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 ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370

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CHANDIGARH, TUESDAY DECEMBER 12, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹2



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MODI'S HISTORIC COURSE CORRECTION IN J&K

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Article 370 of the Constitution, which bestowed special status on the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, was a "temporary provision" and any interpretation of the provision cannot postulate that integration of J-K with India was temporary, the Supreme Court ruled on Monday.

Upholding the abrogation of the controversial provision, the apex court said Article 370 read together with Article 1 of the Constitution leaves no manner of doubt that the integration of J-K as a part of the nation, which in itself was a Union of States, was complete.

"It can be garnered from the historical context for the inclusion of Article 370 and the placement of Article 370 in Part XXI of the Constitution that it is a temporary provision," Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, writing for himself and justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant, said in his 352-page verdict.

In its landmark verdict, the five-judge Constitution bench headed by CJI Chandrachud unanimously upheld the Centre's August 5, 2019 decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370, while directing restoration of Statehood for J&K at the earliest and holding the Assembly elections by September 30, 2024.

The apex court dealt with the question — whether the provisions of Article 370 were temporary in nature or they acquired a permanent status in the Constitution at the end of the J&K Constituent Assembly's tenure in 1957.

In his verdict, Justice Chandrachud said Article 370 was introduced to serve two purposes.

"First, an interim arrangement until the Constituent Assembly of the State was formed and could take a decision on the legislative competence of the Union on matters other than the ones stipulated in the IoA (Instrument of Accession), and ratify the Constitution (the transitional purpose); And second, an interim arrangement because of the special circumstances in the State because of the war conditions of the State (the temporary purpose)," he noted.

The CJI said there are intrinsic reasons in Article 370 that support the view that the provision was not intended by the framers to be a permanent feature of the Constitution at the date of the adoption of the Constitution.

"Part XXI of which Article 370 is a part specifies temporary and transitional provisions. In certain cases, the temporary provisions contained in Part XXI had a restriction with reference to the time over which they would operate," he said.

SC UPHOLDS ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370 IN THE STATE



The five-judge bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai and Surya Kant during pronouncement of verdict on a batch of petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, in New Delhi, on Monday

PM and Amit Shah hail the Apex Court's verdict

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah Monday hailed the Supreme Court's verdict upholding the Government's decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution as "historic" and said this gives a stamp of approval to the move as being "completely constitutional".

Taking to social media, the two top leaders instrumental in abrogating the provisions of Article 370 in 2019 said the top court's decision is not just a legal

judgment, but a "beacon of hope" and testament to the collective resolve to build a stronger and more united India, besides bringing peace and normalcy to Jammu and Kashmir.

Modi said the Supreme Court verdict on the abrogation of Article 370 is "historic" and constitutionally upholds the decision taken by Parliament on August 5, 2019. "It is a resounding declaration of hope, progress and unity for our sisters and brothers in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The court, in its profound wisdom, has fortified the

very essence of unity that we, as Indians, hold dear and cherish above all else," he said. "I want to assure the resilient people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh that our commitment to fulfilling your dreams remains unwavering," the Prime Minister added.

"We are determined to ensure that the fruits of progress not only reach you but also extend their benefits to the most vulnerable and marginalised sections of our society who suffered due to Article 370," he asserted.

Kashmir's integration with India begins

Assembly polls in September 2024

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday upheld the Government's decision to abrogate Article 370, which bestowed special status on the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, and said steps should be taken to conduct elections in the Assembly by September 30 next year.

The apex court also directed that statehood to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir be restored at the earliest.

The apex court also upheld the validity of the decision to carve out the Union Territory of Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019. On that day, the Government abrogated Article 370 and bifurcated the State into two union territories — Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The erstwhile State does not have internal sovereignty different from other States of the country, CJI DY Chandrachud said. "... All provisions of the Indian Constitution can be applied to J-K," the CJI said.

"We hold the exercise of presidential power to issue constitutional order abrogating Article 370 of Constitution as valid," the CJI said.

The bench comprising CJI D Y Chandrachud and Justices Gavai, Surya Kant, Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, assembled at 10.56 am to pronounce the three separate and concurring judgements. Justices Kaul and Khanna wrote their judgments separately. In his concurring judgment, Justice Khanna said the purpose of Article 370 was to slowly bring Jammu and Kashmir at par with other Indian states. He directed the setting up of a truth-and-reconciliation commission to probe human rights violations both by the state and non-state actors.

The CJI said Article 370 was couched amidst other temporary and transitional provisions with a marginal note which indicates that its provisions were temporary.

"On January 26, 1950, when the Constitution was adopted, the State of Jammu and Kashmir became an integral part of the territory of India. The mandate of Article 1 is that India that is Bharat shall be a Union of States," the CJI noted.

ARTICLE 370: TIMELINE

NEW DELHI: Following is the timeline of events in a case in which the Supreme Court on Monday upheld the government's decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution, which bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and said steps should be taken to conduct the election to the Assembly in the Union Territory by September 30 next year.

- **December 20, 2018:** President's Rule imposed while exercising powers under Article 356 of the Constitution in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Subsequently extended on July 3, 2019.
- **August 5, 2019:** Centre abrogates the provisions of Article 370, bestowing a special status upon the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **August 6, 2019:** First petition challenging the presidential order scrapping Article 370 filed by advocate M L Sharma, who was later joined by another lawyer from Jammu and Kashmir, Shakir Shabir.
- **August 10, 2019:** National Conference (NC), a prominent political party from Jammu and Kashmir, files a petition contending that the changes brought in the status of the state had taken away the rights of its citizens without their mandate.
- **August 24, 2019:** Press Council of India moves the Supreme Court supporting the Centre and Jammu and Kashmir administration's decision to impose restrictions on communications.
- **August 28, 2019:** Supreme Court issues notices to the Centre, Jammu and Kashmir administration on a plea moved by Kashmir Times editor for the removal of the restrictions imposed on journalists.
- **August 28, 2019:** A bench headed by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi refers matter to five-judge Constitution bench.
- **September 19, 2019:** Supreme Court sets up five-judge Constitution bench to hear pleas challenging abrogation of Article 370.
- **March 2, 2020:** Supreme Court declines to refer to larger seven-judge bench batch of petitions challenging constitutional validity of Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370.
- **April 25, 2022:** Supreme Court agrees to consider listing after summer vacation pleas challenging Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 after one of the petitioners seeks urgent hearing in view of delimitation exercise being carried out in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **July 11, 2023:** Supreme Court says it will commence day-to-day hearing from August 2 on petitions challenging abrogation of Article 370.
- **August 2, 2023:** Supreme Court commences hearing on petitions challenging abrogation of Article 370.
- **September 5, 2023:** Court reserves verdict on 23 petitions in the matter after hearing those for 16 days.
- **December 11, 2023:** Supreme Court upholds government's decision to abrogate Article 370, says steps should be taken to conduct election to Assembly in Union Territory by September 30 next year.

People jubilant, Politicians bicker

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The common people on the streets of Jammu and Kashmir were 'upbeat and jubilant' after the apex court delivered its long-awaited verdict on Monday, upholding the abrogation of Article 370 and setting the stage for conducting the maiden Assembly polls by September 2024.

The common people refrained from discussing the politics surrounding the abrogation of Article 370; instead, they were keen on witnessing the 'dance of democracy'.

Senior Advocate Sheikh Shakeel called it a landmark judgement. Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Sheikh Shakeel said, "The Apex Court has paved the way for restoring democracy in Jammu and Kashmir. The five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has also directed the Centre to restore the statehood to Jammu and Kashmir while setting the stage for long pending Assembly polls."

A senior representative of the deprived Valmiki society Garhu Bhatti and president of the West Pak refugees joint action committee Labha Ram Gandhi also welcomed the landmark judgement.

The Apex court has cleared all the hurdles allowing our children to



Members of Rashtriya Bajrang Dal after the Supreme Court's verdict upholding the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution, in Jammu, on Monday

realise their dreams and work hard. "The successive Governments in the State deprived us of our basic fundamental rights. We were caged and living in inhuman conditions for a long period of 70 years. After the Abrogation of Article 370, we were given the voting rights. We were granted citizenship of Jammu and Kashmir and our children were granted permission to sit for competitive examinations. Now they have been admitted toadmittedly professional colleges and preparing for Administrative

examinations. It is time to distribute sweets," he said.

The apex court has also directed the Centre to restore statehood status as soon as possible, Ashok Kumar, a local businessman running a provision store in the Nanak Nagar area of Jammu said.

However, the political parties reacted differently in both the Jammu and Kashmir regions. In Jammu, J&K Unit BJP chief Ravinder Raina hailed the Supreme Court's verdict upholding the abrogation of Article 370, saying "We honour and respect the judgment in

letter and spirit."

Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad termed the Supreme Court's verdict on pleas challenging the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution "sad and unfortunate", but said "We have to accept it."

"It (the court verdict) is sad and unfortunate," Azad told reporters.

The former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister said the people of the region are not happy with the verdict delivered by a five-judge bench of the apex court.

On the other hand, National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah said he is disappointed but not disheartened by the Supreme Court verdict.

In a broadcast on 'X', Omar apologised to the people of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh for failing to convince the apex court to restore Article 370.

"Unfortunately, we could not convince the five judges, and for that... I apologise to the people of J&K, Ladakh, and those in the country who wanted us to succeed," he said. "Our efforts will not end here," the NC leader added. "I am in Srinagar at my home and addressing you because the gate has been locked and I am not being allowed to meet anyone..." Omar said.

MP gets a new BJP CM

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After Chhattisgarh, the BJP on Monday dropped a big surprise as it announced Mohan Yadav (58), a leader of Other Backward Classes (OBC) and a three-time party MLA, as the new Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.

The suspense over the third winning State, Rajasthan, continued as its anticipated Chief Minister's name is expected to be announced by Tuesday afternoon, according to BJP sources.

Chhattisgarh's Chief Minister-designate and BJP leader Vishnu Deo Sai will take oath, along with his Cabinet colleagues, on Wednesday at a ceremony in Raipur in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other dignitaries.

Yadav is an MLA from Ujjain Dakshin who won the 2023 Assembly polls by a margin of over 13,000 votes. He was the Higher Education Minister in the outgoing Shivraj Singh Chouhan Government. Chouhan has submitted his resignation to the Governor after Yadav was elected as the leader of the State legislative party paving



the way for him to take over as the next CM of Madhya Pradesh.

Yadav has staked the claim to form the Government and the oath ceremony will be decided by the party in a day. Yadav met Governor Mangubhai Patel in the evening and handed over a letter of support claiming to form next Government.

Yadav was accompanied by outgoing Chief Minister Chouhan, State party chief VD Sharma, and the three Central observers to the Raj Bhavan.

According to BJP leaders, Yadav was elected as the BJP's legislature party leader in Madhya Pradesh at a meeting in Bhopal in presence of central observers.

The Lonely Courage of Prime Minister Modi

ADVAITA KALA

In the intricate web of global leadership, few threads are as uniquely spun as that of Narendra Modi, the fourteenth Prime Minister of India. Modi's journey from the dusty tea stalls of Gujarat to the grand corridors of power in New Delhi is not just a tale of political ascension, but a testament to a kind of courage that is often overshadowed and dismissed in the world of politics - the courage of treading a lonely path.

