement in place there has been no let up from the Pakistani side of the border to disrupt peace and harmony in the Kashmir valley.

Your safety our top priority, LG tells Kashmiri Pandits

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Even though a large number of PM package employees have been awaiting release of salaries ahead of the festival of Maha Shivratri, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Thursday announced full salaries of all PM package & other minority community employees who have resumed their duties in Kashmir have been released.

LG Sinha made this announcement while addressing a gathering of Kashmiri pandits at a three-day long Mahashivratri Mahotsav at Jagti Colony.

Sinha also told the gathering of Kashmiri pandits, "Jammu Kashmir Government always stands by you. Your safety is our top priority and we are taking all possible measures to ensure that. This is the commitment of the Government of India and Prime Minister".

All the issues of the Migrant Kashmiri Pandit community are being taken up for



their resolution with utmost sensitivity, said the Lt Governor. "You have suffered a lot for three long decades. I pray that the day will come when you return to your homes with honour. I hope with your return Kashmir will find its lost glory", added the Lt Governor.

In order to facilitate Kashmiri Pandit Community in Camps & Non-Camp Areas, Relief Organisation has brought together 20 Line

Departments for the Mahashivratri Mahotsav.

Extending the greetings of Mahashivratri in advance, the Lt Governor said the festival is the celebration of Kashmiri culture & the spiritual-cultural heritage of the country.

It is the symbol of our ancient values and ethos. Kashmiri Pandit brothers & sisters living in different parts of the country & the world have kept this tradition alive, he added.

Police records statement of family in suicide case of Dalit student of IIT-B

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid a fierce controversy over the suicide by a first-year B.Tech student belonging to the Dalit community on premises of the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay (IIT-B) a visiting three-member of Mumbai police recorded the statements of the family members of Darshan Solanki, who ended his by jumping from the eighth floor of an IIT-B hostel on Sunday.

A day after the students of the Wardha-based Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya (MGAV) urged the Centre to enact a 'Rohith Vemula Act' to protect scholars hailing from marginalised communities and prevent campus suicides, the visiting police from Mumbai met

Solanki's family members at their residence at Maninagar, located on the outskirts of Ahmedabad.

Meanwhile, several student organisations in Gujarat have announced that they will take out a peace procession and a candle morcha on February 19. The procession and candle march will be held in Ahmedabad and some other cities of Gujarat at 6.30-9.30 pm on Sunday.

Eighteen-year-old Darshan Solanki, a resident of hostel number 16 of IIT-B who hailed from Ahmedabad and had joined the Institute three months ago to pursue Bachelor in Technology (B.Tech) in Chemical Engineering, had jumped from the eighth floor of his hostel building on the afternoon of February 12.

Snakes can hear, react to airborne sound: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

If you thought that snakes are deaf and can feel vibrations through the ground only, then you are wrong!

A first of its kind study by researchers from University of Queensland has found that snakes can hear and react to airborne sound after a team of researchers played three different sound frequencies to captive-bred snakes one at a time in a soundproof room and observed their reactions.

Dr Christina Zdenek from UQ's School of Biological Sciences, in collaboration with QUT's Professor Damian Candusso, played three different sound frequencies to captive-bred snakes one at a time in a soundproof room and observed their reactions.

ED arrests Kerala CM's former PS over money laundering charges

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested M Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to the Kerala Chief Minister on money laundering charges in connection with the Livelihood Inclusion Financial Empowerment (LIFE) Mission Scam.

The ED had recorded a money laundering case on the basis of an FIR registered by CBI, Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Kochi and Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB), Thiruvananthapuram against Unitac Builders and Developers Private Limited and Sane Ventures LLP and others under Prevention of Corruption Act for suspected pecuniary advantage obtained by some persons from the Life Mission Project and illegal gratifications received by various persons including some public servants.

Bengal Guv's ex-PS demoted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

In another instance of a senior bureaucrat becoming the scapegoat of Centre-State tug of war Nandini Chakravarty, a senior IAS officer and former Principal Secretary to Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose has not only been removed from her job — and made the Tourism Secretary — but the Raj Bhavan has also recommended an inquiry against her for allegedly providing false information about the affairs inside the Governor's office.

Bose replaced Jagdeep Dhankhar after he was elevated to become the Vice

President of India following a tumultuous relationship with the Mamata Banerjee Government.

According to sources Chakravarty had leaked out to the media unsubstantiated reports about the Governor's intentions to create a team of officials that would include former IAS officers from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as also the former CBI director Rakesh Asthana.

The Governor promptly relieved the officer from her post. While the State Government was initially not pleased with his actions it acquiesced and provided Chakravarty with a new posting.

The President's Colour

Presented to

Haryana Police

by

Sh. Amit Shah

Union Home and Cooperation Minister

Haryana becomes the 10th State in the country to be bestowed with this exceptional honour

“ हमारे पुलिस बल संविधान द्वारा व्यक्त की गई प्रतिबद्धता के साथ लोगों की विविधता और अधिकारों का सम्मान करते हुए काम करते हैं। वे न केवल लोगों की रक्षा करते हैं बल्कि हमारे लोकतंत्र की भी सेवा करते हैं। ”

- नरेन्द्र मोदी

Information, Public Relations, Languages and Culture Department, Haryana

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Resisting China

The seven new ITBP battalions are part of Indian efforts to curb the belligerence of our northern neighbour

Seven new border battalions, comprising 9,400 fresh troops, will go a long way strengthening our border with China. Government approval for the new battalions has come at the right time; for the dragon continues to be as fiery as it ever was, intensifying activity on our border, conniving with Pakistan to spread jihadist terror in India, and trying to strategically encircle India by hook or by crook. There will also be a new operational base for the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) which guards the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China. The ITBP, which came into being in 1962, has around 90,000 personnel, a strength that would soon increase by over 10 per cent. The new manpower will help man 47 new border posts and a dozen 'staging camps' or troops bases, most of which will be in Arunachal Pradesh, the state which China claims as its own. Cognisant of the threat posed by China, the Government has also adopted a multipronged approach — from entering a multi-lateral strategic alliance the Quad to boosting the procurement of arms and equipment and building infrastructure in the areas near the LAC. Prior to the Galwan conflict in June 2020 and after that, the People's Liberation Army has been furiously preparing infrastructure in the border areas, which resulted in a big "infrastructure differential" with China along the LAC. Thanks to the prompt action by our Government, which included the building of all-weather roads, bridges,



tunnels, helipads, airfields, bridges, etc., that differential has greatly reduced.

Last week, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar shared the details of infrastructure building with the media. Such projects are spread across all the states along the LAC — Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. The Government, Jaishankar said, is "focused on rapid development of infrastructure along northern borders with China for obvious strategic reasons." Also, there are projects connecting India to the "friendly" neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Myanmar. It is nice to notice that the world, especially Western nations, has woken up to the threats posed by China. Leaders across the globe have realised that everything that China does has, or can have, a strategic angle to it. The apps of its companies, like TikTok, are suspected of gathering data that Beijing can use at a critical moment. India banned TikTok and many other Chinese apps; other countries are contemplating such action. Even electrical appliances made by Chinese companies can be weaponised — at least, that is the fear. Global pressure on Beijing has forced it to stop shielding Pakistan-based terrorists; the pressure is likely to go up, as China's nefarious designs unfold in different parts of the world. Resistance to the dragon's bellicosity is increasing. India is playing an important part in resisting China. The ITBP's new battalions are part of that resistance.

PICTALK



Nihangs perform during a procession to mark the martyrdom of Baba Phula Singh Nihang, in Amritsar

Rich and poor are not irreconcilable

The Modi Government in the true spirit of "sabka saath sabka vikas" wants to break the dogma that rich and poor cannot be reconciled in India



VISHAL BAKSHI

Much has been written about Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget proposals pertaining to the changes in personal income tax slabs and the relief that taxpayers in different income groups will get. The conspicuous feature of these proposals is the benefit given to those in the highest slab—that is, to the richest people. Conspicuous because it signifies a paradigm shift in political thinking—at least in the thinking of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

In fact, this is a departure from the canons of received wisdom that have dominated public discourse in the last century. As socialism and communism gained currency among the intellectual and political classes in the first half of the last century, economic policy increasingly got oriented around a zero-sum game: one can gain only at the expense of the poor. The rich become rich because they are able and allowed to exploit the poor.

Such views are still popular, even among those who matter. An illustration: in April 2020, at the peak of the first wave of Covid-19, a bunch of 50 IRS officers of the I-T department took it upon themselves to mobilize revenue to finance the relief measures. Without authorization from the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), they prepared a report making recommendations for income-tax rates reminiscent of the ones in the pre-1991 socialist era. Thankfully, the CBDT not just disowned the report but also initiated action against the 50 officers. Against this backdrop, it required considerable courage on the part of the Finance Minister to provide relief to the rich.

Interestingly, this has been done in the last full Budget of the Narendra Modi Government. Evidently, the Government is not afraid of being dubbed as pro-rich, as being, in Rahul Gandhi's words, the suit-boot ki sarkar.

It looks like Modi's slogan of sabka saath, sabka vikas is not just about the poor and welfare



measures; it also includes the rich. His regime not only recognizes them as equal citizens but also cares for them. It might have taken the suit-boot ki sarkar jibe a bit too seriously earlier, but it seems to have overcome its own diffidence and begun thinking about the rich too. A manifestation of this was the launch of MV Ganga Vilas on January 13.

When PM Modi flagged off the world's longest river cruise in Varanasi through video conferencing, he did not just give a big fillip to tourism, especially in the eastern states concerned, but also sent the message that his Government is no longer comfortable with the dogmas of the past, the dogmas that infected policy and caused incalculable loss to the economy, society, and politics of India.

MV Ganga Vilas is the last word in luxury. Sixty-two meters long and 12 meters wide, it has a draft of 1.4 meters. Its 18 suites in three decks can accommodate 36 tourists. It has all the comforts the rich can buy—plush interiors, carpeted corridors, an indoor gym, tastefully decorated walls, huge rooms with big windows for a scenic view, and lovely decks.



IT LOOKS LIKE MODI'S SLOGAN OF SABKA SAATH, SABKA VIKAS IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE POOR AND WELFARE MEASURES; IT ALSO INCLUDES THE RICH. HIS REGIME NOT ONLY RECOGNIZES THEM AS EQUAL CITIZENS BUT ALSO CARES FOR THEM

MV Ganga Vilas cruise is curated to bring out the best of the country to be showcased to the world said an official press release. The 51-day cruise is planned with visits to 50 tourist spots including world heritage sites, national parks, river ghats, and major cities like Patna, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata, Dhaka, and Guwahati. The journey will give the tourists an opportunity to embark upon an experiential voyage and indulge in the art, culture, history, and spirituality of India and Bangladesh, it added.

With a cost of Rs 20 lakh per head, MV Ganga Vilas is strictly for the superrich. For the old school, this is a brazen, state-sponsored extravaganza that looks obscene because the government of a poor country, where a lot of people don't get clean drinking water, should not be doing it. It should focus on the welfare of the poor, not the merriment of the rich. Implicit in this criticism of Ganga Vilas is the zero-sum mindset.