At the heart of Modi's leadership style is a distinctive blend of solitary decision-making and a deep connection with the masses. He is not a politician who views the people as the public, but as a community. And PM Modi is a community builder par excellence. He is a leader who,

despite being surrounded by advisors and supporters, often appears to walk a path of his own creation. His time in public life is not just about physical solitude; it's an ideological and emotional state, where one's convictions are so strong that they often stand in stark contrast to prevailing norms. And he often surprises us, not because what he does is unpopular, but because what he does has already been dismissed as unthinkable by those who came before him.

Modi's courage is evident in his bold policy decisions. The demonetisation initiative, while contentious at the time, highlighted his willingness to take drastic measures against corruption. Similarly, the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), although initially disruptive, has



been recognised for its long-term vision of a unified market. These decisions, taken amidst considerable uncertainty and opposition, exemplify a leader unafraid to walk alone if it means walking towards what he believes is right for his nation.

Another aspect of Modi's lonely courage is seen in his international diplomacy. Navigating a world stage where allegiances shift like sand, Modi has sought to position India as a global player, forging ties with both Western and Eastern

powers while maintaining a distinct stance on issues critical to India's interests. This delicate balancing act, pursued with a mix of diplomatic charm and assertiveness, underscores a leader willing to stand alone on the global stage to carve out a place for his country.

But perhaps the most poignant aspect of Modi's solitude is found in his personal narrative. His lifestyle, marked by simplicity and an almost ascetic discipline, sets him apart from many of his peers. This personal solitude, mirroring his political path, speaks to a leader whose life is inextricably linked to his mission, a mission he pursues with a singular focus that often requires walking a path less trodden.

As Article 370 is assigned to the dustbin of history, PM Modi is already onto his next mission,

with a zeal and relentlessness that is seen so rarely. The praise and criticism a mere footnote. In the end, the lonely courage of Narendra Modi is not just about the decisions he makes or the policies he implements. It's about the profound sense of responsibility he carries — a responsibility to a nation of over a billion, each with their own hopes and dreams. It's about the willingness to be misunderstood, to be solitary in one's conviction, and yet remain unwaveringly committed to the vision of a resurgent India.

As the world watches India's trajectory under Modi's leadership, one cannot help but reflect on the blend of solitude and strength that defines his journey. It's a reminder that in the theatre of politics, the most impactful roles are often played by those who dare to walk alone.

Classifieds

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Ramesh Kumar S/o Birkha Ram, House-3246, Sector - 22-D, Chandigarh. My Son Deepak Kumar, daughter-in-law Sonal, their Children Priyanshi, Rishi out of my control, I disown them from my moveable/immovable properties. Anybody deal with them at their own Risk.

I Sarbjit Singh s/o Gian Singh r/o Village Pabra Distt Gurdaspur (Punjab) declare that I am also known as Sarabjit Singh. That Sarbjit Singh and Sarabjit Singh, both names pertain to one and the same person i.e myself. Concerned note.

I, Parmjit Kaur w/o Ranjit Singh r/o Village Bhule Chack PO Pul Tibri Distt Gurdaspur (Punjab) PIN-143530 Presently posted at 24 Punjab, Chandi Mandir, Panchkula, declare that in my husband's Army service record my name is wrongly recorded as Parmjit Kaur. My correct name is Parmjit Kaur.

I, Nirmala Devi Age 23 Years (Existing In The Service Documents Of My Husband) Wife Of No 65873-K Ex. Spd Rohitkumar Pahal Resident Of 1 K. M. Stone Gothana Road Bypass Sonapat (Haryana) 131001 Have Changed My Name And Dob From Nirmala Devi Dob 23 Years (Existing In My Service Documents Of My Husband) To Nirmala Pahal Dob 01-01-1961(Existing In My Civil Documents) Vide Affidavit Dated 11-12-2023 At District Court Sonapat (Haryana)

I Kawal Singh S/o Gurmeet Singh R/o Tangrianal Road, Chhotla Bagowal Tehsil Mukerian Distt Hoshiarpur Declare That Neelam Kumari And Nilam Kumari Both Names Of One And Same Person I.E. My Wife's Name. She Known With Both Names.

I Vishal Chopra S/o Vinod Kumar R/O Manoharpur Teh. & Distt. Jind Declare That In My Birth Certificate My Name Is Vishal Chopra S/O Vinod Kumar, In My 10th & 12th Marksheet My Name Is Vishal S/O Vinod. I Want To Correct My Name In 10th & 12th Certificate As Vishal Chopra S/O Vinod Kumar.

I, Jhanna Devi W/O Tulsi Ram R/O #524, Rajiv Colony, Sector 17, Panchkula Haryana Disown My Son's Ramesh, Gopal, & Daughter Laxmi From My Moveable/Immovable Properties. They Are Out Of My Control. If Anybody Deals With Them They Will Do Their Own Risk/Responsibility.

We, Prem Pal S/O Dresh Raj, Angeo Devi W/O Prempal Tehsil Shahahabad M., Distt. Kurukshetra Declare That My Son Ravinder And His Wife Pinky Is Out Of Our Control. So I Disown Them From My Moveable Or Immovable Properties. Any Body Dealing With Them On Their Own Risk.

I, Manoj Kumar S/O Sh. Prem Singh R/O H.No. P-13, Sonapat Road, Panchvati Colony, Rohtak-124001 (Haryana) Declare That Previously My Son Was Known As Anuj And Now I Have Changed My Son Name From Anuj To Anuj Hooda. In Future My Son May Be Known As Anuj Hooda For All Purposes.

We, Lachman Singh S/o Rishal Singh and Seeta Devi W/O Lachman Singh R/O Village Aahan, Tehsil Dhand, District Kaithal (Haryana) declares that our son Luv Mehla is out of our control so we disown him from our moveable/immovable properties. We are not more concerned with him. He is fully responsible for his work/idealing not we are. All concerned please note.

I Akshita D/O Parveen Vaid R/O Shop No 3 , Type 1, Sector 2 Naya Nangal , VTC Nangal Punjab in my 12th document my father name wrongly entered Parveen But my Father correct name is Parveen Vaid.

I, Anita W/o Sh. Rajbir R/O Village Sheikhpura , Teh - Ganaur ,Sonipat declare that my son Ashok and his wife Sudha both are out of my control. So I disown them from my all moveable/immovable property. Any body deals with them at their own risk.

I, Amanpreet Kaur legally wedded spouse of Army No. 15178142L Hav (DMT) Sukhpal Singh of 327 Med Regt C/O 56 APO declared that service record/Documents of my husband wrongly written as Amanreet Kaur instead of Amanpreet Kaur. My Actual and correct name is Amanpreet Kaur. Vide affidavit dated 11-12-2023 at Pathankot before the Sat Pal Notary Public of India

I, Bandana Dhali W/o No 1562001M, Rank Hav Name Asit Dhai, R/O Vill-Sahapur, PO-Chhatna, Teh-Tehatta, Distt-Nadia, State-West Bengal, Pin-741160 declare that I have changed my name from Bandana Biswas to Bandana Dhali due to wrong name recorded in Army service record of my husband.

We, Rajesh Kumar S/o Both Raj & Urmila Devi W/O Rajesh Kumar R/O 46, Basant Vihar, Khambra, Jalandhar declares that our son Nitish Chauhan & his wife Anjali They are Living abroad have gone out of our control. We disinherit them from our moveable and immovable properties. We and our family shall not be held responsible for any of their acts, deeds and things.

I, Mathura is Mother of Army No 15579017F, Rank NK, Name Mohan sukdev Jundre, Address Vill - Lohasingve, Po - Shenit, Teh/Distt-Nashik, State-Maharashtra, Pin - 422502 declare that I have changed my name From Mathura to Mathurbai Sukdev Jundre. Vide Affidavit No-JD 0032426476, Dated-11-12-23

I, Muthurbai Sukdev Jundre is Mother of Army No 15579017F, Rank NK, Name Mohan sukdev Jundre, Address Vill - Lohasingve, Po - Shenit, Teh/Distt-Nashik, State-Maharashtra, Pin - 422502 declare that I have changed my Date of birth from 07/09/1973 to 01/06/1964. Vide Affidavit No-JD 0032426476 Dated-11-12-23

I, Army No-15346087W, Rank-Hav, Name- Bhagat Singh Permanent Address Vill/Post-Gadgu, Distt-Rudrapnagar, Teh-Ukhimath, State - (Uttarakhand) Pin-246469 declare that I have changed my Son name from Sakshyam Rana to Saksham Rana. Vide Affidavit No-JD 0032426442, Dated-11-12-23

I, Muthurbai Sukdev Jundre is Mother of Army No 15579017F, Rank NK, Name Mohan sukdev Jundre, Address Vill - Lohasingve, Po - Shenit, Teh/Distt-Nashik, State-Maharashtra, Pin - 422502 declare that I have changed my name from Muthura to Muthurbai Sukdev Jundre. Vide Affidavit No-JD 0032426476, Dated-11-12-23

I, Arun Kumar S/O Raj Kumar Sharma, House No. 9701/A, Sector 124, Sunny Enclave, Kharar, SAS Nagar, Mohali, Punjab, 140301. I have changed my Name From Arun Kumar to Arun Kumar Sharma.

I, Ritv w/o Jatin Kumar R/o #50/12, Ram Nagar, Near Main Market, Karnal (Haryana) have changed my name from Ritv to Ritv Bala. In future I should be known as Ritv Bala.

I, Salma W/O. Shri Mahavir R/O. # 971, Janta Colony, Nayagaon, Mohali, Punjab. Declare That Salma And Ajad Is One & The Same Person. I have changed my name from Salma to Arun Kumar Sharma.

I Gurpreet Singh S/O Malkheet Singh R/O House No.11, Nawa Pind Bhathe, Subhanpur Road, Kapurthala, (Punjab) Declare that I have changed my name from Gurpreet Singh to Mahir Arora.

I, Pammi Devi w/o Vinod Kumar r/o #232/I, Masita House, Jhnsra Road, Thanesar, Distt. Kurukshetra have changed my name from Pammi to Pammi Devi. In future I should be known as Pammi Devi.

I, Prashant Kumar is legally son of Service no. 15613040K, Rank : CHM Name Ramnarayan Yadav of Unit 19 Gaurds C/o 56 APO & R/o Sikri, Sikhari, Gazipur Uttar Pradesh - 275202 declare that I have changed my name from Poonam Kumari to Poonam Yadav vide affidavit dated 11-12-2023 before Notary (Govt of india)

I, Prashant Kumar is legally son of Service no. 15613040K, Rank : CHM Name Ramnarayan Yadav of Unit 19 Gaurds C/o 56 APO & R/o Sikri, Sikhari, Gazipur Uttar Pradesh - 275202 declare that I have changed my name from Prashant Kumar to Prashant Yadav vide affidavit dated 11-12-2023 before Notary (Govt of india)

I, Sakuntla Devi Wife Of Army No Jc-430080 Rank Ex Sub Name Purnottham Singh Resident Of Vill-Kauna, Post- Kauna, Tehsil-Palampur, Distt-Kangra, State-Himachal Pradesh (Hp), Pin-176107, Declared Vide Affidavit No In-Pb66224856173682v That My Correct Name And Dob Is Shakuntla Devi, Dob-24 Feb 1967 As Per My Aadhar, Pan Cards And School Certificate Instead Of Sakuntla Devi, Dob - 20 Jan 1966. Please Correct It.

I, Rahul S/O Late Kaish Chand, Employed as Assistant Manager in the THDC Ind 1013ed Limited permanent R/O H.No. 4/103, Ward No. 8, Kaharan Mohalla, Chhachhrouli, Yamuna Nagar, Haryana-1338103, presently residing at Room- 211, Old Xest House, THDCIL, Vill.- & Post- Dasherha Kherli, Tehsil- Khurja, Distt. Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh- 203131, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rahul Chand.

I, Usha W/O Late Sh. Hemraj, VPO Machhili kalan, Tehsil kharar, Distt Mohali declare that my daughter Sona is out of my control. I disown them from my all moveable and immovable properties. Any person who deals with her will do so at his/her own risk and responsibility.

I Gurdeep Singh S/o Bhan Singh R/O H.No. 51 G, Street No. 3 Pratap Nagar Patiala declare that my son Harmandeep Singh and daughter in law Gurpreet Kaur are out of control. I had disowned both of them from my all moveable and immovable properties. Any person who deals with them will do so at his her own risk and responsibility.

I, Shalini Raghov spouse of No.15414392K Hav/STA Yogendra Kumar resident of Village-Maithana Jugalpur, Post-Sarai Chhabla, Tehsil-Bulandshahr, District- Bulandshahr, State-UP, Pin-203001, have changed my name from Shalini Raghov to Shalini Devi Vide affidavit No. IN-PB65407904139459v dated 08 Dec 2023 before Notary public Pathankot

I, Pankaj Vashishta S/o Sukhdev Vashishta, R/O 838/13, New Brahah Colony, Ward No.14, Sonipat-131001, Haryana have changed my name from Pankaj Vashishta to Pankaj Vashishta for all future purposes.

I, Mahaveer S/o Sh. Banshi Dhar R/O Village Ding & Distt. Sirsa (Haryana), have changed my name from Mahaveer to Mahavir Parsad, in future my name is to be called as Mahavir Parsad.

I, Jagdish Chand Father of Rajender Singh R/O #993, Sector 47-A, Chandigarh have changed my name from Jagdish Chand to Jagdish vide Affidavit Dated 11-12-2023 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, Army No. 18013198X SPR Parminder Singh S/O Sh. Harcharan Singh R/O Vill. Pandori Phangurian PO Shamchaurasi Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab by army record my mother Jagdish Kaur date of birth has been wrongly mentioned as 10-08-1971. But my mother correct date of birth is 01-01-1971.

I, Seema Sangwan W/o Charan Singh R/O Village Tejji, PO Fatehpur, Tehsil Jagadhri, Distt Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Seema Sangwan to Seema. In future I shall be known as Seema.

I, Aashima, D/o Sh Prem Krishan Joshi, R/O 299 A, Palam city, sec 127, kharar, Mohali. That I changed my name Aashima Salwan to Aashima.

I, Rajni Bala W/o Bharat Bhushan Chopra R/O #176-A, Model Town, Yamunanagar, Tehsil- Jagadhri, Distt. Yamunanagar (Haryana) have changed my name from Rajni Bala to Rajni Chopra.

I Sarabjit Kaur W/o Ram Karan Singh R/O House No. 1331B, MIG, Phase 10, Mohali Punjab have changed my name from Sarabjit Kaur to Sarabjit Kaur and date of birth wrongly written as 1971 instead of 31-05-1971

I, Sameer Kumar Vasudeva S/o Oudh Kumar Vasudeva R/O Tagra Kalkin, Kangan Road, Tehsil-Kalka, Distt.Panchkula (Haryana) have changed my daughter name from Kayva to Kayva Vasudeva.

I, Nirmla Devi W/o Narender Singh R/O VPO Lehara 721, Gal No. 1, Sonepat, Haryana declares that Nirmla Devi & Nirmala Devi both are my names.

I, Monika D/o Jogender R/O VPO Khewra, Distt. Sonepat (Hr.) 131001 has changed my name to Monika Antil for all purposes.

I Ravi Handa Son Of Sh. Dev Mitter Handa Resident Of H.No.771, Sector 22-A, Chandigarh, Declare That I Have Changed My Name From Ravi Handa To Ravi Mitter Handa All Concerned Please May Note.

I, Neha D/o Mohd Nafis, R/O 1611, Sui Walan Tajiran, Darya Ganj, Central Delhi have changed my religion from Muslim to Hindu with my own will and choice.

I, Kunti W/O Baldev R/o #115, Near Gurudwara, Saketi, Panchkula (Haryana) have changed my name from Kunti W/O Baldev to Kulwinder Kaur W/O Baldev Singh.

I, Jasbir Kaur W/O Amandeep Singh R/O VPO Dhand, Sarai Amanat Khan District Tam Taran Have Declare That Jasbir Is My Given Name And Kaur Is My Surname

I Ranjeet Kaur Wife Of Sukhdev Singh R/O VPO. Pindian Tehsil Khadur Sahib Distt. Tam Taran Punjab. Have Changed My Name To Ranjit Kaur.

I Manjit Singh S/O Baljit Singh R/O 290 National City Home Plant Verka New Amritsar Distt Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Manjit Singh To Manjeet Singh

I, Sukhraj Singh S/O Rashpal Singh R/O Village Kasel Tehsil And District Tam Taran Have Declare That Sukhraj Is My Given Name And Singh Is My Surname

I, Gurmeet Singh S/O Rashpal Singh R/O Village Kasel Tehsil And District Tam Taran Have Declare That Gurmeet Is My Given Name And Singh Is My Surname

I, Surjit Singh S/O Sawinder Singh R/O Village Kasel Tehsil And District Amritsar Have Declare That Surjit Is My Given Name And Singh Is My Surname

I, Subhash Chander S/O Bhim Sain R/O H.No.489, Gali No.35, O/S Bhagtan Wala, Fateh Singh Colony Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Subhash Amrohi To Subhash Chander Amrohi

I, Manisha And Manisha Dhawan W/O Sandeep Dhawan R/O Village Adda Chhabhal Tehsil And District Tam Taran Have Declare That Above Both Name's Are Mine One And Same Person

I Ram Rumi S/O Madan Lal R/O E-4/276 Dharampura Chheharta Amritsar Have Declare That Rumi Is My Surname And Ram Is My Given Name

I, Sarabjeet Singh S/O Joginder Singh R/O 30, Guru Nanak Avenue, Chheharta, Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Sarabjeet Singh To Sarabjit Singh

I Ranjit Kaur W/O Rahul Kumar R/O Government Primary School Mander Wala Pasa And Near Station Jhabelwali Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name From Ranjit Kaur To Ranjeet Kaur

I Ranjit Kaur W/O Rahul Kumar R/O Government Primary School Mander Wala Pasa And Near Station Jhabelwali Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name From Ranjit Kaur To Ranjeet Kaur After Marriage

I Onkar S/O Harbans Lal R/O Vpo Jhabelwali Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name From Onkar To Omkar

I, Bobby Singh W/O Bholu Gupta R/O H.No.D-7/6659 Gali No.9, Ram Nagar Colony, Guru Nanak Pura Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Bobby To Bobby Kumar

I, Gurmeet Kaur W/O Dabir Singh R/O Village Barkiwal, Po Kastivali, Gurdaspur Have Changed My Name Gurmit Kaur To Gurmeet Kaur

I, Manpreet Singh S/O Kulwinder Singh R/O Vpo Ratta Khera, Teh Malout, Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name From Singh Is My Surname And Given Name Is Manpreet

I, Khushi And Khushi Jaiswar D/O Bans Raj R/O 57, Rattan Singh Chowk Gali No.2, Navy Abadi, Karampura Distt Amritsar Have Declare That Above Both Name's Are Mine One And Same Person

I, Deepak Kumar Khanna S/O Sardari Lal Khanna R/O 27, Guru Nanak Avenue 3, backside power colony, Majitha Road Amritsar have Changed my name to Deepak Khanna.

I, Kailash Devi W/O Sh. Vishnu Bhagwan R/O Near Rama Aashram, Village Siwan, Distt. Kaithal (Haryana) declares that I have changed my name from Kailash Devi to Kailash Verma. In future, I will be known by the name of Kailash Verma. All concerned please note.

I, Surjeet Singh S/O Labh Singh R/O 273, Mohan Nagar, Verka, Amritsar, Punjab-143501 have changed my name from Surjeet Singh to Surjit Singh.

I no.15683831Y ex hav sandeep S/O Ramkumar R/O village israna dist. panipat declare that in my army record my wife's name mentioned pamilia devi. but my wife's correct name is Pramila Rathi. And my wife's name should be recorded as Pramila Rathi in my army records

I, Surender Kumar S/O Sewa R/O H.No. 96, village bhadaur teh. maunda, dist panipat declare that surender kumar and surender both name are of same person. but my actual name is surender kumar for all future purposes.

I, Shree Devi Wife of JC 857676H Rank NB/SUB Name Shankar Korav Posted at HQ 627(I) AD BDE C/O 56 APO R/O Pin 906218. Resident of At Post Sarawade Tehsil Radhanagar District Kolhapur State Maharashtra Pin 416212 have changed my name from Shree Devi to Shri Devi vide affidavit dated 05-12-2023 before Session Court Hisar.

I, Jatin S/O Gulshan Kumar R/O H. No 736/15 Subhash Road Rohtak (Haryana) declares that I have changed my name from Jatin to Jatin Harjai in future I will be called by the name of Jatin Harjai for all purposes.

I, Deepak Kumar Aggarwal S/O Late Banarsi Dass resident of H.No 33/35 Mohalla No. 23, Jalandhar Cantt, Punjab - 144005 have changed my name from Deepak Kumar Aggarwal to Deepak Aggarwal. All concerned please note.

I, Jasveer Kumar W/O Narinder Singh R/O VPO. Simbli, Tehsil Garhshankar (Hoshiarpur) have changed my name as Jasvir Kaur.

I Mahinder Singh S/O Vir Singh R/O Village Raipur Ratan Distt. Fatehgarh Sahib I Have Changed My Name Mohinder Singh.

I Gurmeet Kaur W/O Mohinder Singh R/O Village Raipur Ratan Distt. Fatehgarh Sahib I Have Changed My Name Gurmit Kaur.

I Balbeer Singh (Aadhar Card No 8688 4494 3803) S/O Shana Ram R/O H.No-17-B, Niharas (310) Distt Ambala Inform That Balbeer Singh And Biru Ram Bothare Are One & The Same Person. But My Actual & Correct Name Is Balbeer Singh.

I Sejal Chhabra W/O Narinder Kumar R/O Village Raiwali Distt Ambala 134118 Have Changed My Name From Sweety To Sejal Chhabra.

I Md Najib Hussain Son Of Army No. Jc303110y Rank Sub Maj (Ofc) Md Nasir Hussain Unit 616(1) Ad Ede Pin-928616 C/O 56 APO Have Changed My Name From Nagir Hussain To Md Nagir Hussain Through Vide Document No. In-Pb6598844486637v Dated :11-12-2023.

I, Balbir Singh S/O Amar Singh, R/O 125, Gali No-1, Nathu Nagar, Dhangu Road Pathankot, Tehsil & District Pathankot, My Daughter Ramandeep Kaur 10th Certificate My Name Is Wrongly Entered As Balvir Singh, Instead Of Balbir Singh, So Kindly Correct It.

I, Sanjay S/o Sh. Gurmial Chand R/o 1934, Sector 45-B, Buralil, Chandigarh, have changed my name from Sanjay to Sanjay Devgan.