What this criticism misses is the fact that the merriment of the rich is not at the expense of the poor. Quite the contrary: luxury tourism, just like other classes of tourism,

helps the poor, the not-so-poor, the middle classes, the rich—everyone.

This is the reason that Modi is zealously promoting tourism, including luxury tourism. As Modi said at the inauguration of Ganga Vilas: "With this cruise, many places of eastern India will now figure on the world tourism map... What can be more unfortunate than the fact that since Independence the banks of the Ganga became backward, let alone develop [them]?"

He hit the nail on the head. The need of the hour is to cleanse the economic policy of the pollutant called the zero-sum game. This pollutant clouds the minds of policymakers with the phony rich-poor divide, placing the wealthy and the poor in two different, antagonistic groups.

Slashing tax rates for the highest income groups and promoting tourism can help reduce the toxicity of this pollutant. The Government should move ahead and introduce more such measures in the true spirit of sabka saath, sabka vikas.

(The author is a well-known economic and financial journalist. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TRIPURA POLLS A TEST FOR BJP

Sir — State elections are becoming really a fight for supremacy and each and every election is a test of nerves among political parties. We have witnessed multi-cornered contests in every recent election and all the parties trying their best to throw out the ruling dispensation. But that is not so easy as the ruling party has laid roots and made a progressive platform to display its working habits. Under the circumstances, it is very difficult to upset the incumbent but false allegations are levelled to win vote bank politics. Voting in 60 Assembly constituencies in Tripura is a test of strength.

A little over 28 lakh people are eligible to vote and 259 candidates are in the fray. Massive security deployment was in place across the State. Security deployment in Bishalgarh Assembly constituency augmented after reports of bomb attacks on a house. An agent of a political party was detained by villagers just after midnight for illegally entering a polling station at Bamutia in west Tripura. The TMC is making a bid to enter Tripura. Let us wait and watch the result in early March. It is testing time for the ruling party and its rivals.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

NIKKI HALEY FOR TOP JOB

Sir — Nimrata Nikki Randhawa, 51, who married an American, Michael Haley, in 1996, became Nikki Haley. After being the Governor of South Carolina twice, former President Trump made her the ambassador to the United Nations. Now she will take on the same Trump; she has declared herself as the 2024 Republican Party candidate. But is it that easy? Especially since that party considers itself a nationalist and white supremacist, which strongly opposes immigration and migration. The party which hates migrants of all origins, can it make the daughter of an Indian expatriate a candidate?

In 2020, when a black man named

Flying higher



One year after the Tata Group acquired Air India, the carrier's historical mega-aircraft deal with US-based Boeing (220 aircraft) and France-based Airbus (250) to acquire 470 next-generation aircraft is the largest ever single deal in aviation history, which will help Air India modernise its fleet, expand its network on global footprint and boost its ambition to become a truly a world-class airline. This \$85-

billion mega order demonstrates the vision and aspiration of the Tata Group to bring back to old glory the Air-India when it was one of the most preferred airlines globally, which will connect India "non-stop" to every major city in the world.

It is a landmark moment in the history of Air India and Indian aviation. In the true sense, India will become the global aviation hub. This deal has come at a time of global economic meltdown that has seen mass layoffs; it will help create new jobs in the US, France and the UK. The World Bank has projected a gloomy outlook for the global economy but has said Indian economy will continue to grow at 6.6 per cent. These days, relations among countries are seen more on mutual economic interest, hence India's relation with the US, France and UK will get further strengthened. The order is also a testament to the tremendous economic potential unleashed by Air India.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bengaluru

George Floyd was strangled to death by a white police officer, a movement began across the country under the banner of 'Black Lives Matter'. Donald Trump termed that movement 'fake' and a conspiracy against the 'spirit of America'. The same stand was of the entire Republican Party. At that time, Nikki had kept silence. Nikki said one more thing that she will "protect America". But what will she protect? Has there really been a threat to America? This is a rhetoric that pseudo-nationalist party people all over the world keep saying.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

UNRULY CRICKET 'FANS'

Sir — Indian cricketer Prithvi Shaw was targeted when a group of people allegedly attacked his car with baseball bats for his refusal to take selfies with them. Shaw had gone for dinner with his friends in Santa Cruz where fans (a man and a woman) approached him for a selfie and he happily agreed. Later, the couple insisted for more pictures and Shaw

refused, saying that he had come out with his friends to have dinner and enjoy his personal space. When the incident escalated, Shaw complained to the manager who had the couple kicked out of the hotel.

Out of annoyance, the accused allegedly vandalised the BMW car of Shaw's friend and were waiting outside the hotel with a few others armed with baseball bats. Shaw had to take Shaw away in another car. But the accused stopped them at a traffic signal near Jogeshwari Lotus petrol pump and demanded Rs50,000 or else the cricketer will face false accusations.

Oshiwara police registered a complaint against eight people for unlawful assembly and using weapons. Shaw, safe and unharmed in the incident, is out of action from international cricket for some time now.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

If the Congress wins the assembly elections due later this year, the Congress government would take up the construction of 100 Rama temples in various assembly constituencies.

Telangana Congress President — A Revanth Reddy

Apparently some in the US take a wandering civilian balloon as a big threat while the explosive train derailment and toxic chemical leak Not.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson — Hua Chunying

Javed Ji, you never failed to fill the room with joy and warmth. Your pure heart and positive energy will be dearly missed.

Actor — Aamir Khan

India agar aankhe dikha raha hain, then they have made themselves that strong, hence they are being able to talk like this, otherwise, they wouldn't have the courage

Pakistan cricketer — Shahid Afridi

We are devotees of Lord Rama, Lord Hanuman. We offer prayers and obeisance to Lord Hanuman, and we are not Tipu's descendants. Let's send Tipu's descendants back home.

Karnataka BJP chief — Nalin Kumar Kateel

It is free for all!

Tripura elections once again show how political parties are wooing voters with freebies

The Northern state of Tripura is the first state this year to go to the polls. The fate of 259 candidates in the fray for the 60-member Assembly was sealed in the ballot machines on February 16. The results would be declared on March 2. The state elections are important on two counts, first, its result would decide the future of communists in the Northeast and secondly, it would also be a good indicator of other states in the Northeast going to polls later this year. The state witnessed a fierce triangular contest — the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the CPM-Congress alliance, and the local TIPRA Motha were the three main contenders. The 2018 Assembly elections were watershed in Tripura. The state voted out the ruling Left Front government, which had held power since 1993. The CPM-led Left Front held sway over Tripura for nearly 25 years, leading the state to be dubbed a 'red holdout'. But the BJP seized power in the last polls.

This year, BJP's focus is going to be retaining its sway over the electorate. The Communists, on the other hand, have allied with Congress.

All political parties have gone all out to woo the voters. They have made many tall promises to the voters in their manifestoes. It would be interesting to see whose promises the people of Tripura fall for. The BJP's bid to woo the voters is loaded with several attractive 'rewaris' or freebies. BJP promised a meal at Rs 5, an amount of Rs 50,000 to EWS families on the birth of a girl-child, a scooter to meritorious college-going girls, smartphones to 50,000 meritorious students, two free LPG cylinders to the beneficiaries of PM Ujjwala Yojana, land pattas to all eligible landless citizens, and the list goes on. The CPM's appeal was more ideological as it promised to restore 'democratic, political and religious rights' but it also offered sops; 200-day work to the poor under MGNREGA, bringing back the Old Pension Scheme, 2.5 lakh new jobs in next five years, free electricity up to 50 units per family, and so on. Congress promised to restore the old pension scheme for government employees, and free 150 units of electricity along with other promises. Two things are going to decide the outcome of the elections — the division of votes among the opposition parties that is CPM-Congress alliance and TIPRA Motha party and the lure of freebies which has now become a norm and even the BJP which is vocal against it has offered them on the platter. If CPM can make a comeback or fade into oblivion would be known on march 2.





FIRST COLUMN REDUCING ACCIDENTS ON ROADS IS CRUCIAL

There is not just human cost but also economic loss



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

Road accidents are one of the leading causes of death and debility in India, which cost heavily not only to the victims and their beloved family members. India also faces severe repercussions in terms of untimely deaths, injuries, disabilities, cost of treatment, losses of productivity because of disabilities, and the suffering family members had to endure. There is also an accompanying loss of potential income for the family and the nation.

Road accidents cost most countries almost three per cent of their gross domestic product. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the situation in India is more alarming, as at least one out of 10 people killed on roads across the world is from India.

The annual report of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for the year 2021-22 suggests that in 2019 there were a total of 449,002 road accidents and 151,113 deaths. Globally, every year the lives of approximately 1.3 million people are cut short by road accidents. The saddening part is that about 73 per cent of all road traffic deaths occur among young males under the age of 25 years, who are the most productive human resources of the country.



Social and economic standards of the people also determine these accidents, for 93 per cent of the world's fatalities on the roads occur in low and middle income countries like India. Road traffic injury death rates are highest in African countries and lowest in European countries.

Even in developed countries, people from lower socio-economic strata are more vulnerable. It is distressing to note that more than half of the road traffic deaths in India and elsewhere are vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, forcing the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to set an ambitious target of halving the global number of deaths and injuries from road accidents by 2030.

Considering the urgency, the Government has taken various measures and made policy changes as per the standard global practices, formulating a multi-pronged strategy to address the issue based on education, engineering, enforcement and emergency care. The concerned ministry implements a scheme for undertaking publicity measures and awareness campaigns, besides identifying black spots on national highways based on accident and fatality data.

Road safety has been made an integral part of road design at the planning stage itself. Safety standards for automobiles have also been improved in respect of airbags, anti-braking system (ABS), tyres, crash test, Whole Vehicle Safety Conformity of Production (WVSCoP), etc.

The recently passed and implemented motor vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 provides for strict implementation through latest technologies, providing for strict penalties for ensuring strict compliance and enhancing deterrence for violation of traffic rules. Under the act, a scheme for the cashless treatment of victims of the accident during the golden hour is also provided. The National Highways Authority of India has made provisions for ambulances at all toll plazas on the completed corridor of national highways.

Moreover, ambulances have also been upgraded with the basic life support system. Expressing concerns over rising road accidents, even Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken in his Mann Ki Baat more than once to create awareness, appealing to the people to become active stakeholders in road safety activities to save themselves and others.

(The author is a senior journalist)

Future of AI in data journalism is unclear

News outlets can publish and curate content using machine learning and AI to make data journalism impartial



SANTOSH K BISWAL ANAND J KULKARNI

In the wake of increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism, data journalism and the nature of storytelling are taking shifts which have further invited deliberations on news values, the political economy of news media, and media ethics. There is no doubt that AI tools are immensely contributing to the news industry. Subsequently, there are paradigm shifts in the realm of journalism, as a form of art and profession. However, excessive and unstructured use of technologies in newsrooms has plumbed to various ailments in the media industry. Incalculable foray of AI into newsrooms have accumulated pointless pitfalls.