I, Ankush Sandhyan S/o Ishwar Singh R/O VPO Chuhar Majra Tehsil Dhand Distt Kaithal, have changed my name Ankush to Ankush Sandhyan.

I Manjit Kaur w/o Daljeet Singh Vill. Lassoil, Tehsil and Distt. Malerkotla, changed my name to Manjeet Kaur.

I Daljit Singh S/o Harnek Singh Vill. Lassoil, Tehsil and Distt. Malerkotla, changed my name to Daljeet Singh.

I, Jasdeep Kaur W/O Jagmeet Singh R/O Vill. Lakhewali Distt. Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name To Jasvir Kaur.

I, Pallavi Pasricha D/O Dev Kumar Sandhir R/O H.NO-227-J, Spangle Condons, Dhakauli, Mohali have changed my name to Pallavi Sandhir.

I, Ravi S/O Shamsheer Singh # 1440/1, Harijan Basti, Manimajra, Chandigarh have Changed my name to Ravi Saroy.

I, Rimpy w/o Prem Parkash # 5235/3, MHC, Manimajra, Chandigarh have changed my name from Rimpy to Rimpy Rajan.

I, Jasmer Singh S/O Late Dhanna Singh R/O Village Bhanra, Tehsil & Distt. Patiala declare that in my passport my father's name wrongly mentioned Dhan Singh but his correct name is Dhanna Singh.

I, Sandeep Singh Anand S/O Jasbir Singh R/O H.No.89, New Moti Bagh Colony, Patiala (Punjab) declares that Sandeep Singh Anand and Sandeep Singh are the name of one and the same person i.e. myself.

I, Divya Jyoti Mishra wife of No. 14650597X, Rank: Hav. Laxmikant Mishra, Unit: 115AW C/o 56 APO resident of 185, Babupur, Po Chohrata, Tehsil Huzar Nagar, Distt. Rewa, Madhya Pradesh declare that in my husband's service record my name is wrongly mentioned Divya Jyoti Mishra but my correct name is Divya Jyoti Mishra.

I, Manpreet Kaur Dhindsa W/O Gurnam Singh R/O Village Bishangarh, Dandrala Dhindsa, Nabha (Patiala) have changed my name to Manpreet Kaur .

I, Gurnam Singh Dhindsa S/O Harbans Singh R/O Village Bishangarh, Dandrala Dhindsa, Nabha (Patiala) have changed my name to Gurnam Singh.

I, Manju Jindal w/o Mukesh Jindal R/O House no 47, Sector - 20 D, Mandi Gobindgarh, Distt. Fatehgarh Sahib. Have changed my name from Manju Jindal to Pushpa Manju Jindal.

I G R Shalini, spouse of No. JC-3132611 Sub Boopalan Unit of 22 Eng Rgt C/O 56 APO resident at Pillayar Kovul Street, Palladaiyampatti Virupatchipuram, Village Virupakshipuram, Po Thorapadi Tehsil Distt. Vellore (Tamil Nadu) Pin-632002 declare that my date of birth 10-03-1985 Wrongly written in my Husband Army Service Records but my correct date of birth 05/06/1988.

I, Shaik Rahimbi, Spouse of No. 16114359K Hav Baji Shaik Unit of 22 Eng Rgt C/O 56 APO resident at Dange Vri Street, Andharav PVO Tenali Distt. Guntur (Andhra Pradesh) Pin 522201 have change my name in all documents from Rahimbi to Shaik Rahimbi. Vide Affidavit Dated 11 December 2023 before at Notary Ferozpur.

I Aruna Surjeet Khorate, Wife of No. 14683551P, NK (Tech Comm) Khorate Surjeet Dattatray of Unit 218 Fd Wskp Coy EME, C/o 56 APO Pin 906218. Resident of At Post Sarawade Tehsil Radhanagar District Kolhapur State Maharashtra Pin 416212 have changed my name from Khorate Aruna S to Aruna Surjeet Khorate Vide Affidavit Dated 11 December 2023 before at Notary Ferozpur

I, No.3211930N, Rank : L/NK, Name Aashish, Resident at Village & Post Mokhra, Tehsil Meham, District Rohtak, Haryana Pin 124022, have changed my minor Son Name from Davik to Davik vide affidavit no. IN-PB86317307683495V, Dated 11 Dec 2023 before at Notary Ferozpur.

I, Krishana Devi W/O Sandeep R/O Ward No. 12, Narnaund Teh. Narnaund Distt. Hisar declares that I want to correct my name in my son Ankit's 10th and 12th DMC from Krishana to Krishana Devi.

I, No.2494125n Ex L/Hav Sukhwinder Singh S/O Balwant Singh R/O Vpo- Hardo Chhanni, Teh/Distt-Gurdaspur (Pb)-143526, Have Changed Name Of Son From Jasanpreet Singh To Jashanpreet Singh Being Wrongly Entoned In My Army Records. E Stamp No. IN P63594605245321v Dated 02/12/2023 Produced Before Executive Magistrate Gurdaspur (Pb). Please Note All Concerned.

I, Inderjit Kaur Spouse Of Gurcharan Singh R/O Vpo- Mullarwal Teh/Distt- Gurdaspur Pin Code-143517 Punjab. Have Changed My Name From Inderjit Kaur To Inderjeet Kaur Vide Affidavit Dated 02/12/2023 Before Lucknow Family Court. Date Of Birth 28/04/1982.

I, Sonia W/o Rajiv Kumar Mehra R/O H.No. NB-206/70, New Laxmipura, Jalandhar, Punjab have changed my name from Sonia to Sonia Mehra, All please note.

I, Rajwant Kaur Sidhu W/O Kuldheep Singh R/O VPO. Jeonwala (Faridkot) have changed my name to Sukhdeep Kaur Romana.

I, Harikat Singh S/O Swaraj Singh R/O VPO. Jeonwala (Faridkot) have changed my name to Harikat Singh Romana.

I, Veena Devi W/O Kamal Singh R/O VPO. Mirthal District Pathankot Punjab Have Changed My Name To Beena Kumari.

I Gurjit Singh S/O Tegal Singh R/O Vpo. Khiala Kalan Amritsar 143001 Punjab India Have Changed My Name From Gurjit Singh To Gurjit As Given Name And Singh As Surname.

I Rajwant Kaur Sidhu W/O Kulwinder Singh R/O Vpo. Kaunka Kalan Tehsil Jagraon Distt. Ludhiana Have Changed My Name To Rajwant Kaur.

I, Veena Devi W/O Kamal Singh R/O VPO. Mirthal District Pathankot Punjab Have Changed My Name To Beena Kumari.

I, Sanjeev Kumar S/O Balwinder Singh R/O Vill. Usmanpur, Pehowa, Kurukshetra Have Changed My Minor Daughter Vanshika to name Vanshika and surname Saini.

I, Neelam Rani W/o Joginder Vill.Chuhar Majra, Dhand, Kaithal Have Changed My Name Neelam.

I, Sanjeev Kumar S/O Balwinder Singh R/O Vill. Usmanpur, Pehowa, Kurukshetra Have Changed My Minor Daughter Vanshika to name Vanshika and surname Saini.

I Surjit Bawa W/O Ranjit Singh R/O House No.339/20 Street No.6 Daganra Road Labh Nagar Hoshiarpur Punjab Have Changed My Name To Harjit Singh.

I, Joginder Kumar S/O Babu Ram Vill.Chuhar Majra, Dhand, Kaithal Have Changed My Name Joginder.

I, Neelam Rani W/o Joginder Vill.Chuhar Majra, Dhand, Kaithal Have Changed My Name Neelam.

I, Sanjeev Kumar S/O Balwinder Singh R/O Vill. Usmanpur, Pehowa, Kurukshetra Have Changed My Minor Daughter Vanshika to name Vanshika and surname Saini.

I, Inderjit Kaur Spouse Of Gurcharan Singh R/O Vpo- Mullarwal Teh/Distt- Gurdaspur Pin Code-143517 Punjab. Have Changed My Name From Inderjit Kaur To Inderjeet Kaur Vide Affidavit Dated 02/12/2023 Before Lucknow Family Court. Date Of Birth 28/04/1982.

I, Sonia W/o Rajiv Kumar Mehra R/O H.No. NB-206/70, New Laxmipura, Jalandhar, Punjab have changed my name from Sonia to Sonia Mehra, All please note.

I, Rajwant Kaur Sidhu W/O Kulwinder Singh R/O Vpo. Kaunka Kalan Tehsil Jagraon Distt. Ludhiana Have Changed My Name To Rajwant Kaur.

I, Manish Kumar S/O Vijay Kumar R/O Gausahla Road Giddarbaha Distt. Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name To Manish Kumar Bansal.

I Sarbjit Kaur W/o Jagdev Kumar R/O Vill-Sunner Khurd Po Rurkee, Teh-Phillaur, Distt Jalandhar, Punjab (India)144301 have changed my name Sarbjit Kaur to Sarabjit Kaur.

I, Vijaypal Singh S/O Naranjn Singh R/O Vill: Mohri Chak Teh- Muker

BSF urges preventive detention of smugglers to combat drug smuggling

Hands over a list of 75 individuals to Punjab police

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

In a significant move to curb the persistent challenge of drug smuggling along the Punjab border, the Border Security Force (BSF) has submitted a comprehensive proposal to the Punjab Police advocating for the preventive detention of 75 individuals suspected of involvement in drug trafficking under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PIT NDPS) Act, 1988.

The proposal, aimed at disrupting the illicit drug trade network that has plagued the region, specifically targeted 75 convicted or suspected smugglers operating in the bordering districts of Tarn Taran, Ferozpur, and Fazilka. These individuals are allegedly involved in trans-border smuggling, acting as couriers or running smuggling modules in the identified regions. Sharing the information in the press briefing on Monday, BSF, Western Command's Special DG Yogesh Bahadur Khurania (IPS) shed light on the comprehensive efforts made by the BSF and other law enforcement agencies in the previous year. A database of suspected drug smugglers in border areas and hinterlands has been meticulously prepared, accompanied by vulnerability mapping to identify areas prone to illegal

activities, he said.

The submission of the proposal aligns with Section 3 of the PIT-NDPS Act, which empowers the Centre and State Governments to detain individuals, including foreigners, to prevent their engagement in illicit drug trafficking.

The proposal emphasizes the necessity of preventive detention to curb the influence of suspected drug smugglers in the identified districts. The preventive measures aim to mitigate the potential threat posed by these individuals, thus fortifying the overall security apparatus in the region.

"The recommendation was made to the state police a few months ago...They might be considering the names which we have given. The police shall take a call on the matter after due diligence," said Khurania.

The BSF's comprehensive strategy includes deploying additional troops, conducting vulnerability mapping, and creating a comprehensive database to identify areas prone to illegal activities. The collaboration with Punjab Police has already yielded positive results, contributing to the prevention of illegal activities along the extended operational jurisdiction of the BSF. The BSF continues to adopt a holistic approach, combining legal measures with technological solutions, increased ground deployment, and cooperation

Seizures and Recovery in 2023

- 755 Kgs of narcotic items
- 15 assorted rifles
- 38 pistols
- 36 Pak nationals apprehended
- 9 Pak intruders neutralized
- 95 drones

with local law enforcement agencies. The proposal reflects the BSF's dedication to adapting to emerging challenges and ensuring the safety and well-being of the nation.

Drones as a Challenge

Khurania highlighted the challenge posed by the use of drones in drug smuggling activities. He informed that in the year 2023 alone, the BSF seized 95 drones, with a majority of these recoveries occurring in Punjab, and a few in the Sri Ganganagar area in Rajasthan. He also acknowledged that drones have become a preferred method for smuggling narcotics and weapons across the border. To counter this, the BSF is actively working on employing specialized equipment capable of detecting drones in the air, addressing a critical need in the ongoing efforts to secure the region.

Providing insights into the changing tactics employed by smugglers, Khurania noted a shift from larger drones, capa-

ble of carrying payloads of three-five kgs, to smaller drones carrying 400-500 grams of payload. This change in tactics, he suggested, could be driven by cost-effectiveness and the increased difficulty in detecting smaller drones. Accepting these challenges, the BSF continues to adapt its strategies to effectively counter the evolving landscape of smuggling activities.

Khurania emphasized that the BSF is actively exploring and implementing advanced technology to detect drones in the air. Currently, the detection of drones largely relies on visible means by BSF personnel on the border, the upcoming technological solutions aim to enhance capabilities and improve the overall effectiveness of border security.

The BSF's collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, including state police and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), has resulted in a coordinated effort to address drug smuggling challenges.

The creation of a database and vulnerability mapping facilitates not only immediate responses to illegal activities but also comprehensive investigations to dismantle the networks involved in smuggling operations.

Extended Area of Operation

Addressing concerns about the extension of area of operation in Punjab, Khurania highlighted the positive outcomes achieved by deploying BSF personnel not only at the border but also in the hinterland. He maintained that the BSF's extended area of operation in Punjab, stretching from 15 to 50 kilometers, has yielded positive results in countering the persistent threat of drones and illegal activities. The increased troop deployment has played a pivotal role in fortifying the border and preventing illicit activities in the extended operational jurisdiction, he added. With the ability to cover areas five-six kilometers deep into Indian territory, the BSF has successfully neutralized threats posed by drones that can bypass border fencing. The collaboration with Punjab Police in the extended operational jurisdiction has yielded tangible results, said Khurania, expressing satisfaction with the support received. To bolster preventive measures against smuggling activities, the BSF is actively working with the

Punjab Police to install CCTV cameras five to six kilometers inside the Indo-Pak border. This strategic placement aims to monitor key roads and crossroads, enabling authorities to track the movements of individuals involved in smuggling activities. The implementation of this initiative is anticipated to enhance surveillance capabilities and serve as a deterrent against illegal border crossings and smuggling. Khurania acknowledged the crucial role played by farmers living near the border areas in Punjab.

He commended them as the eyes and ears of the BSF, providing valuable information whenever they observe suspicious activities. The collaborative effort between the BSF and local communities exemplifies the importance of public cooperation in ensuring border security and thwarting illegal activities.

Operational Achievements in 2023

Khurania, during the press conference, highlighted the operational achievements of the BSF in 2023. A total of 95 drones were seized, along with 755 kg of narcotic items, 15 assorted rifles, and 38 pistols. Additionally, 36 Pakistani nationals were apprehended, and nine Pakistani intruders were neutralized along the International Boundary (IB) and the Line of Control.

Hry Police identifies 50 hotspot areas across 7 States to combat cybercrime

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To combat cybercrime, Haryana Police has identified 50 hotspot areas across seven states in the country where cyber fraud cases are known to originate. To effectively tackle these cases, cyber teams have been deployed in these areas to not only control cyber fraud activities but also apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice, said Haryana Director General of Police Shatrughan Kapur on Monday.

In a statement, DGP said that the maximum number of cyber fraud cases reported in Haryana originate from Rajasthan, with 21 identified hotspot areas in the state. Similar hotspots have been identified in other states, including Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Delhi, West Bengal,

and Telangana. Kapur emphasized that cyber teams are regularly dispatched to these states to actively counter cyber fraud activities. Moving forward in the realm of cyber security, a collaborative effort is being undertaken by nodal officers of banks and the Cyber Helpline 1930 team. This collaboration aims to freeze cyber criminals' finances within the critical first hour of reported incidents, working closely with bank personnel to facilitate the process, he added.

Kapur urged the public to remain vigilant and avoid clicking on suspicious links on their phones. Additionally, people must not disclose personal information related to their bank accounts to anyone. Even a minor oversight can make individuals vulnerable to cyber fraud, he added.

Govt to launch exclusive girls-only C-PYTE camp at Kapurthala

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a significant stride towards women empowerment and fostering opportunities for girls aspiring to join the armed forces, the Punjab Government is set to inaugurate a Centre for Training and Employment of

Punjab Youth (C-PYTE) camp exclusively for girls at Kapurthala. Apart from being the girls-only centre, it would entirely be managed and operated by women staff, ensuring a conducive and empowering environment for the trainees. This exclusive initiative aligns

with the Chief Minister's vision of providing equal opportunities and breaking gender barriers. The decision to establish a girls-only C-PYTE camp was formalized during the 33rd meeting of the Executive Board of C-PYTE, presided over by State Minister Aman Arora.

Pb Police's aggressive campaign against drug menace led to arrest of 302 smugglers in week

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a resolute effort to annihilate the scourge of drugs from the state, Punjab Police executed a pivotal operation resulting in the arrest of 302 drug smugglers and suppliers across the border state. The crackdown carried out under the ambit of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, witnessed the registration of 221 First Information Reports (FIRs), including 34 commercial cases, in the past week.

Sharing the information during the press conference, the state Inspector General of Police (IGP), Headquarters, Sukhchain Singh Gill on Monday revealed that the intensive operation yielded a substantial haul, including 24.08 kilograms of heroin, 10 kilograms of opium, 1.57 quintals of poppy husk, and an astonishing 1.05 lakh tablets, capsules, injections, and vials of pharmaceutical opioids. The police also seized drug money

amounting to Rs 20.72 lakh from the arrested individuals.

Highlighting the multifaceted approach adopted by the Punjab Government to combat the drug menace, IGP Gill emphasized the three-tiered strategy of Enforcement, Prevention, and Rehabilitation.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, during a recent review meeting, instructed all Commissioners of Police (CPs) and Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) to conduct public meetings in village councils ('Panchayats') to gather crucial information on drug-related activities.

These measures aim to enhance crime prevention and facilitate the eradication of drug abuse.

The police force has been actively engaged in awareness campaigns against drugs, organizing 175 events, including 13 significant gatherings, to educate the public about the adverse effects of narcotics.

Furthermore, the government is promoting awareness about Section 64A of the NDPS

Act, offering rehabilitation opportunities to individuals caught with small quantities of drugs. IGP Gill clarified that this provision does not entail long-term legal consequences, allowing those affected to seek voluntary medical treatment for de-addiction. To disrupt potential criminal networks, Chief Minister Mann had issued directions regarding the transfer of lower-ranking police officials who have remained in the same position for an extended period. District chiefs have been tasked with compiling lists of such officers. Additionally, CPs/SSPs and field officers are prohibited from bringing their subordinates with them during transfers, reducing the risk of collusion. To target hardcore criminals, the Government has introduced categorizations for Proclaimed Offenders (POs), considering the severity of their crimes. Categories A, B, and C delineate punishments exceeding 10 years, more than seven years, and less than seven years, respectively.

Himachal will become self-reliant state by 2027: CM

Cong govt implemented three major poll guarantees despite financial crunch

PNS ■ DHARAMSHALA/SHIMLA

On the first anniversary of his government, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Monday said that acute financial crunch and monsoon disaster came as a major hurdle in fulfilling the poll guarantees but still the Congress government implemented three major promises.

Addressing a rally at Dharamshala Police Ground to mark one year of his government, he lashed out at the BJP for alleging that the government failed to implement the poll guarantees and said that three main guarantees, including restoration of old pension scheme, introducing English in the government schools and Rs 680 crore Rajiv Gandhi start-up scheme have been implemented, despite acute financial crunch. He added that three more guarantees would be fulfilled next year.

The present state government was focused towards changing the system and has taken many decisions in this regard, said the Chief Minister. "In one year, our government has laid the strong foundation for making Himachal self-reliant and by the year 2027, Himachal will become an ideal example of a self-reliant state. Our dedicated and continuous efforts would ensure that Himachal becomes one of the most prosperous states of India by the year 2032," He reiterated and added that the government's revenue has increased by Rs. 500 crore from the auc-



tion of liquor contracts.

Sukhu further said the government has initiated the process to give Rs 1,500 per month to women in the 18 to 60 years age bracket but natural disasters put spokes. "I am now declaring that the women in Lahaul and Spiti district would get Rs 1,500 per month and 2.37 lakh women in the state drawing Rs 1,100 pension per month would get Rs 1,500 from the next year," he added.

The chief minister had earlier on Himachal Day, which is observed on April 15, announced to provide Rs 1,500 to all the 9,000 women of Spiti above 18 years of age from June 2023. Taking potshots at the Centre and state BJP leaders for not giving adequate relief to the state during the worst ever natural disaster, Sukhu said that neither our demand to declare the calamity in the state as 'National Disaster' was fulfilled nor were we given a special relief package of Rs

12,000 crore.

Sukhu said that a plan has been chalked out to purchase cow dung at Rs 2 per kilo and the procurement price of milk would be increased from Rs 31 to Rs 37 per litre from January next year and 20,000 jobs would be given in one year. He said that every Himachali is today under a debt of Rs 1.02 lakh due to the previous BJP government's financial mismanagement. Sukhu added that his government would keep the foundation of self-sufficient Himachal Pradesh and also bring changes in the system. Sukhu said that during the tenure of the previous BJP government, question paper leaks in the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) was a common phenomenon. To end corruption and in the interest of the youth, the government has decided to dissolve the SSC. He added that the previous BJP government took a huge loan of Rs. 14,000 crore in its last

year to win the elections. The consequences of huge debt were passed on to the present government. Apart from dealing with the situation, the government also decided to inform the people about the poor economic condition of the state. For this, a committee was formed under the leadership of the Deputy Chief Minister and a white paper was brought on the state's finances. The state government adopted 4,000 orphans as 'Children of the State', made the country's first law for their welfare and started 'Mukhyamantri Sukhshraya Yojana'. Under the scheme, the state government is providing proper assistance for the care and higher education till they attain the age of 27 years, Sh. Sukhu said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri said that the BJP leaders have become blind and cannot see development in the state. The government is stable and last-



ing which would complete its five-year term and no conspiracy to destabilise the government would succeed, he added.

Congress MP and party's Himachal Pradesh in-charge Rajiv Shukla lambasted the ruling BJP at the Centre for discrimination with the state. "Why discrimination with Himachal, which the prime minister claimed to be his second home...The Union government has not even given Rs 12 lakh of Rs 12,000 crore special package as sought by the state government," said Shukla. "Where was the PM when the people at his home (HP) were facing disaster? he asked taking a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi stating that he would only be spotted during the elections. Himachal Pradesh Congress chief and Mandi MP Pratibha Singh on her part said that after implementing the old pension scheme, the state government was moving towards providing

Rs 1,500 to the women per month but the monsoon disaster struck and life went haywire in the state. "We would fulfil our promise," she asserted. Singh said, "I am upset that despite meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Parliament Session and asking him to declare calamity in Himachal Pradesh as a national disaster on the pattern of Bhuj and Kedarnath disasters, he ignored my plea and did not even help us financially." "We could not give pace to work in the past one year but keep faith in us that we would fulfil all the promises in the next four years and have started providing employment to the youth," she added. The posters and banners highlighting the Congress government's achievements in the past one year adorned Dharamshala and the people clad in traditional costumes were seen dancing to the tunes of their folk music outside the venue.