Due to the bottlenecks that such complicated and opaque systems pose for undermining accountability, decision-making, and professional judgment, this intelligibility issue is especially acute for public service media. Unraveling the dichotomy between the Global North and Global South has further worsened the feasibility of using the AI tools in data journalism. Inclusive journalism has become a distant dream. Moreover, there are other several unidentified factors plaguing the news industry, are to be scientifically probed.

Journalism is the process of gathering, analysing, producing, and presenting news and information. History demonstrates that a society tends to have more news and information the more democratic it is. Journalism as a means of craft and business remains a dynamic field at the same time. With the pace of time and demand, data journalism is increasingly significant these days. And subsequently, this approach to storytelling is getting apparent in newsrooms across the globe.

The practice of reporting on facts while using structured data as the central element of the narrative and managing it impartially is known as data journalism. It covers an expanding range of storytelling tools, methods, and approaches. It can include everything from conventional computer-assisted reporting to the most cutting-edge news applications and data visualisation. The overarching objective is a journalistic one: disseminating data and analysis to help us all learn more about pressing current affairs.

Digital tools are used to streamline data collection in data journalism, which is news presentation fuelled by quicker data collection and visualization. It first emerged in the US in the 1950s. Probability and computation play a large role in data journalism. Big data has the potential to produce news more quickly and with greater depth than ever before. Like the internet, big data is an infinite reservoir of ever-expanding data that belongs to no one in particular. Big data can be used for a wide range of intricate tasks with the right equipment and personnel, including improving public healthcare in smart cities and personality-based psychometric profiling.

Without a doubt, social media played



JOURNALISM AS A MEANS OF CRAFT AND BUSINESS REMAINS A DYNAMIC FIELD AT THE SAME TIME. WITH THE PACE OF TIME, DATA JOURNALISM IS INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT THESE DAYS. SUBSEQUENTLY, THIS APPROACH TO STORYTELLING IS GETTING APPARENT IN NEWSROOMS ACROSS THE GLOBE

(Biswal is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department, Journalism and Mass Communication, Rama Devi Women's University, Bhubaneswar. Kulkarni is a Research Professor and Associate Director of the Institute of Artificial Intelligence, MIT World Peace University, Pune)



a significant part in many of the historical events of this century. Applications with AI that use big data from the media can search through millions of forums and social media posts. By analysing the tone of social media posts, forum posts, e-mails to government agencies, and other sources of information, sentiment-based big data in media can reveal the underlying problems in a particular area. In these posts, elements like the use of negative or positive sentences, word choice, length and readability of posts, and the characteristics of images or other media within the posts are evaluated to ascertain the mood of the public in a specific area. The use of big data in media for sentiment-based tools is still in its infancy. News networks can use technology to bring the issues of citizens to the attention of the ruling government once it has developed sufficiently and is more practical to use for journalism.

AI tools have become instrumental in mitigating bias in mainstream journalism. Because of the polarisation of news coverage, viewers enjoy picking sides and demonising people who disagree with their way of thinking and opinions. Even though from a TRP standpoint this may be profitable for news channels, if it is not addressed in the beginning it can eventually cause a fractured society.

News outlets can publish and curate content using machine learning and AI to make data journalism impartial and unbiased. Machine learning involves finding distinctive and subtle patterns in vast amounts of data. This enables AI-based applications to distinguish between authentic data and fake data with great clarity. Data journalists can produce factually

accurate articles and moreover, news reports once the non-factual data has been separated from it. Such content can also be edited so that it doesn't sound or read too biased. News production becomes more moral when using this method to develop news campaigns. Additionally, it forces an increasing number of reporters and journalists to take the ethical path when it comes to circulating information to the scores of audiences.

The impact of AI extends beyond the newsrooms of a specific news network. Media companies can more effectively manage their financial operations thanks to technology and big data. Through data-driven financial management and expense control, these technologies enable media businesses to make money by simplifying the analysis of financial documentation. In addition to identifying instances of fraud and errors in financial statements, AI-based accounting systems can also lower the number of false positives in fraud detection.

False positives are decreased, which lowers the costs associated with financial fraud investigations that would otherwise be incurred. News networks are safe when it comes to complying with financial regulations thanks to a well-calibrated financial management framework guaranteed by AI and big data in media and journalism.

AI, big data analytics, and machine learning will support human journalists and remove human error from newsgathering, making journalism more integrity-driven. News media is regarded as the fourth pillar of any democracy. Data journalism must uphold this goal in order to strengthen society and preserve a nation's democracy. Big data's emergence in journalism-

related media is expected to achieve this goal. The news media cannot escape bias because it is a global problem. But because AI's machine learning algorithms are trained to take accuracy into account, it helps to reduce the subjective interpretation of data by humans.

The use of AI tools in data journalism has developed certain flaws in the newsrooms across the globe. Certain newsrooms are not equipped with AI tools and their orientation towards technological implications in Global South compared to Global North remains lethargic. The tendency of AI algorithms to reproduce existing bias is one of the main issues with their growing use. At the moment, AI-written articles can only be found on straightforward, formulaic subjects like stock market data and sports scores.

Considering how quickly technology is developing, data journalism will play a significant role in the way we tell and visualise stories going forward. Additionally, audiences are becoming more engaged and will anticipate seeing more journalism and articles that focus on the power of the data. However, the future of AI in the domain of data journalism remains undecided. Some newsrooms already use artificial intelligence to mine data, develop algorithms, and produce content automatically. Journalists face new issues as a result of routinely using this technology. Some experts assert that we are in a transitional period and must decide how this technology will be used in the media going forward, particularly in data journalism. It's difficult to know exactly what all of the limitations may be because we are still in an early stage of the adoption of AI techniques in journalism.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE I-T ACTION (AGAINST BBC) IS POLITICAL VENDETTA OF THE BJP GOVERNMENT. THIS WILL AFFECT FREEDOM OF PRESS.

— TMC CHIEF & WEST BENGAL CM MAMATA BANERJEE



IT'S A SURVEY, NOT A RAID, SINCE BBC HAD BEEN VIOLATING TRANSFER PRICING RULES FOR A LONG TIME.

— BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON SHEHZAD POONAWALLA

IPEF is an opportunity that India should not miss

The 14 IPEF partners represent 40 per cent of global GDP and 28 per cent of global goods and services trade

India did well to host the second negotiating round of Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) in New Delhi last week, right at the beginning of the new year. The IPEF is an economic negotiating platform launched mid last year with 14 participating countries, including India, the US and several other countries in Asia and one from South Pacific.

The initiative by US President Joe Biden to advance the American influence in the strategic Indo-Pacific region intends to define "the coming decades for technological innovation and the global economy". The press statement released immediately after the launch stated: "This framework will



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

advance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness for our economies. Through this initiative, the IPEF partners aim to contribute to cooperation, stability, prosperity, development, and peace within the region."

This framework will offer tangible benefits that fuel economic activity and investment, promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and benefit workers and consumers across the region.

The 14 IPEF partners represent 40 per cent of global GDP and 28 per cent of global goods and services trade. "Immediately afterwards each country appointed their key negotia-

tors who, in turn, narrowed down the scope for future negotiations to four pillars — Trade, Clean Economy, Supply chains and Tax and anti-corruption. The IPEF represents a new age economic framework which promises to allow each participating member to pick and choose the pillars of negotiations based on its own domestic political sensitivities.

The economic clout of the IPEF, with a huge combined GDP to flout, along with an aggressive counter wave of a muscular China, trying to bully almost all countries, makes IPEF an eco-strategic framework to watch out for in the near future. China has been taking aggressive stances, including threatening sovereign spaces and rights of

many of the IPEF partner countries the US, India and Japan. China also managed to create one of the largest trading blocs through Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which is a free trade agreement (FTA) between 10 members states of the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN) and five of their FTA partners, which includes Australia, China, Republic of Korea, Japan and New Zealand.

China already has a disproportionate influence over many of its Asian neighbours (many of whom are now more closely tied with RCEP), through its opaque infrastructure funding exercise, called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI has in many cases forced

many of the beneficiary nations to get into a vicious economic southwards spiral, pushing them closer to bankruptcy, and forcing them to hand over strategic infrastructure projects such as ports, to China.

India had stayed out of the RCEP, quoting some of the severe arm-twisting tactics adopted by China and, in hindsight, it may have been good in the national interest of the country. China's main concern is to restrict India's influence in Asia and stave off any ambition of New Delhi becoming a global power with huge influence in multi nation concerns.

The changed geopolitical world order, after a once in a century pandemic, followed closely by a war in the heart

of Europe, has forced the US and Europe to start looking at alternative strategic allies, such as a rising India, as trusted partners in the Indo Pacific region. The US and EU have in their Indo-Pacific outlooks stated the urgent need for an open, transparent, rules-based Indo Pacific region where India plays a key role. China has also developed a "friendship beyond any barriers" with Russia, which is emerging as one of the biggest fallen superpowers.

However, the Russian-Chinese intimacy has huge implications for India and the western allies including the US and could eventually lead to the setting up of an alternative technology, strategic and economic framework, running in opposite direction to what is

being proposed by the democratic bunch of countries.

It is against this backdrop that India should carefully calibrate its position in the IPEF negotiations. India is the only country which has so far not joined the trade pillar of IPEF negotiations which is likely to focus on digital trade standards, labour laws and environmental financing issues, fearing huge domestic backlash on sensitive issues. The year 2023 is a politically crucial year, given general elections are scheduled for 2024. The government would like to bag some early harvest deals through IPEF.

However, taking a call on joining the trade pillar (no matter how relevant it may be) could be more of a political decision.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)

Russia fires another missile barrage at Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Russia again pummelled Ukraine with a barrage of cruise and other missiles on Thursday, hitting targets from east to west as the war's one-year anniversary nears.

One of the strikes killed a 79-year-old woman and injured at least seven other people, Ukrainian authorities said.

Russian forces used a variety of missile types, firing 36 in a two-hour overnight burst, Ukraine's military chief, Valery Zaluzhnyy, said.

Ukrainian air defense batteries shot down 16 of them, he said — a lower rate of success

than against some previous Russian waves.

Ukrainian authorities said targets in the north, west, south, east and center of the country were struck.

The head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andriy Yermak, said Russian forces "changed their tactics" for the strike, deploying what he described as "active reconnaissance" and "false targets."

Russian troops had launched balloons with corner reflectors to deceive Ukraine's air defense as part of an effort to retake some battlefield advantage after months of setbacks, Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National



Security and Defense Council, said.

"This indicates that (the Russians) are preparing and not sleeping," Danilov said on Ukrainian TV, "and they are starting to use other methods."

Ukrainian air defenses that have been strengthened by Western-supplied weapons systems and have had high rates of success against previous Russian barrages of missiles and killer drones.

One of the overnight strikes caused casualties and destroyed homes in the eastern city of Pavlohrad, the regional governor said. Gov. Serhiy Lysak said a 79-year-old woman was killed and at least

seven other people were wounded, including two who were later hospitalized.