BRIEFS

SAD to observe its Foundation Day on Dec 14 at Amritsar

Chandigarh: The 103rd foundation day of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) will be observed on December 14 as per panthik maryada at Gurdwara Shaheed Baba Gurbakh Singh ji at Sri Akal Takht Sahib. Akhand Path will be initiated on December 12 at 10.30 am and bhog of Sri Akhand Path will be held on December 14 at 10 am followed by 'kirtan' and 'ardas'. SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal as well as the senior leadership will be encamped at Amritsar from December 12 to 14. They will also participate in 'sewa' at Sri Darbar Sahib during this period.

Chandigarh MC conducts training session for officials for toilet grading

Chandigarh: Aiming to provide essential skills and knowledge to accurately complete the 'CT/PT Grading', Municipal Corporation Chandigarh (MCC) on Monday conducted a training session as part of the Clean Toilets campaign, with a specific focus on Toilet Grading. The designated Self-Help Group (SHG) team, comprised both Men and Women, and officials from the MCC and Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), attended the session at the Municipal Corporation Office. In her address, Municipal Commissioner Anindita Mitra highlighted the importance of equipping the team with the necessary skills and knowledge. In collaboration with DAY-NULM's SHG team, MCC Chandigarh will organize comprehensive training sessions before the grading exercise begins.

EVM Demonstration camp started in Chandigarh

Chandigarh: As per the guidelines of the Election Commission of India, an EVM Demonstration camp was started in areas of Daddu Majra and Mauli Jagran in Chandigarh on Monday. Under this camp drive, an EVM demonstration van will roam around the city to demonstrate about the EVM VVPAT machine and also be informed about the usefulness of the evms. During the Camp, Residents of Daddu Majra and Mauli Jagran were experienced/learned how it works and how one can cast his/her vote during the election. Residents enthusiastically participated in the camp and around 125 persons cast their vote as a demonstration using the EVM VVPAT machine.

Application for fifth National Water Award invited in Hry

Chandigarh: The Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti has initiated the process of inviting applications for the 5th National Water Award, 2023, on the National Award Portal. All applications for these awards will be received through the online National Award Portal at <https://awards.gov.in/Home/Awardpedia>. The applicants can visit this portal or the website of this department (www.jal-shakti-dowr.gov.in). The deadline for submitting applications is December 15, 2023. An official spokesperson said that individuals engaged in commendable work in the field of water conservation and management, including any state, district, village panchayat, urban local body, school/college, institution (other than school/college), industry, civic society, water user association, or water conservation and management, are eligible to apply.

Dushyant Chautala inaugurates developmental projects in Hisar

Chandigarh: Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Monday spearheaded a series of development initiatives in Hisar, laying the foundation stones for projects worth approximately Rs. 280 crore. He also inaugurated several completed projects, including initiatives at Maharaja Agrasen International Airport. Chautala laid the foundation stone for the Air Traffic Control Room and Terminal Building. He directed officials to expedite the construction process, targeting completion within the next two to three months.

Janata Darbar: Hry Home Minister redresses grievances of people

Chandigarh: Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij on Monday ordered SIT to probe the cases related to fraudulent practices involving crores of rupees in the name of sending people abroad. Vij redressed grievances of people from various districts at his residence. A Kaithal resident alleged that an agent took Rs 22 lakh from him in installments to send his son to Canada, but neither sent the son nor returned the remaining amount. A Karnal woman claimed she paid an agent Rs 9 lakh to send her daughter to Canada for studies, but the agent kept her passport and documents without sending her daughter abroad.

Hry Guv stresses collective efforts for achieving goal of a Viksit Bharat

Chandigarh: Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya on Monday emphasised the need for concerted and diligent efforts to achieve the Viksit Bharat vision set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the launch of the Viksit Bharat @ 2047 Ideas Portal. With 24 years remaining to realize this common goal, he stressed the importance of collaborative and dedicated work to accomplish the vision. Dattatreya was addressing the Vice Chancellors and Registrars of all State Universities during a seminar on the theme Viksit Bharat @ 2047 held at Haryana Raj Bhavan, Chandigarh. He said, "The objective of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047, as outlined in the vision of creating New India, is an ambitious goal that mirrors the collective aspirations of the country's citizens and leadership. This vision entails a future where the nation successfully overcome its current challenges and achieve holistic socio-economic progress."

DPS Chandigarh celebrates 20 years

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

‘Siddharth se Buddha-an awakening’- the theatrical showcased the saga of Siddharth's journey from his birth eclipsed by a prophecy --- marking the completion of twenty years of Delhi Public School, Sector 40, Chandigarh. DPS witnessed the curtain raiser of ‘Siddharth se Buddha-an awakening’ on Monday. The lyrical odyssey was conceptualised, planned and directed by the Principal, Reema Dewan and is a one-of-a-kind school production with a repertoire of plays, songs and scintillating dances on opulent sets. More than four hundred students presented the show on Monday.

This showcased the saga of Siddharth's journey from his birth eclipsed by a prophecy, childhood and education to his awakening, spanning different stages of his life from a sheltered, happy prince to the Enlightened One. The show was staged in the presence of Pawan Kumar Bansal and Ambika Soni - former Members of Parliament and Senior Members of the DPS Chandigarh, Anup Soni and Amit Bansal - Directors of the school and other dignitaries. The Principal emphasized that besides excellence in academics, the school has taken great strides in other fields too, adding that the school's focus is on the wholesome and holistic development of the students. She added that being a part of the mega-production has been a great learning experience for students who have not only rediscovered the wisdom of Buddha but also cemented their foundation for personal growth. The inaugural show will continue on 12th, 13th and 14th December.



SC RULING ON ARTICLE 370

Historic day for India, says Fadnavis; hails Modi

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday hailed the Supreme Court ruling on Article 370 and called it a historic day for the country. The Supreme Court on Monday upheld the Union government's decision to abrogate Article 370, which bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and said steps should be taken to conduct the election to the Union Territory's Assembly by September 30 next year. The apex court also directed that statehood to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir be restored at the earliest. Speaking to reporters on the Vidhan Bhavan premises here, Fadnavis said, "Today is a very important day in the history of the country. The SC, in a way, has today given a stamp to the decision taken to remove Article 370 under the leadership of Prime Narendra Modi. The SC order is a victory for the peo-

ple of the nation as well as J-K." After the abrogation of Article 370, terrorism has reduced in Jammu and Kashmir and development is taking place there on a grand scale, Fadnavis claimed. The decision has paved the way for "Eksangh Bharat" (United and Together India), the senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader asserted. Queried about Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray's comments on whether Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (PoK) will come back to India, Fadnavis said this is what every Indian wants. "We are people who believe in Akhand Bharat. Modiji has done things considered impossible. I feel we should wait for the time to come," he said. Speaking to reporters earlier in the day here, Thackeray had said "we also hope POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) is merged into Kashmir so that elections are held in greater Kashmir which is an inseparable part of our country". Thackeray had also asked if PM Modi would give a "guarantee that Kashmiri



Pandits will return to their home state safely?" Hitting back, Fadnavis said Thackeray did not have the right to speak on the issue. Fadnavis said Shiv Sena founder late Bal Thackeray had sought removal of

Article 370 for a long time, and the demand was fulfilled by PM Modi. "However, when PM Modi was doing this work, the (undivided) Shiv Sena had different stand in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. Hence, he (Uddhav Thackeray) does not have the right to

speak about it," Fadnavis said. Asked whether others would also be treated in the same manner as NCP leader Nawab Malik, who was jailed and is out on bail on medical grounds, Fadnavis said it would be the same if they too faced such charges. Fadnavis had written to deputy CM Ajit Pawar expressing the BJP's reservations on inducting Malik into the ruling alliance. However, opposition parties have questioned Fadnavis over why the BJP did not have an issue with Praful Patel of the Ajit Pawar faction of the NCP who too is facing similar allegations. Asked to comment on Thackeray's statement that TDR (transferable development right) of the Dharavi redevelopment project must not be with (industrialist Gautam) Adani, Fadnavis pointed out that the MVA government had cancelled an earlier tender of the project despite Adani not being the winning bidder. Thackeray has a policy of opposing development works, Fadnavis said in a swipe at the former chief minister.



The Pioneer fondly remembers its Founder Editor Dr Chandan Mitra (December 12, 1954 to September 1, 2021) on his 69th birth anniversary.

₹6,000 flood relief will be given to all ration cardholders: TN

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The flood relief sum of Rs 6,000 announced by the Tamil Nadu government will be provided to all ration cardholders in the four cyclone Michaug ravaged districts, including Chennai, state Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu said on Monday. Tokens to avail the relief would be distributed on December 16 to all the ration cardholders in Chennai and the process of disbursing the amount would be completed in about 10 days, he noted. On December 9, Chief Minister M K Stalin announced financial assistance of Rs 6,000 to each of the flood-hit families and said the sum would be given in cash. Chennai, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, and Tiruvallur were inundated due to the influence of cyclone Michaug on December 3 and 4. Speaking to reporters here, Thennarasu said the state government averted a catastrophe by effectively handling the situation. "Major loss of human lives were prevented due to timely measures initiated by the state government," he claimed. On the release of water from Chembarambakkam dam, he said the government reduced the storage ahead of the cyclone and later regulated the release of the reservoir water thereby staving off inundation in many parts of the city.



"Normalcy has returned to Chennai now. Due to the Chief Minister's direct involvement, a major catastrophe to Chennai has been averted," Thennarasu said. He flayed the BJP and AIADMK for needlessly criticising the state government for its handling of the floods triggered by the cyclone. Meanwhile, an official release here said Rs 17.80 crore worth of relief has been distributed to the flood-affected people. This includes 10,77,000 drinking water bottles, 3,02,165 bread packets, 13,08,847 packets of biscuits, 73.4 tonnes of milk powder, 4,35,000 kg of rice, 23,220 kg of gram and cooking ingredients. Also, 82,400 bedspreads, dress, and other essentials were provided to them.

Assam CM calls on PM, discusses State issues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi here and discussed with him a number of issues concerning the state. Sarma also invited the Prime Minister to visit Assam to lay the foundation stone of the Kamakhya corridor project, dedicate to the nation the imposing statue of Bir Lachit Barphukan at Jorhat and inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of two medical colleges. "Chief Minister of Assam Shri @himantabiswa met Prime Minister @narendramodi," the Prime Minister's Office wrote on 'X'. Sarma wrote on 'X': "I had the privilege to call upon Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji today. Shared Assam's immense gratitude for his continuous guidance & leadership and briefed him on the ongoing pro-people programs during



our interaction." The chief minister said it was his pleasure to extend an invitation to the prime minister to visit Assam and lay the foundation stone of the Kamakhya corridor project, dedicate the grand statue of Bir Lachit at Jorhat, inaugurate the Tinsukia medical college and lay the foundation of Sivasagar medical college. "Furthermore, I took the opportunity to seek the prime minister's counsel on organising the Assam Business Summit in 2024. Our aim is to establish it as a platform to attract private investments and accelerate our economic growth," he said.

SC ruling victory of India, says Chhattisgarh CM designate Sai

PTI ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister-designate Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday welcomed the Supreme Court ruling on Article 370 and termed it as the victory of India. In a post on his 'X' handle Sai wrote in Hindi. "The Supreme Court's decision on abrogation of Article 370 is historic. It is the victory of India. It is a resounding declaration of hope, progress and unity for our sisters and brothers in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh". The Supreme Court on Monday upheld the government's decision to abrogate Article 370, which bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and said steps should be taken to conduct the election to the Union Territory's Assembly by September 30 next year. The apex court also directed that statehood to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir be restored at the earliest. "It is not just a legal judgment



but it is a testament to our collective resolve to build a united India. Congratulations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji and Union Home Minister Amit Shah ji for this victory," Sai added. Sai was on Sunday elected as legislative party leader during the meeting of newly-elected 54 BJP MLAs here. Chhattisgarh Governor Biswa-

BJP legislative party in Rajasthan meets today, new CM likely to be announced

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The newly elected BJP MLAs in Rajasthan will meet here Tuesday to formally pick the next chief minister of the state, party leaders said. The MLAs were informed Monday about the meeting of the legislative party, where the BJP's central leadership is expected to make known its choice for the post and end days of suspense after the party won the assembly election. The results of the November 25 polls in Rajasthan were declared on December 3. BJP MLA Jogeshwar Garg said the observers appointed for the legislative party meeting will come to Jaipur on Tuesday and hold one-on-one talks with the MLAs in the morning. After lunch, a formal meeting will be held in which the MLAs will choose the legislative party leader, or the CM-designate. The party has appointed Defence minister Rajnath Singh, Saroj Pandey and Vinod Tawde as observers. MLA Kirodi Lal Meena said the MLAs have been informed about the legis-



lature party meeting. When asked about the MLAs who met former chief minister Vasundhara Raje at her home Monday, Meena said 17 MLAs have met him as well after the results and this should not be seen as lobbying. Several MLAs have called on former CM Vasundhara Raje in recent days in what was seen as a show of support for her, amid speculation over whom the party's central leadership will pick as the next CM. Raje also met party leaders in Delhi. The BJP won 115 seats out of 199 for which elections were held in November. Polling in one constituency was postponed. Raje is being considered as one of the frontrunners for the post. Other leaders said to be in the running include Union ministers Arjun Ram Meghwal, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Ashwini Vaishnaw.

Air quality in Mumbai has improved but not satisfactory: Bombay HC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The air quality index (AQI) in Mumbai has improved but continues to be moderate and not satisfactory, the Bombay High Court said on Monday, while asking the Maharashtra government to come up with a comprehensive plan to find a final solution to the issue. A division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice G S Kulkarni asked the government to take the issue seriously, as lakhs of people continue to suffer because of the air pollution in the city. The court took note of a news report which stated that seven project sites - road concretisation at suburban Bandra and Khar, the bullet train site at BKC, Versova-Bandra sea link project, Mumbai Metro-III, Mumbai Coastal Road and the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link - were generating a lot of dust adding to the worsening air quality. The court noted that large mounds of construction material and rubble are reportedly left open at these sites. The bench directed the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) to con-



duct a joint inspection at these seven sites and immediately take requisite steps, pass orders and ensure that all the norms are followed. "We also direct that in case the stakeholders at these sites are found to be not following or deviating from the norms, legal action may be taken by the MCGM and MPCB," the court said. The court noted that the AQI in the city continues to be at moderate levels, which indicates that such air quality will continue to cause breathing problems for people with heart and lung ailments, children and older adults. "The satisfactory level of AQI is 51 to 100. And therefore, a collective effort is required to be taken to bring the AQI to below 50 in the entire city," the court said.

"Anything beyond 50 is not good...It has to be brought down to below 50," it said. The bench said a statutory body needs to be set up to address the issue regularly. "We need to have a comprehensive plan for the entire city of Mumbai. Ultimately, you need to find a final solution or mechanism so that every six months we need not intervene," the court said, asking the government to at least start the process. Advocate General Birendra Saraf, appearing for the government, said senior government officials were busy with the Nagpur winter assembly. The bench then said the government should take this issue seriously. "Are you wondering if there could be a situation more serious than this? Lakhs of people

are suffering daily. Be serious now. Last eight to ten days, there is this fog. But it is not fog," Justice Kulkarni said. The court said the state government should consider framing some legislation mechanism along the lines of the central legislation - The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act of 2021. The court said Saraf would take up the matter with the government and some appropriate decision be taken. The bench also directed the MPCB and the Central Pollution Control Board to file affidavits stating how air quality is measured and if the machines are adequate. The court said the expert committee set up by it last month will continue to monitor the situation and submit its periodical reports. The state government will consider the suggestions made by the committee and take an appropriate decision, it said. The court was hearing a bunch of petitions along with one it had taken up on its own regarding the rising air pollution in the city. The court said it would hear the matter further on February 6, 2024.



India at turning point in history: Nagaland Governor

PTI ■ KOHIMA

Nagaland Governor La Ganesan on Monday said that India is at a turning point in history as the country pole-vaults into the future confident of its capabilities. Addressing a programme in the Raj Bhavan, he said India is the fifth largest economy in the world at present and will become the third largest by 2027 as its GDP is expected to cross USD 5 trillion. The country is poised to be a USD 30 trillion economy with all the attributes of a developed nation by 2047, he claimed. The governor said that there has been a massive expansion in

social and economic infrastructure through various policies and schemes of the government over the last few years. He said India is one of the youngest nations with a median age of 29 years and it accounts for nearly 20 per cent of the world's total young population. This is an enormous opportunity, likely to last till 2047, he said. The governor called upon vice-chancellors of universities and heads of other educational institutions who were present at the function to motivate students to participate in the nation-building process. A panel discussion on "Thriving and Sustainable Economy" was also held as a part of the programme.

Granted ASI nod, Bihar gears up for excavation of 2,600 years old site

PTI ■ PATNA

The Bihar government is preparing the process for exploration of Buddhist sites visited by Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang in present-day Vaishali district, and excavation of the remains of 2,600-year-old structures in Banka, officials said on Monday. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) recently granted permission to the Bihar Heritage Development Society (BHDS), a wing of the state's Art, Culture and Youth department, to work in these two places. The excavations will be made in Bhadaria village with links to

Hindu mythology and Buddhism, in Banka district near the Chandan river. "It has been established that Bhadaria is a historical place. As per initial studies, the remains found there are 2,600 years old," said Harjot Kaur Bamrah, Additional Chief Secretary of the state's Art, Culture and Youth department. The ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey, a geophysical method that uses radar pulses to image the subsurface, has already been conducted in Banka and surrounding areas to trace ancient structures that are buried below the earth, she told PTI. "A team of experts from IIT

Kanpur conducted the survey at Bhadaria village, where ancient-age brick structures were found under the ground, both in the bed and on the bank of Chandan river," Bamrah said. The Mandar hill in Banka has many references in Hindu mythology. In ancient Buddhist literature, Bhadaria is mentioned as a place where Buddha himself visited and one of his chief disciples, Visakha (a nun), stayed in that village. "This hill was used for churning the ocean to extract the nectar from its bosom, as per mythology," said BDHS Executive Director Bijoy Kumar Choudhary. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar



had visited the site in December 2020. In the case of Vaishali visited by Hiuen Tsang over 1,000 years ago, the BDHS will start exploration work there. "Hiuen Tsang, also known as

Xuanzang, came from China and travelled to places in India between 629 and 645 CE to obtain Buddhist scriptures during the reign of King Harsha Vardhana. "Xuanzang's travelogue helped

Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1860s and 1870s identify famous sites such as Nalanda and Vaishali," Choudhary told PTI. Cunningham was a British army officer and archaeologist who

had also served as the first director of the ASI. However, no systematic work has been undertaken since then to follow the footsteps of Xuanzang who gave distances, directions and descriptions of several ancient sites that he visited between 630 AD and 642 AD in Vaishali and other areas in Bihar, Choudhary said. "Now, after obtaining permission from the ASI, the BHDS has decided to bring the process for the exploration of the Buddhist pilgrim sites visited by Xuanzang in Vaishali this month," said Choudhary. The BHDS has already explored several sites visited by Xuanzang in South Bihar.

Bamrah said Xuanzang spent several years in Nalanda and Vaishali. "Buddhist pilgrim sites visited by Xuanzang in South Bihar have already been discovered in Patna-Jehanabad-Gaya-Nawada-Nalanda sector by the BHDS. In this process, all major hills falling in the region have been explored, and its sculptures, antiquities and archaeological features scientifically documented and studied," she said. Now, the BDHS will start exploration work in the Vaishali area. "Exploration of these sites would help us discover and piece together our great heritage," said Bamrah.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Validation

Saying the Centre was well within legal rights while abrogating Article 370, the SC lays the controversy to rest

Upholding the Union Government's decision to abrogate Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, the Supreme Court wants the Assembly elections to be conducted there by September 30, 2024. Also, putting to rest any confusion regarding future status of J&K, the court has said its statehood should be restored at the earliest. Despite a longwinded and vicious campaign by parties in the Valley and in the Opposition, especially the Congress, the apex court put its seal of approval on the Government's decision of August 5, 2019, to abrogate Article 370, which gave special status to the State of J&K. The national security considerations were paramount in the decision. The special status had been a contentious issue, often exploited by separatist elements. The Narendra Modi-led NDA Government's move was intended to integrate the region more closely with the rest of India and marked a crucial shift in the political landscape. The region now adheres to the same constitutional and legal provisions as other States and Union Territories of India, fostering a sense of equality among citizens. Economically, the decision was seen to work as a catalyst for development in J&K. Aligning with the Centre's policies, the region would attract more investments, subsequently fostering economic growth and job opportunities.



However, the repeal of Article 370 also triggered political unrest, with leaders angry over the perceived infringement on J&K's unique identity. This discontent manifested in protests and demonstrations, indicating the complexities of regional dynamics. Internationally, too, the abrogation drew attention, with a few countries expressing concern about the situation. The move prompted debates on the global stage, highlighting the intricate relationship between national sovereignty and international human rights standards. There are very few decisions that change the course of history, or correct it. The revocation of Article 370 was one such decision; of course, it was the BJP's poll promise, too. However, had it perhaps been done after taking local people's concerns into account and in a more democratic way, it might not have raised the storm it did. It goes to the credit of the Modi Government that no related violence was reported but it did lead to some hardships for the people. However, geopolitics and ground reality have vastly changed since Article 370 was promulgated. Now any State having a separate flag or, for that matter, separate Constitution does not hold relevance. Ultimately, the move will lead to betterment of J&K as the region would have access to many Government policies and plans which could not be implemented earlier due to its special status. The decision has profoundly impacted J&K and the broader Indian polity. The Supreme Court verdict plays a pivotal role in determining the constitutional validity of the abrogation and shaping J&K's future.