The strike destroyed seven homes, damaged 30 others and sparked a fire at an industrial plant that emergency services put out within hours, the governor added.

A regional governor in western Ukraine, Maksym Kozitskyi, said a fire broke out at a "critical" infrastructure facility in the province of Lviv. He did not immediately offer details.

Overall, Russian attacks and shelling over the previous 24 hours killed at least seven people, Ukraine's presidential office said Thursday.

For Ukrainian circus performers, future still up in air



AP ■ BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Nearly a year since fleeing Ukraine for Hungary amid the bombs and terror of Russia's invasion, more than 100 young circus performers still hold intensive daily training sessions in Budapest while waiting to see what an uncertain future holds.

The group, whose members are between the ages of 5 and 20, found a home with the Capital Circus of Budapest after leaving their circus schools and lives between the cities of Kharkiv and Kyiv in March 2022.

Trainer Svetlana Momot, who fled Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, with an initial group of 12 of her students last year, watched and reflected Monday as some of the young circus artists swung from suspended rings, dangled from aerial silks and rehearsed acrobatic stunts in one of the Budapest circus training halls.

Momot said that in the past year, the performers had to learn to live, cook, clean and study together in close quarters. But her goal from the beginning was to ensure that, despite being uprooted from their homes, their intensive daily training would not be interrupted.

"When they're busy (with training), they don't have time to think about the bad things.

It distracts them," Momot said. "What I see is that we live as one family and as a creative team... I think it hasn't affected their training, and I try to keep them in the form they were in Ukraine."

After Russia invaded Ukraine, the Budapest circus and a Hungarian school for acrobats extended their solidarity to the Ukrainian performers, offering them accommodation, food and the ability to continue their training, Capital Circus of Budapest director Peter Fekete said.

"We have to realize that all people need a purpose in life. Even an 8-year-old child can ask the questions, 'Why am I alive, what is my purpose in the world?'" Fekete said.

"If we provide an opportunity to train, and if we set goals that we want to achieve through opportunities to perform, then in their everyday lives they won't be focused only on the difficult situation they are in, but artistic performance can fill their lives to some degree," he said.

Anna Lysytska, a 14-year-old acrobat, said it had been difficult at first to adapt to life in Hungary after fleeing her home in Kharkiv. But staying focused on her training, she said, had helped ease the transition.

From tents to tanks: Big year in Ukraine for NATO allies

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The day after Russia invaded Ukraine, the leaders of NATO's 30 member countries held an emergency summit to address what they described as the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades — the launch of what would become the biggest land war in Europe since 1945.

"In this very evolving and difficult situation, it's hard to predict what will (happen) in the future, but allies are providing support and are very committed to continue," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters. What that support might look like was an open question.

In the months that followed, Ukraine's supporters at NATO and elsewhere sent fuel, helmets, medical supplies and other non-lethal support. Then,

after much hand-wringing, came artillery and air defence systems in the hope that these would not provoke Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

NATO, as an organisation, was wary of being dragged into all-out war with nuclear-armed Russia. Technically it still is, but a year on the Ukraine Contact Defence Group this week held talks at NATO's Brussels headquarters, where the alliance's leaders, ministers and envoys usually sit.

Having just secured a promise of sorely needed battle tanks Ukraine wanted more: fighter jets. "Ukraine has to win this war," said Hanno Pevkur, the defence minister of Estonia, a Baltic country that shares a border and a long history with Russia and is extremely wary of Putin's intentions. The government has stepped up conscription and NATO has boost-



ed its troop presence there.

"We had many questions. Should we send tanks? Now this decision is made," Pevkur said. "Always, there has been the question before, and then the answer after that. We know that Ukraine needs any kind of help, and that means also jet fighters."

All that's missing, it might seem, is the boots of allied troops on the ground. Indeed, the public in Europe and North

America could be excused for believing that their taxes funding the world's most powerful security organisation are being spent in a war with Russia.

In the year since the Russians invaded, the US has provided more than USD 27 billion in military help to Ukraine. Two senior defence officials estimated this week that other allies have stumped up more than USD 19 billion worth, with over USD 1 billion

each from Britain, Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland. That's on top of the tens of billions the West is sending to keep Ukraine's battered economy afloat.

For the nationalist government of Hungary, a NATO ally, there is no doubt about what this means.

"If you send weapons, if you finance the entire annual budget of one of the belligerents, if you promise more and more weapons, more and more modern weapons, then you can say whatever you want. No matter what you say, you are in the war," Prime Minister Viktor Orban said last month.

Not so, says Stoltenberg. Even as he exhorted allies and partners this week to give Ukraine more weapons and ammunition, the former Norwegian prime minister insisted, in response to a ques-

tion from The Associated Press, that NATO is not at war with Russia.

"Neither NATO nor NATO allies are party to the conflict. What we do ... is to provide support to Ukraine. Ukraine is defending itself," he said. "The type of support that we provide to Ukraine has evolved as the war has evolved."

Indeed it has, and some of it is tough to find despite the West's best intentions. Ukraine now fires daily as many artillery shells as a small NATO country orders during a peace-time year, and Europe's defence industry just can't keep up.

"This has become a grinding war of attrition, and therefore it's also a battle of logistics, and this is a huge effort by allies to actually get in the ammunition, the fuel, the spare parts which are needed," Stoltenberg said.

Israeli FM visits Kyiv as pressure mounts over military aid

AP ■ KYIV, UKRAINE

Israel's foreign minister travelled to Kyiv on Thursday for the first public visit to Ukraine by a senior Israeli official since Russia's invasion last year.

But there were no signs that Israel was preparing to significantly increase its modest support for Ukraine or meet Ukrainian requests to provide weapons.

Foreign Minister Eli Cohen's visit came just before the first anniversary of Russia's invasion and as Western nations seek to increase aid to the country.

Since the outbreak of the war, Israel has walked a tightrope between assisting Ukraine and avoiding friction with Russia, with which it has strategic regional interests. Unlike other western countries, Israel has not imposed sanctions on Russia or Russian officials or



provided Ukraine with weapons.

It has provided humanitarian support to Ukraine, including a field hospital, and pledged to provide defensive air-raid warning systems. Ukrainian leaders have talked about some intelligence cooperation with Israel, but Israeli officials have not publicly confirmed these ties or the extent of any such cooperation.

Cohen met with Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, who said on Twitter afterwards that he was "thankful for all of the support that Israel and Israelis have provided over the past year."

"During our detailed and frank talks, we focused on ways to enhance bilateral relations, increase assistance, and address shared security challenges," he said. Yevgen Korniychuk, Ukraine's ambassador to Israel, said that Israel "again assured us that they will bring the early warning system, but they didn't say when."

Cohen was also scheduled to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and leaders of the country's Jewish community as part of the brief trip.

It was unclear whether Cohen would announce greater assistance to Ukraine during his lightning visit or whether the visit signifies greater Israeli

engagement going forward.

"We're here on an important visit of solidarity with the Ukrainian nation, which has certainly endured a very hard time in the past year," Cohen said during a visit to a mass grave memorial in Bucha, outside Kyiv. He said Israel has supported Ukraine and provided humanitarian aid, and would continue to do so.

Cohen was reminded of the hardships endured by Ukrainians when air raid sirens sounded as he entered the country's Foreign Ministry.

Cohen said earlier this year that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government "will definitely do one thing: publicly, we will talk less" about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but would keep providing Ukraine with humanitarian aid. Shortly after taking office, he spoke to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Oil-rich Norway donates USD 7.4 bn in aid to Ukraine

AP ■ COPENHAGEN (DENMARK)

The parliament of oil-rich Norway on Thursday announced that the Scandinavian country is donating 75 billion kroner (\$7.4 billion) to Kyiv as part of a five-year support package, making Norway one of the world's biggest donors to war-torn Ukraine.

In a video address to the 169-seat parliament, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked Norway for the donation.

The 10 Norwegian party leaders spoke afterward to express their support to the package. Only the socialist Red Party, which has eight seats, opposed the donation, because part of the money was earmarked for weapons.

The money will be split

evenly between military and humanitarian assistance over five years, broken down to 15 billion kroner (\$1.5 billion) annually.

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store thanked lawmakers for the support and said that the Russian invasion of Ukraine a year ago was "the first attack in Europe since World War II."

Gahr Store said the money was from oil income, and the donation should not affect the Norwegian economy. "This is money out of Norway that we should not use or would not use in Norway right now" he added.

Norway is one of Europe's largest fossil-fuel exporters, and the conflict in Ukraine has boosted its revenues. However, Norway has fended off accusations that it's profiting from the war in Ukraine.



Red Cross chief warns of health crisis in quake-hit Syria

AP ■ BEIRUT

Syria could face dangerous outbreaks of disease in the wake of last week's devastating earthquake if hundreds of thousands of displaced people do not get permanent housing soon, the Red Cross' global chief said on Thursday, as Syrians struggle to receive humanitarian aid amid the mounting crisis.

Jagan Chapagain, who is Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said families staying in makeshift shelters without adequate heating urgently need permanent housing.

"They are still living in very basic conditions in very, very cold school rooms," he told The Associated Press in an interview.

"If this continues for a long period of time, then there will be health consequences." He spoke after returning from Aleppo, Syria's largest city that for years witnessed some of the worst fighting of the country's ongoing civil war.



for Syrians' mental health. "If the conflict had broken their backs, I think this earthquake is breaking their spirit now," Chapagain said.

The deadly 7.8 magnitude earthquake that rocked Turkey and Syria over a week ago shattered parts of the war-torn country, both in the northwestern rebel-held enclave and nearby government-held areas.

An estimated 3,688 people died on both sides of the frontline in Syria, about 1,400 of them in government-held cities and towns.

Entire neighbourhoods of Aleppo have been abandoned, Chapagain added, with some residents opting to move to rural areas after the quake.

Many Syrians were displaced for a second time following the natural disaster, already leaving their homes to

escape the airstrikes and shelling. The UNHCR estimated that 5.3 million Syrians across the earthquake-hit country could be homeless if viable shelter and aid is not secured.

In the long term, Chapagain said rebuilding Syria's infrastructure, already crippled by the war, ought to be a priority. However, the civil war and economic crisis in Syria makes a swift post-earthquake recovery more complicated.

The IFRC has raised 200 million Swiss francs (USD 216.8 million) and hopes to support 2.4 million people across the country over the next two years. Dozens of planes and trucks loaded with humanitarian aid have reached government-held Syria.

The UN appealed for USD 397 million to support almost 5 million people in rebel-held northwestern Syria, almost all living in poverty.

During his tour of Aleppo, Chapagain said that aid, which has decreased over the years, was now arriving in larger quantities.

One woman told him that she had suffered from the dwindling assistance in recent years but "in some way this earthquake brought back humanitarian assistance so (she) could eat food again," he recalled.

Quake survivors wait amid rubble, to search or say goodbye

AP ■ ANTAKYA, TURKEY

Hamid Yakisikli has waited outside the pile of concrete that used to be his house since an earthquake devastated his home in the ancient city of Antakya. He and his two brothers have endured freezing conditions, in big jackets and wool hats, waiting for rescuers to retrieve the body of their mother, Fatma, from under the rubble.

Ever since the Feb. 6 earthquake decimated swathes of Turkey and Syria, survivors have gathered outside destroyed houses and apartments, refusing to leave.

Hundreds of buildings were reduced to rubble; ancient buildings lie in ruins; and the streets of Antakya's historic center were blocked by mounds of debris and furniture, dividing the city into small blocks of apocalyptic destruction. It was the most deadly quake in Turkey's modern history.

Over 2 million people have left the disaster zone in Turkey, according to the government. But here in the worst-hit city, hundreds are still waiting. At every corner, a few people look at a pile of rubble, praying for a wife, a sister, a son or a friend.

Yakisikli, a retired cook, was closest to his mother. She

lived right below him.

He was home when the quake struck. "We were on the third floor, and we just found ourselves on the ground," he said. His mother's second-floor apartment was deep underground.

Yakisikli and his brothers initially tried to climb the rubble in search of their mother. One caught a glimpse of her head through the debris — she was lifeless, lying on her back. Unable to free her body, they began a long wait.

"I can't have peace of mind without burying her," said Yakisikli, as he watched an excavator claw at the remains of the building behind his home.

The Yakisiklis only slept when the excavators turned off their engines, in a tent pitched in an abandoned school near their former home. There was no water, electricity or toilet in the tent.

"We will not feel good about leaving. We must get her out and bury her and then we see what we have to do," he said.

The Yakisikli brothers find solace in the company of the living — and the occasional laugh, as they spend the days swapping stories about their travels.

Some of the people waiting hope for a miracle.

Turkey-Syria quake: Scandal of not being prepared

THE CONVERSATION ■ LONDON

The magnitude-7.8 earthquake near Gaziantep that struck southeastern Turkey and neighbouring Syria on February 6, and the large aftershocks that followed, destroyed thousands of buildings and claimed tens of thousands of lives.

In response to criticism of the efforts to rescue buried survivors, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan reportedly said that it was "impossible to prepare for the scale of the disaster". But is he right? I don't think so, and I will explain why.

It's true that it's hard to predict when and where an earthquake can happen. Days ahead, there are occasionally warning signs of a major earthquake such as inexplicable night-time glows in the sky or unusual animal behaviour. But these signals are untrustworthy, and poorly understood. In Japan and California, there are warning systems that can give a few tens of seconds warning, setting traffic lights to red and bringing trains to a halt — but obviously not long enough for an evacuation of any kind.

The Turkish government is well aware the country sits on active fault zones in the Earth's crust, with a long



record of earthquake activity. Yet it allowed builders to flout earthquake resilience construction regulations.

Earthquake preparedness Even supposing there was a reliable system that would give, say, one day or one month's advanced warning of a big earthquake, how should it be used?

If it was up to you, would you try to move millions of people out of the area likely to be affected? Would they be willing to go? Where would they live and work afterwards if they came back to find their homes destroyed?

The best way to prepare for an earthquake disaster, and what Erdogan had it within his power to do, is to build homes and infrastructure using earthquake-resilience techniques. That way, people are not killed during the earthquake and they still have their homes afterwards.

There are many ways in which buildings can be designed and built to withstand earthquakes, so that they don't collapse. In an area at risk of large earthquakes, a multistorey building should be designed so that when the ground starts to shake, its outer walls on either side sway in unison in the same direction as each other.

If, on the contrary, opposite walls are free to sway away from each other, the intervening floors become momentarily unsupported, allowing upper floors to pancake down on to lower floors. This happened to deadly effect in Turkey.

Builders can prevent this by structurally tying floors and walls together, without making the framework of the building so rigid that it breaks, rather than bending a little. This may mean more steel and less concrete.

Markets end marginally higher amid volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices ended marginally higher on Thursday amid volatility faced during the last minutes of trading hours as concerns over rising inflation and fears of monetary tightening worldwide hit the sentiment.

The BSE Sensex eked out marginal gains of 44.42 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 61,319.51. During the day, it jumped 407.16 points or 0.66 per cent to 61,682.25.

The NSE Nifty advanced 20 points or 0.11 per cent to end at 18,035.85.

"Markets ended marginally higher in a trading session marked with extreme volatility. Traders seem to be taking a cautious stance, especially after the rout in Adani group stocks in recent weeks.

"With inflation levels once again inching up, there are concerns that central banks worldwide could continue their rate hiking trend, which could further hurt growth and dampen sentiment," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

From the Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra jumped 5.58



per cent, followed by Nestle, Tata Steel, NTPC, Tata Consultancy Services, Asian Paints, Wipro and Bajaj Finserv. Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance were among the major laggards.

"The domestic market absorbed the buoyancy in the global market, led by IT stocks, while upstream oil companies gained as a result of the slash in windfall tax. After robust jobs data, strong retail sales numbers in the US showed proof of resilience in the US economy amidst concerns over elevated inflation numbers. However, the gains were

Adani Group firms end on mixed note

Adani Wilmar climbs 5%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Adani Group firms ended on a mixed note on Thursday after rallying in the morning trade amid volatile trend in the broader market.

Adani Wilmar stock climbed 5 per cent, NDTV rallied 4.99 per cent, Adani Power jumped 4.97 per cent, Adani Ports advanced 1.45 per cent, Adani Enterprises ended 1 per cent higher and Ambuja Cements advanced 0.99 per cent on the BSE.

However, shares of Adani Total Gas tanked 5 per cent, Adani Transmission fell 4.93 per cent, Adani Green Energy dipped 0.69 per cent and ACC declined 0.55 per cent.

In the broader market, the BSE Sensex ended marginally higher by 44.42 points or 0.07 per cent at 61,319.51.

Most of the Adani Group stocks had ended higher on Wednesday.



Billionaire Gautam Adani's embattled conglomerate said its balance sheet is "very healthy" and is laser focused on continuing business momentum, as it looked to reassure investors to keep faith in the group despite a share rout triggered by a damning report by a US short-seller.

Group CFO Jugeshinder (Robbie) Singh in an earnings call said the group is confident of its internal controls, compliance and corporate governance.

"Our balance sheet is very healthy. We have industry-leading development capabilities, strong corporate governance, secure assets and strong cash flows," Singh said.

ONGC, Oil India share jumps over 5%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of ONGC and Oil India jumped on Thursday after the government reduced the levy on domestically-produced crude in line with the softening of international oil prices.

ONGC stock rallied 5.66 per cent to settle at ₹155.85 apiece on the BSE.

Shares of Oil India jumped 5.21 per cent to end at ₹260.50 each.

Upstream oil companies gained as a result of the slash in windfall tax, Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

The BSE benchmark ended 44.42 points or 0.07 per cent higher at 61,319.51.

The government has cut windfall profit tax on export of diesel and ATF to their lowest while also reducing the levy on domestically-produced crude in line with the softening of international oil prices, according to an official order.

The levy on crude oil produced by companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has been cut to ₹4,350 per tonne from ₹5,050 per tonne, the order dated February 15 said. Crude oil pumped out of the ground and from below the seabed is refined.

India's exports rise in both value, volume terms in 2022: GTRI report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's merchandise exports have recorded a healthy growth in both value and volume terms in 2022, economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said in a report on Thursday.

The outbound shipments rose by 14.6 per cent year-on-year to \$453.3 billion in 2022.

"The study found that products where exports increased to cover a value of \$315.9 billion (69.8 per cent of total merchandise exports). But, products whose export quantities increased over the previous year represent \$285.6 billion (63 per cent of total exports)," it said.

Major product categories which have recorded growth in both value and volume terms include petroleum products, sugar, and basmati rice.

"Petroleum products, including diesel, gasoline and naphtha represent an export value of \$94 billion. The unit price rose between 50-115 per cent in one year. The high unit prices may be primarily due to the high prices of crude oil. Sugar saw a unit value increase



of 15 per cent, with exports of over \$5 billion," it added.

It said that Gold jewelry and similar products with an export value of about \$9 billion saw lower unit value realization in 2022. Similarly, hot rolled steel products with exports of \$769 million in 2022 saw a decline of 26.2 per cent in unit value realization.

"Exports in 2022 saw a healthy trend with products covering 63 per cent of export value and saw an increase in the quantity of export," the report said.

Further products where India's exports have been traditionally strong but now feeling regulatory heat in a few countries or low global demand include shrimps, and iron-ore pellets.

Imports of steel minimal; domestic industry progressing tremendously: Min



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The inbound shipment of steel is "very minimal", Steel minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia said on Thursday amid industry flagging the issue of "cheap imports".

"If you look at the numbers, the rise is very very minimal. Our market is growing tremendously and our domestic producers are supplying well," the minister told PTI in reply to a question on increasing imports.

According to industry data, imports of finished steel rose by 21 per cent to 4.77 million tonnes (MT) in 2022 from 3.94 MT in 2021.

Alok Sahay, secretary general of Indian Steel Association (ISA), said the industry is undergoing the pressure of supply chain issues coupled with increasing raw material prices.

ISA is the apex industry body of steel sector.

The prices of key raw material coking coal have registered a sharp increase of 55 per cent from \$248 per tonne on December 1, 2022 to \$345 a tonne on February 15, he said.

"Steel is exported to India by FTA (free trade agreement) countries at lower than their domestic prices, which is nothing but dumping. We have been repeatedly raising the issue of cheap imports with the ministry," Sahay said.

Coking coal is a key raw material used in manufacturing of steel and India remains dependent on imports to meet over 85 per cent of its coking coal requirement.

BoB, IOB hike lending rates; SBI marginally ups deposit rates

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Bank of Baroda and Indian Overseas Bank have increased their marginal cost of fund-based lending rates (MCLR), following a hike in the interest rates on loans and deposits by their largest public sector peer SBI.

The latest hikes in the interest rates come days after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on February 8 increased the borrowing costs by 25 basis points (bps).

The RBI's six-member Monetary Policy Committee had raised the benchmark repurchase or repo rate to 6.50 per cent in its latest bi-monthly policy review. This was the sixth straight increase in interest rates since May last year, and the cumulative hike now totals 250 bps.

State-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) has increased its



MCLR by 5 bps across all tenors from February 12.

The bank has revised one-year MCLR to 8.55 per cent from 8.5 per cent. The overnight, one-month and three-month MCLR stand at 7.9, 8.2 and 8.3 per cent, respectively, according to its website.

Another state-run lender Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has raised its MCLR by up to 15 bps across all tenors.

Its one-year MCLR is up to 8.45 per cent from 8.30 per cent now. Similarly, one-month, three-month and six-month MCLR are up by 15 bps to 7.9,

8.2 and 8.35 per cent, respectively, while its overnight, two-year and three-year MCLR have been revised upwards by 10 bps.

Both the banks have not increased their deposit rates yet.

State Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday increased the MCLR-linked loans by 10 bps across the overnight and up to three year category of loans — varying from 7.95 per cent to 8.70 per cent, effective February 15.

The nation's largest lender also increased deposit rates by 5-25 bps effective February 15.

With the revised rates, senior citizens will get 8.5 per cent on deposits of over five years, while others will get 5 bps more on three year funds and 25 bps on longer-term funds, according to the bank's website.

'Godrej Appliances expects 20% growth in gross sales in FY24'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Godrej Appliances, part of the diversified firm Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co, expects a 20 per cent increase in gross sales at around ₹6,200 crore in FY24, according to a top company official.

"The company is expecting contribution from its premium products of up to 40 per cent from 35 per cent at present, Godrej Appliances Business Head and Executive Vice President Kamal Nandi said.

"The gross sales of Godrej Appliances is expected to be around ₹5,200 crore in FY23 and with a close 20 per cent growth, we would be around ₹6,200 crore," Nandi told PTI.

The company, which on Thursday unveiled a new range of residential air conditioners, expects a two-fold growth from this vertical to ₹1,200 crore.

"We are expecting a severe summer and may be an elon-



gated one and as result, demand for the cooling category will be high," he said, adding, this will not be high from last year but also better than pre-Covid years.

Last year, the demand tapered down due to intermittent rains and the inflationary trend also forced the companies to go for the revised price hikes, he added.

"Sentiments are much better than last year and this year. We can also expect more discretionary spending this year as people will have more money in their hands with tax reliefs," he said.

'India's investment in pvt wireless network seen at \$250 m by 2027, major 5G uptake expected'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's investment in private wireless network is expected to reach nearly USD 250 million by 2027, according to a report by Nokia that also talked of a three-fold jump in mobile data usage in the country over last five years.

Nokia's annual Mobile Broadband Index (MBI) report pointed towards a significant acceleration in enterprise investment, and anticipated a major 5G uptake starting second half of 2023.

Enterprise spending on private 5G networks will be driven by new use cases in diverse industry verticals, including manufacturing, utilities, transportation and healthcare, among others in India, as per the report.

"India's investment in private wireless network is expect-

ed to reach around USD 250 million by 2027," the report said.

The report outlined that mobile data traffic in India has risen 3.2 times over the last five years. All India mobile data usage per month grew from 4.5 exabytes in 2018 to 14.4 exabytes in 2022.

Further, the average data consumption per user has risen "sharply" since 2018, reaching 19.5 GB per user per month in 2022. To put things in perspective, this is equivalent to 6,600 songs.

The average monthly data traffic per user was pegged at 9.7 GB in 2018, and has grown at 19 per cent compounded annual growth rate up to 2022.

At an aggregate level, total mobile data consumed in India is expected to more than double by 2024, Nokia report said.

Rupee gains 13 paise to close at 82.70 against US dollar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The rupee appreciated by 13 paise to close at 82.70 (provisional) against the US currency on Thursday, supported by broad dollar weakness and a positive trend in domestic equities.

Forex traders said upbeat domestic trade deficit data and foreign fund inflows supported investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.72 against the American currency and finally settled at 82.70 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 13 paise over its previous close of 82.83.

During the trading session, the rupee touched a high of 82.59 and a low of 82.73 against the dollar.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength



end. The US PPI data will be released today evening, which may give a direction to the currencies which are moving in a small range," Bhansali said.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 44.42 points or 0.07 per cent to end at 61,319.51, while the broader NSE Nifty rose 20.00 points or 0.11 per cent to 18,035.85.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital market on Wednesday as they purchased shares worth ₹432.15 crore, according to exchange data.

India's trade deficit in January narrowed to a 12-month low of \$17.75 billion as imports declined 3.63 per cent year-on-year to \$50.66 billion. Exports in January dipped 6.58 per cent to \$32.91 billion, as against \$35.23 billion a year ago.

Gold falls ₹50; Silver jumps ₹140

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price fell by ₹50 to ₹56,270 per 10 gram in the national capital on Thursday, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had touched ₹56,320 per 10 gram.

Silver, however, jumped ₹140 to ₹65,720 per kilogram.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at ₹56,270 per 10 gram, down ₹50 per 10 gram," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities.

In the overseas market, both gold and silver were trading higher at \$1,840 per ounce and \$21.69 per ounce.

Zomato setting up 'Rest Points' for delivery partners

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Online food delivery platform Zomato on Thursday said it is building public infrastructure called 'Rest Points' to support the entire gig economy and delivery partners of various companies.

In a blog post, the company's Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal informed that it already has two 'Rest Points' operational in Gurgaon and plans to create more rest points in the most dense clusters of its food delivery business.

Rest Points offer clean drinking water, phone-charging stations, access to washrooms, high-speed internet, a 24x7 helpdesk and first-aid support. Goyal, however, did not disclose the number or the location for setting up these Rest Points.

Now, HDFC Bank customers can link Rupay credit cards to UPI

Mumbai: HDFC Bank has become the first private sector lender to offer its customers the option to use their Rupay credit cards on the unified payments interface (UPI).

Till last year, UPI was being linked to savings accounts from where the payments used to be debited.

From now on, HDFC Bank Rupay credit cards can be linked to a UPI ID enabling a customer to use the credit card on popular payments platforms. The bank's country head for payments Parag Rao said this move will offer customers even more flexibility and convenience to make digital payments.

Windfall tax on crude oil, export of diesel, ATF cut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has cut windfall profit tax on export of diesel and ATF to their lowest while also reducing the levy on domestically-produced crude in line with softening international oil prices, according to an official order.

The levy on crude oil produced by companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has been cut to ₹4,350 per tonne from ₹5,050 per tonne, the order dated February 15 said.

Crude oil pumped out of the ground and from below the seabed is refined and converted into fuels like petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

The government has also cut the tax on export of diesel to ₹2.5 per litre from ₹7.5, and the same on overseas shipments



of ATF to ₹1.50 a litre from Rs 6 a litre.

The new tax rates come into effect from February 16.

The reduction follows an increase in the levy effected earlier this month.

The export levy on diesel is the lowest since the tax was introduced in July last year. The rate on export of jet fuel (ATF) equals the lowest rate hit in second half of December.

India first imposed windfall profit taxes on July 1, joining a growing number of nations that tax super normal profits of energy companies. At that time, export duties of Rs 6 per litre (USD 12 per barrel) each were levied on petrol and ATF and ₹13 a litre (\$26 a barrel) on diesel.

A ₹23,250 per tonne (\$40 per barrel) windfall profit tax on domestic crude production was also levied.

The export tax on petrol was scrapped in the very first review. Reliance Industries Ltd, which operates the world's largest single-location oil refinery complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat, and Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy are primary exporters of fuel in the country. The government levies tax on windfall profits made by oil producers on any price they get above a threshold of \$75 per barrel.

Sebi mandates brokers, depositories to maintain websites

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to bring in transparency, capital markets regulator Sebi on Thursday mandated all stock brokers and depositories to maintain websites.

A designated website brings in transparency and helps the investors to keep themselves well informed about the various activities of the Stock broker (SB) and



Depository participant (DP).

In view of the same, considering the advancement in technology and need to provide better services to the investors, all SBs and DPs have been mandated to maintain a designated website, Sebi said in a circular.

'Flying' Adeyemi sinks Chelsea

AP ■ DORTMUND
A superb length-of-the-field goal from Borussia Dortmund forward Karim Adeyemi helped his side to a 1-0 win over Chelsea on Wednesday, putting them in the box seat to qualify for the Champions League quarter-finals.

Adeyemi's goal came during a period of sustained dominance from the visitors early in the second half, with the Germany forward pouncing on a clearance from a Chelsea corner.

Adeyemi sensed the opportunity and ran the length of the field, rounding both Enzo Fernandez and goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga to give Dortmund the lead in the first leg tie.

Dortmund captain Jude Bellingham told German TV when Adeyemi finds himself in space "not many players can really stop him."

"He had a tough time coming here at the start - finding his feet - but now he's flying."

After the match, Adeyemi praised his side's desire to fight for giving them an advantage ahead of March's



return leg in London. "I had a little bit of luck, but I'm really happy about the goal," he said. "Everyone fought for everyone else - (the win) was

really important for the return leg." Chelsea manager Graham Potter hailed his team's performance but lamented their failure to score.

"We were close to scoring ourselves. They broke on us. It's disappointing, we need to do better."

"We have a team in progress, we know there are a

lot of positive things there." The win means Dortmund only need a draw in London to progress to the quarter-finals for the second time in the past four years.

Benfica with one foot in CL quarters

AP ■ BRUGES

Benfica closed in on a place in the quarter-finals of this season's Champions League after easing to a 2-0 victory over Club Brugge in Belgium in the first leg of their last-16 tie on Wednesday.

Both goals came in the second half at the Jan Breydelstadion, with Joao Mario opening the scoring from the penalty spot six minutes after the restart and substitute David Neres putting daylight between the teams by pouncing on sloppy defending to add another goal late on.

The Portuguese league leaders, who lost to Liverpool in the last eight last season, will be expected to complete the job when the sides meet in Lisbon for the second leg on March 7.

"When you play the first leg away from home in a Champions League tie and win it is always a good first step. We are halfway there," Benfica coach Roger Schmidt told broadcasters Eleven Sports.

Schmidt's team have lost just once in their domestic league in this campaign and topped their Champions League group ahead of Paris Saint-Germain and Juventus.



They do not appear to have been seriously affected by the loss of star midfielder Enzo Fernandez, the Argentine World Cup winner who was sold to Chelsea for 121 million euros (\$132m) last month.

Benfica were simply too strong for a Club Brugge side who have won just once in eight matches since former England midfielder Scott

Parker was appointed as their coach at the end of December. "Naturally a 2-0 defeat isn't something you can be happy with, but I have seen a lot of positive things in this game," Parker said.

"I'm just super proud of the team. After five weeks of coaching them, I'm finally seeing what I was looking for. But little mistakes lost us this game tonight."

Man City sink Arsenal to seize top spot



AP ■ MANCHESTER

Pep Guardiola hailed Manchester City's second half power surge as the champions knocked Arsenal off the top of the Premier League with a crucial 3-1 win on Wednesday.

Guardiola's side showed they are not ready to surrender the title with a ruthless display of finishing that lifted them above Arsenal on goal difference.

Kevin De Bruyne put City ahead in the first half at the Emirates Stadium and, although Bukayo Saka equalised with a controversial penalty, Jack Grealish landed the vital blow in the second half when he restored the visitors' lead.

Erling Haaland's 26th goal in 22 league appearances for City killed off Arsenal in the closing stages.

In the most eagerly anticipated Premier League clash this season, City seized the momentum in the title race.

Although Arsenal have a

game in hand that could tip the balance back in their favour, City headed home with renewed belief they can win a fifth title in six seasons.

Having trailed Arsenal by eight points a month ago, Guardiola's men have won four of their last five league games, while Arsenal have stumbled.

The race could yet reach a memorable climax, with City due to host Arsenal on April 26 in what is shaping up to be a do-or-die showdown for both teams.

"OK, now we are top of the league, but Arsenal have one game in hand. Winning or losing, you have a lot of games to play, but of course coming here and winning against that team is good," Guardiola said.

Bidding for their first Premier League title since 2003-04, Arsenal were unable to subdue City's battle-hardened stars.

Mikel Arteta's team have failed to win their last four games in all competitions, los-

ing to City in the FA Cup before a surprise defeat at Everton and Saturday's draw against Brentford.

CITY TURN SCREW

City took the lead in the 24th minute when Grealish harassed Takehiro Tomiyasu into a miscued backpass.

De Bruyne pounced on the mistake with a perfectly-weighted chip from the edge of the area that floated over out-of-position keeper Aaron Ramsdale into the net.

Arsenal drew level in debatable fashion three minutes before half-time.

As Eddie Nketiah flicked a shot goalwards from a tight angle, Ederson raced off his line and collided with the Arsenal striker just before the ball was cleared off the line by Nathan Ake.

Ederson appeared to be trying to pull out of the challenge but Anthony Taylor awarded a penalty despite City's furious protests and Saka stepped up to send Ederson the wrong way with a nerveless strike.

In the midst of a frantic clash, it was City who kept their heads and gradually turned the screw.

Gabriel's foul on Haaland was ruled a penalty but the Norwegian star was just outside when he received Kyle Walker's pass and the spot-kick decision was overturned.

Yet City's pressure paid off in the 72nd minute as a sweeping move cut through the Arsenal defence.

Gabriel conceded possession too easily and Silva, Haaland and Ilkay Gundogan exchanged passes before Grealish applied the finishing touch, driving a deflected strike past Ramsdale to send Guardiola into a jubilant, fist-pumping jig on the touchline.

Haaland sealed the points in the 82nd minute, drilling into the far corner from De Bruyne's cross.

Benzema bags two penalties as Madrid defeat Elche

AP ■ MADRID

Karim Benzema netted two penalties as Real Madrid breezed to a 4-0 win over rock-bottom Elche on Wednesday to cut the gap on La Liga leaders Barcelona back to eight points.

Carlo Ancelotti's team did not play at the weekend because of their involvement in the Club World Cup in Morocco, which they presented to supporters at the Santiago Bernabeu.

It was Madrid's second trophy of the season, after the European Super Cup, but if they are to add La Liga to their haul they have a big job on their hands.

Marco Asensio opened the scoring and veteran midfielder Luka Modric rounded off the rout on an easy night for Los Blancos.

"Here nothing is impossible," Eduardo Camavinga told DAZN, pledging to fight for the title until the end of the season.

"We saw it last season in the

Champions League and we will play until the end."

The French midfielder said he was happy to return to his usual position in midfield after a spell on the left of the defence.

"I like playing as pivot more, I'm not a full-back, I played there to help the team," he added.

"Today I was a pivot and I am happy."

Madrid were without winger Vinicius Junior, suspended, while Eder Militao returned after injury, forcing Antonio Rudiger to drop to the bench.

Bottom of the table visitors Elche, with only one win all season, were ideal opponents for Madrid to face to resume their league campaign against.

Pablo Machin's side offered the hosts a guard of honour before the game and it only got more comfortable for Los Blancos from there.

Marco Asensio put the Spanish champions ahead after eight minutes with a fine indi-



vidual goal, driving into the area and stroking into the bottom corner.

Benzema had an effort saved by Edgar Badia and then nodded a good chance off target, but he didn't have to wait long.

The French forward's header was handled by Enzo Roco in the area after half an hour and Benzema sent Badia the wrong way from the spot.

Rodrygo earned Madrid a second penalty before half-time when he beat Diego Gonzalez and was clumsily felled. Having fired his first into the top right corner, this time Benzema chose the top left and although Badia went that way he could not claw it out.

Benzema's brace took him to 11 league goals for the season, three short of leader Robert Lewandowski at Barcelona.

Modric smashed home Madrid's fourth goal, driving into the top left corner from just inside the box to round off the rout.

Conte set for more time away from Spurs



AP ■ LONDON

Tottenham manager Antonio Conte is set for another spell away from the touchline to recover from

gallbladder surgery.

The Italian has remained in his homeland after taking charge of Spurs' 1-0 defeat to AC Milan in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Conte had returned to the bench for Saturday's 4-1 defeat at Leicester after undergoing surgery on February 1.

"Following a routine post-operation check in Italy yesterday, Antonio Conte will remain at his family home to further and fully recover from his recent gallbladder surgery," a Tottenham statement said on Thursday.

"Health is the most important consideration and everyone at the club wishes him well. Cristian Stellini will assume first-team responsibility."

Assistant boss Stellini took charge of a 1-0 win over Manchester City earlier this month with Conte providing input from Italy.

Spurs, who sit fifth in the Premier League, host West Ham in a London derby on Sunday.

Nicole sacked as Salernitana coach

AP ■ ROME

Serie A strugglers Salernitana on Wednesday fired coach Davide Nicola for the second time in a month.

Salernitana, just four points above the relegation zone, officially confirmed what Italian media had been reporting with a series of brief statements on their website.

"U.S. Salernitana 1919 announces that it has relieved Mr. Davide Nicola of his duties as First Team coach."

Nicola wasn't alone in looking for a new job on Wednesday when fourth-bottom Spezia, two points behind Salernitana, said they had fired coach Luca Gotti.

In mid-January, Salernitana had announced



Nicola was out after an 8-2 rout against Atalanta Bergamo.

But owner, Danilo Iervolino, changed his mind and gave a reprieve to the coach who unexpectedly kept the club up last season.

But they lost at Verona 1-0 on Monday.

Salernitana quickly posted photos showing Paulo Sousa taking training earlier in the day.

Rublev, Zverev crash in Rotterdam



AP ■ ROTTERDAM

Fifth-ranked Andrey Rublev and former world number two Alexander Zverev both crashed out of the Rotterdam ATP event on Wednesday.

Second seed Rublev went down 6-4, 6-4 to Australia's Alex De Minaur who goes on to face American serve-and-volleyer Maxime Cressy for a quarter-final place.

Rublev was the second seeded player to exit on Wednesday after Polish world number 10 and fifth seed Hubert Hurkacz lost to Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5) in the last 16.

Zverev, now ranked 17 in the world and attempting to rebuild his career after suffering ankle ligament damage at the French Open last year, slipped to a second round 4-

Alcaraz makes winning return

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

Carlos Alcaraz made a winning return to tennis after a four-month injury absence on Wednesday, defeating Serbia's Laslo Djere to advance to the quarter-finals of the Argentina Open in Buenos Aires.

The 19-year-old Spaniard showed signs of

ring-rustiness during a two-hour battle on the Court Guillermo Vilas before sealing a 6-2, 4-6, 6-2 victory against Djere, the world number 57.

World number two Alcaraz's quarter-final opponent Lajovic advanced to the last eight earlier Wednesday with a 6-3, 6-1 win over Camilo Ugo.

knocked out French qualifier Constant Lestienne 6-4, 6-4.

Three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka made the last-eight by seeing off fellow former top 10 rival Richard Gasquet 6-3, 6-3.

The Swiss veteran won the tournament in 2015 and advanced to the final in 2019.

Swiatek routs Collins at Doha Open

AP ■ DOHA

World number one Iga Swiatek needed just 53 minutes to rout Danielle Collins and reach the Doha Open quarter-finals on Wednesday.

The reigning French and US Open champion, playing her first match since a shock last-16 exit at the Australian Open, defeated 42nd-ranked Collins of the United States 6-0, 6-1.

The Polish star will tackle last weekend's Abu Dhabi champion and world number nine Belinda Bencic for a semi-final spot.

Bencic rallied to defeat Victoria Azarenka 1-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 after being 6-1, 4-1 down at one stage.

World number six Coco Gauff opened her Doha cam-



paign with a 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) win over two-time champion Petra Kvitova.

Kvitova, the champion in Doha in 2018 and 2021, racked up 21 winners but was undone by 31 unforced errors to Gauff's 14.

The 18-year-old Gauff will next face Veronika Kudermetova, who reached her fourth quarter-final of 2023 with a 6-2, 7-5 defeat of

former Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin.

American second seed Jessica Pegula saved two match points to defeat former French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko 6-2, 2-6, 7-5.

Pegula will next face Beatriz Haddad Maia after the Brazilian defeated sixth-seeded Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 7-6 (9/7).

India eye another big win against Aus

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

KL Rahul's prolonged run of failures remains a worry but India will still start as overwhelming favourites for another three-day finish when they take on Australia in the second Test here from Friday.

The match will be one of Indian cricket's understated warrior Cheteshwar Pujara's 100th Test, a feat achieved after 13 years of sweat and toil.

While Pujara would like to savour the momentous personal milestone with a 20th Test ton, one can't but paper over the concerns around India's top-order.

Save skipper Rohit Sharma, who was regal in attack and classical in defence during his hundred on a slow turner in Nagpur, the others failed to get going in the opener. Besides Rahul, the list of strugglers includes the peerless Virat Kohli and, to an extent, Pujara.

Kohli is leaving no stone unturned to up the ante while facing the spinners. Round two of Kohli versus Nathan Lyon and Todd Murphy could be equally enticing.

RAHUL AND HIS WOES

Time is running out for Rahul as Virat Kohli's heir apparent, Shubman Gill, is waiting in the wings despite being in prime form.

Having wasted so many opportunities in his 46-Test career with a below par average of 34, it will be interesting to see what call is taken by the Indian team management if the 30-year-old Karnataka man endures another failure before the squad for the last two Tests is announced.

With Ravichandran Ashwin and



THE MATCH WILL BE ONE OF INDIA'S UNDERSTATED WARRIOR CHETESHWAR PUJARA'S 100TH TEST, A FEAT ACHIEVED AFTER 13 YEARS OF SWEAT AND TOIL

Ravindra Jadeja putting enormous pressure on the Australians during the hosts' comprehensive innings win in Nagpur, one can confidently say that another slow turner will greet the visitors at the Ferozshah Kotla.

Unless Australia bat out of their skin, they won't even be able to stretch it to the fifth day.

The Ferozshah Kotla tracks, after the initial moisture dries up, turn as dead as a dodo.

India head coach Rahul Dravid had no hesitation in admitting that in the recent past, it has been the middle-order trio of Ravindra Jadeja, the now-injured Rishabh Pant and the fit-again Shreyas Iyer that has bailed the team out on most occasions.

Even in the opening Test, it was left to the duo of Axar Patel and Jadeja to out-bat Australia.

The Kotla pitch promises to be a touch slower than Jamtha, and hence, the Indian batters need to follow their skipper's template and employ a judicious blend of attack with defence.

With shorter boundary on one side, Australia skipper Pat Cummins will be wary of bringing in Nathan Lyon from the Old Pavilion end, as the

leg side boundary would be barely 60 metres.

IYER OR SKY

Shreyas Iyer has completed his rehab after suffering a lower back injury and as per the current team management's convention, any player who was performing before getting injured would get his place back in the playing XI.

Dravid, in fact, said that "if Iyer is able to take workload of five-day Test, he will walk into the side".

If anyone knows Dravid, the operatives are always between the lines.

Iyer hasn't played competitive cricket for more than 30 days and will it be risky to throw him straight into a Test match even before checking his match fitness? That's a tricky call.

In the case of Surya, more than being Iyer's replacement, India is looking at him replicating Pant's cavalier approach in the middle-order as Kona Bharat is more of a keeper who can also bat decently.

WARNER DROPPED?

David Warner's lean patch in Test matches has been a matter of concern for Australia. The manner in which Mohammed Shami sent his off stump cartwheeling didn't make for a pretty picture and whether he gets another chance remains to be seen.

Having already brought in an additional left arm spinner in Matt Kuhneman in the squad, it will also be interesting to see whether Australia decide to go with three tweakers.

Mitchell Starc, if fit, could replace Scott Boland as the Kotla pitch, with no tangible help off the surface, could seriously dent the confidence of the burly Victorian.



Can't change my whole game but I am more open to tweaks now: Pujara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Known for his workman-like approach to batting, Cheteshwar Pujara on Thursday said he has understood the need to have some flexibility in order to stay relevant in Tests, the only format that he plays.

Pujara, standing on the cusp of his 100th Test after an international career spanning over a decade and a half, has added new shots to his repertoire after discussions with the team management.

Last year, Pujara was briefly dropped from the Indian team during a home series against Sri Lanka after claims that he "wasn't able to move the game" and put pressure on the bowlers.

Against this backdrop, how difficult was it to stay true to his methods?

"Certainly, it was challenging, but the most important part is you need to be mentally strong, believe in yourself," Pujara said on the eve of the second Test against Australia.

"I know how I got success in first five-seven years for what I have done and I can't change my game, but obviously, you can fine tune and add things to your game. But you can't change your entire game," said the man with 7000 plus Test runs and 19 centuries.

There is also the challenge of competing with multi-format players, who probably possess a different dimension of attacking game.

"Each and every player

has different style. What I have learnt in all these years is to stick to your strengths and you need to back that and I have added few shots to my game in last couple of years and continuing to grow as a cricketer."

Dropped from the Indian team, he went back to English county cricket, scored heavily for Sussex, and made a comeback to become the 13th Indian to play 100 Tests.

"I had already spoken to Rahul bhai (Dravid) and Vicky paaji (Vikram Rathour) and although I was left out of team, I had clear communication that there were certain things I had to work on and there will be opportunities to play for India," Pujara stated.

"I got my opportunity again to play that one-off Test match in England and I was ready, I played first-class games for Sussex and scored enough runs, got enough confidence," he added.

Pujara said he is now open to playing some unorthodox shots in the traditional format.

"That has opened my mindset and I want to implement these in Test, you are little more open-minded and flexible and that has helped me even in last series against Bangladesh, and when we needed to accelerate and I had to play few shots, I could do that. I have been a little more open minded and flexible to changes and adapt to situations and be open to changes in technique."

Australian spinners struggling with low bounce: Cummins

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spinner Nathan Lyon and Scampany's effectiveness on Indian tracks has been curtailed because of low carry as they are used to bowling on bouncy Australian pitches, conceded skipper Pat Cummins on Thursday.

Though Australia's young Test debutant spinner Todd Murphy took seven wickets, Nathan Lyon could manage just one even as Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja ran through the visitors' batting lineup to help India win the

Nagpur Test.

Lyon bowled 49 overs in the opening Test with only Suryakumar Yadav's wicket to show for his efforts.

Cummins said that his spin unit is still adjusting to the changes. "It's an adjustment. Even the last game we saw a lot of around the wicket bowling, whereas in Australia it's mainly over-the-wicket bowling. The close catchers don't feel like the ball is going to pop up as much when there isn't much bounce. It is bit of an adjustment," Cummins said.

"Using side-spinners, just

changing up your angles a bit more. All those things come into a bit more. I think the bowlers did a really good job, both spinners (in the) last game (in Nagpur). It's a bit of an adjustment but in some ways it doesn't get any better."

Tracks in western India are predominantly made with red soil, while up north it is black soil. While the colour of the soil had changed, Cummins feels the nature of the pitch will not change a lot.

"Not too sure, really. It's different soil here (Delhi), the black soil, but it looks pretty sim-



ilar. I think it's going to spin. That's our expectation and the wicket matches that. We will see," the skipper said.

The skipper said that both rookie left-arm spinner Matt Kuhnemann and the tried and tested Ashton Agar were an option for the second Test.

"We are open to both (Kuhnemann and Agar) options. Both, we are really confident will do a fantastic job out there. They both had long sessions the last couple of days and looked awesome. If we wanted a third spinner variety we'd be comfortable with either of those two."

England take control of first NZ Test

AP ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

High-octane batting and a precocious day-one declaration put England in control of the first Test against New Zealand in Mount Maunganui on Thursday.

The Black Caps limped to 37-3 at stumps in the day-night Test at the Bay Oval, having been thrusted on to the back foot by England's swash-buckling 325-9 declared.

The tourists raced to their total in just 58.2 overs -- boosted by blistering half-centuries to Ben Duckett and Harry Brook -- as England opened the two-Test series with the sort of attacking approach, dubbed "Bazball", that has carried them to nine wins from their past 10 Tests under coach Brendon McCullum.

England captain Ben Stokes instructed his lower-order batsmen to throw the bat before calling them in, leaving 18 overs to bowl at the Black Caps under lights with a new pink ball.

The play worked as Tom Latham, Kane Williamson and Henry Nicholls departed before reaching double fig-



ures. Evergreen seamer James Anderson took 2-11, including the key wicket of Williamson following an lbw review.

Opener Devon Conway will resume on 18 and night-

watchman Neil Wagner on four, with a deficit of 288 runs staring at them on Friday.

It was a grim response to an England innings that featured 48 fours and one towering six from Brook off the bowling of New Zealand cap-

Stokes, Bairstow, Archer return for The Hundred 2023

AP ■ LONDON

England Test captain Ben Stokes has been retained by the Northern Superchargers for this year's edition of The Hundred after missing last year's event due to a heavy workload.

Jonny Bairstow and Jofra Archer will also remain with the Welsh Fire and Southern Brave respectively on their return after missing The Hundred 2022 due to injury.

The eight Hundred franchises confirmed their retained list on Thursday with a draft to make up the remainder of their squads set for March 23.

Teams in the men's competition were able to retain 10 players while the women's franchises could keep four of their 2022 group.

Smriti Mandhana, who was the most expensive player at last week's inaugural Indian Women's Premier League auction, is retained by the Southern Brave.

England one-day captain Jos Butler remains with the Manchester Originals and Moeen Ali is hoping to go one better as Birmingham Phoenix captain after finishing runners-up in 2021.

Blair Tickner (1-72) and Scott Kugegejin (2-80) to claim their maiden Test wickets.

However, momentum was snatched back by the in-form Brook, who accelerated to 89 off 81 balls, supported by 38 from Ben Foakes.

Hope & Powell named white-ball captains of Windies cricket team

AP ■ MIAMI

Shai Hope was named the new captain of the West Indies ODI team on Wednesday, with Rovman Powell taking the reigns of the T20 side.

Nicholas Pooran had held both positions but stood down after the team's early exit from the T20 World Cup in November.

Cricket West Indies (CWI) announced the two appointments ahead of next month's tour of South Africa when the Caribbean team face the Proteas in three ODIs and three T20s.

"It is a tremendous honour and privilege to be appointed captain of any West Indies team," said Barbadian wicket-keeper/batsman Hope.

"To lead a team that is of such incredible significance not only to myself and my teammates but to our legion of fans the world over, is something one dreams of as a child," he added.

Batsman Powell was pro-



moted from vice-captain after showing leadership qualities in regional cricket for his native Jamaica.

"For me, this is a huge vote of confidence and I see this as the greatest honour of my career. I'm a passionate cricketer who believes in leading from the front and always giving 100 percent," he said.

Kraigg Brathwaite is the captain of the West Indies Test team.

Muneeba hits landmark century as Pakistan win

AP ■ CAPE TOWN

Opening batter Muneeba Ali became the first ever woman to score a hundred for Pakistan in T20s when she smashed 102 to set-up a 70-run win over Ireland in the T20 World Cup at Newlands on Wednesday.

The bespectacled left-hander spurred Pakistan to a total of 165 for five after they were sent in to bat.

Ireland were bowled out for 95, with left-arm spinner Nashra Sandhu claiming career-best figures of four for 18.

The slightly-built Muneeba had not previously scored a half-century in 44 T20Is although she made a ODI hundred against the same opponents in Lahore last November.

BRIEF SCORES

Pakistan 165-5 in 20 overs (Muneeba Ali 102, Nida Dar 33; A. Kelly 2-27) v Ireland 95 in 16.3 overs (O. Prendergast 31; Nashra Sandhu 4-18, Nida Dar 2-5, Sadia Iqbal 2-17).

Unadkat, Sakariya rattle Bengal; hand Saurashtra edge in Ranji final

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bengal's dream of winning the Ranji Trophy after more than three decades suffered a setback as left-arm Saurashtra pace duo of Jaydev Unadkat and Chetan Sakariya rattled the home team's top-order to bundle them out for a paltry 174 on the opening day of the summit clash here on Thursday.

It would have been more embarrassing for Bengal but spin all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed (69) and wicketkeeper Abhishek Porel (50) saved the hosts from the blushes with gritty half-centuries.

The duo showed the way

for the top-order in a 101-run stand for the seventh wicket and batted close to four hours to frustrate Saurashtra.

But they looked in a sense of urgency and took risks as Saurashtra wrapped up Bengal innings' with left-arm spinner Dharmendrasingh Jadeja (2/19) scalping two wickets.

At close on day one, Saurashtra were 81 for 2, trailing Bengal by 93 runs.

In-form opener Harvik Desai (38), who has more than 600 runs this season, was at the crease with night watchman Sakariya (2).

The duo survived some late charge by Bengal pace duo of Akash Deep and Mukesh



With their leading run-getter of the season Aprit Vasavada (826 runs at 75.06) yet to come along with the prolific duo of Sheldon Jackson (529) & Chirag Jani (509), Saurashtra would definitely fancy a first innings lead

Kumar to bring the deficit under 100.

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Bengal bowlers looked pedestrian at start but Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar took some purchase in the fag end of the day to dismiss Jay Gohil (6) and Vishvaraj Jadeja (25) respectively.

Making a comeback after being released from the Test side, Unadkat (3/44) produced

a terrific opening spell of 5-2-7-2, while Sakariya (3/33) made the ball talk in initially to reduce Bengal to 17 for 4 inside 31 minutes.

Bengal lost half of their side at the score of 34 for 5 in one hour and 13 minutes with third seamer Chirag Jani (2/33) also making good use of the lively Eden surface.

BRIEF SCORES

Bengal: 174 all out in 54.1 overs (Shahbaz Ahmed 69, Abhishek Porel 50; Jaydev Unadkat 3/44, Chetan Sakariya 3/33, Chirag Jani 2/33, Dharmendrasingh Jadeja 2/19) vs Saurashtra 81 for 2 in 17 overs. Saurashtra trail by 93 runs.