On 11th December, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India delivered a historic judgment on the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35(A). Through its judgment, the Court has upheld the sovereignty and integrity of India, something that is cherished by every Indian. The Supreme Court rightly observed that the decision taken on 5th August 2019 was done with the purpose of enhancing constitutional integration and not disintegration. The Court has also recognized the fact that Article 370 was not permanent in nature. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh's breathtaking landscapes, serene valleys, and majestic mountains have captivated the hearts of poets, artists and adventurers for generations. It is a place where the sublime meets the extraordinary, where the Himalayas reach for the sky, and where the pristine waters of its lakes and rivers mirror the heavens. But, for the last seven decades, these places have witnessed the worst form of violence and instability, something which the wonderful people never deserved. Unfortunately, due to centuries of colonisation, most notably economic and mental subjugation, we became a confused society of sorts. Rather than taking a clear position on very basic things, we allowed duality, leading to confusion. Sadly, Jammu and Kashmir became a big victim of such a mindset. At the time of independence, we had a choice of making a fresh start for national integration. Instead, we decided to continue with the confused society approach even if it meant ignoring the long-term national interests. I have had the opportunity of being connected with the Jammu and Kashmir Andolan from a very early part of my life. I belong to an ideological framework where Jammu and Kashmir was not merely a political issue. But, it was about addressing the aspirations of society. Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee held an important portfolio in the Nehru Cabinet and could have remained in government for a long time. Yet, he quit the Cabinet over the Kashmir issue and preferred the tough road ahead, even if it meant paying with his life. His efforts and sacrifice led to crores of Indians becoming emotionally attached with the Kashmir issue. Years later, Atal Ji, at a public meeting in Srinagar gave the powerful message of 'Insiyat', 'Jamhooriyat' and 'Kashmiriyat', which has also always been a source of great inspiration. It was always my firm belief that what had happened in Jammu and Kashmir was a great betrayal- to our nation and to the people living there. It was also my strong desire to do whatever I can to remove this blot, this injustice done to the people. I have always wanted to work to alleviate the suffering of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. In very basic words- Articles 370 and 35 (A) were like major obstacles. It seemed like an unbreakable wall and the sufferers were the poor and downtrodden. Articles 370 and 35(A) ensured that the people of Jammu and Kashmir never got the rights and development that the rest of their fellow Indians got. Due to these Articles, a distance was created between people belonging to the same nation. Due to this distance, many people from our nation who wanted to work to solve the problems of Jammu and Kashmir were unable to do so even if they clearly felt the pain of the people there. As a Karyakarta who has seen the issue closely over the last several decades, I had a nuanced understanding of the specifics and the complex-

Supreme Court vindicates abrogation of Article 370

The Supreme Court has given its seal of approval to the Government's decision to abrogate Article 370 saying it was temporary in nature



NARENDRA MODI



On 11th December, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India delivered a historic judgment on the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35(A). Through its judgment, the Court has upheld the sovereignty and integrity of India, something that is cherished by every Indian. The Supreme Court rightly observed that the decision taken on 5th August 2019 was done with the purpose of enhancing constitutional integration and not disintegration. The Court has also recognized the fact that Article 370 was not permanent in nature. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh's breathtaking landscapes, serene valleys, and majestic mountains have captivated the hearts of poets, artists and adventurers for generations. It is a place where the sublime meets the extraordinary, where the Himalayas reach for the sky, and where the pristine waters of its lakes and rivers mirror the heavens. But, for the last seven decades, these places have witnessed the worst form of violence and instability, something which the wonderful people never deserved. Unfortunately, due to centuries of colonisation, most notably economic and mental subjugation, we became a confused society of sorts. Rather than taking a clear position on very basic things, we allowed duality, leading to confusion. Sadly, Jammu and Kashmir became a big victim of such a mindset. At the time of independence, we had a choice of making a fresh start for national integration. Instead, we decided to continue with the confused society approach even if it meant ignoring the long-term national interests. I have had the opportunity of being connected with the Jammu and Kashmir Andolan from a very early part of my life. I belong to an ideological framework where Jammu and Kashmir was not merely a political issue. But, it was about addressing the aspirations of society. Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee held an important portfolio in the Nehru Cabinet and could have remained in government for a long time. Yet, he quit the Cabinet over the Kashmir issue and preferred the tough road ahead, even if it meant paying with his life. His efforts and sacrifice led to crores of Indians becoming emotionally attached with the Kashmir issue. Years later, Atal Ji, at a public meeting in Srinagar gave the powerful message of 'Insiyat', 'Jamhooriyat' and 'Kashmiriyat', which has also always been a source of great inspiration. It was always my firm belief that what had happened in Jammu and Kashmir was a great betrayal- to our nation and to the people living there. It was also my strong desire to do whatever I can to remove this blot, this injustice done to the people. I have always wanted to work to alleviate the suffering of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. In very basic words- Articles 370 and 35 (A) were like major obstacles. It seemed like an unbreakable wall and the sufferers were the poor and downtrodden. Articles 370 and 35(A) ensured that the people of Jammu and Kashmir never got the rights and development that the rest of their fellow Indians got. Due to these Articles, a distance was created between people belonging to the same nation. Due to this distance, many people from our nation who wanted to work to solve the problems of Jammu and Kashmir were unable to do so even if they clearly felt the pain of the people there. As a Karyakarta who has seen the issue closely over the last several decades, I had a nuanced understanding of the specifics and the complex-

ities of the issue. Yet, I was crystal clear about one thing- that the people of Jammu and Kashmir want development and they want to contribute to the development of India based on their strengths and skills. They also want a better quality of life of their children, a life free from violence and uncertainty. Thus, while serving the people of Jammu and Kashmir, we gave primacy to three pillars- understanding of the citizens' concerns, building trust through supportive actions, and prioritising development, development and more development. In 2014, just after we assumed office, deadly floods struck Jammu and Kashmir, with a lot of damage in the Kashmir valley. In September 2014, I went to Srinagar to assess the situation and also announced Rs. 1000 crore as a special assistance for rehabilitation, signalling our government's commitment to supporting the people during crises. I had the opportunity to meet people from different walks of life and there was one common thread in these interactions- the people not only wanted development but they also wanted freedom from the rampant corruption prevailing for decades. The same year, I decided not to mark Diwali in remembrance of those we lost in Jammu and Kashmir. I also decided to be in Jammu and Kashmir on Diwali day. In order to further strengthen Jammu and Kashmir's development journey, we decided that our Government ministers would frequently go there and interact with people directly. These frequent visits also played a crucial role in building goodwill in Jammu and Kashmir. From May 2014 to March 2019, over 150 ministerial visits took place. This is a record in itself. The special package of 2015 was a significant step in addressing the developmental needs of Jammu and Kashmir. It contained initiatives for infrastructure development, job creation, tourism promotion and support to the handicraft industry. We harnessed the power of sports in Jammu and Kashmir, recognising its

“ WHILE SERVING THE PEOPLE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, WE GAVE PRIMACY TO THREE PILLARS — UNDERSTANDING OF THE CITIZENS' CONCERNS, BUILDING TRUST THROUGH SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS, AND PRIORITISING DEVELOPMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND MORE DEVELOPMENT ”

potential to ignite the dreams of the youth. Through sporting initiatives, we witnessed the transformational impact of athletic pursuits on their aspirations and futures. Sporting venues were upgraded, training programmes were organised and coaches were made available. One of the most unique things was to encourage the setting of local football clubs. The results were outstanding. The name of the talented footballer Afshan Ashiq comes to my mind- in December 2014 she was a part of a stone pelting group in Srinagar but with the right encouragement she turned to football, she was sent for training and excelled in the game. I recall interacting with her in one of the Fit India Dialogues where I said it time to move over 'Bend it like Beckham' because it is now 'Ace it like Afshan.' Other youngsters began to shine in kickboxing, Karate and more. The Panchayat polls were also a watershed moment in the region's quest for all-round development. Once again, we were faced with a choice of either remaining in power or standing by our principles- the choice was never tough and we let go of a Government but preferred that that ideals that we stand for, the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir are given top priority. The success of Panchayat polls indicated the democratic nature of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. My mind went back to an interaction I had with Pradhans from the villages. Among other issues, I made a request to them- that at no point must schools be burnt and that must be ensured. I was delighted to see that this was adhered to. After all, if schools are burnt the biggest sufferers are the small children. The historical day of 5th August is etched in the hearts and minds of every Indian. Our Parliament passed the historic decision to abrogate Article 370. Since then, much has changed in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The judicial court verdict came in December 2023 but seeing the wave of development across Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh,

the people's court have given a resounding thumbs up to the Parliament's decision of abolishing Articles 370 and 35(A) for four years now. At a political level, the last 4 years have been marked with a renewed faith in grassroots democracy. The women, tribals, SC, ST and marginalised sections of society were not getting their due. At the same time, the aspirations of Ladakh were totally ignored. 5th August 2019 changed all that. All Central laws now apply without fear or favour Representation has also got more widespread- a three tier Panchayati Raj System is in place, BDC elections have been held, and refugee communities who were all but forgotten have begun to enjoy the fruits of development. Key Central Government scheme have attained saturation levels, thus covering all sections of society. These include Saubhagya, Ujwala and Ujjwala schemes. Strides have been made in housing, tap water connection and financial inclusion. Healthcare, otherwise a major challenge for the people has witnessed an upgradation of infrastructure. All the villages achieved ODF Plus status. Government vacancies, which were otherwise a den of corruption and favouritism have been filled in a transparent and process driven manner. Other indicators like IMR have shown betterment. The boost to infrastructure and tourism has been for everyone to see. The credit for this naturally goes to the resilience of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have shown time and again that they want only development and are willing to be drivers of this positive change. Earlier, there was a question mark on the status of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Now, there are only exclamation marks about record growth, record development, record tourist inflow.

In its verdict on 11th December, the Supreme Court has strengthened the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' - it has reminded us that what defines us is the bonds of unity and a shared commitment to good governance. Today, every child born in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh is born with a clean canvas, where he or she can paint a future full of vibrant aspirations. Today, the dreams of the people are no longer prisoners of the past but are possibilities of the future. After all, Development, democracy and dignity have replaced disillusionment, disappointment and despondency. (This is a special article by the Prime Minister on the historic verdict of the Supreme Court)

PICTALK



Students in jubilant mood after receiving their degree on 98th Foundation Day celebration of IIT in Dhanbad

PTI

Soil pollution can lead to a major catastrophe

If the soil pollution is not checked, the environment will suffer and life as we know it, may come to a grinding halt

Soil and water are the essential components that sustain life, including that of humans, on our planet. Soil is the medium on which all types of living organisms are maintained. Every religion that has evolved with us has highlighted the importance of soil. The Vedic civilization held the soil in the highest regard as Mother Earth. The prayer to Prithvi, the Earth, is invoked in the Atharva Veda: "Let what I unearth from thee, O Earth, sprout and develop once more in a swift manner." The veneration of vegetation, trees, animals, and soils is exclusive to India. Consequently, it discourages the application of harsh chemicals and pesticides, as they may inadvertently cause harm to the beneficial nutrients and living microorganisms inside the soil. The Earth teems with biodiversity and is the foundation for all living organisms. Earth is where plants, trees, animals, and even soils are revered. Unfortunately, the present generation is doing more harm to the lifeline of our species. We have done enough damage to the soil by focussing on development and ascetics. The fertile agricultural



lands pay way to flats and gardens with exotic plants. Soil is a fundamental resource for agriculture, providing essential nutrients and a medium for plant growth. Erosion, loss of topsoil, and degradation can significantly reduce soil fertility, leading to decreased crop yields. The cycling of nutrients in the soil is critical for the health and productivity of plants. Soil is home to various microorganisms, including bacteria, fungi, and protozoa. Unfortunately, these microbes are destroyed by chemical fertilizers, weedicides and pesticides. The health of soil and water is interlinked. Pollution caused by anthropogenic activities ultimately reaches the soil through water. We take soil for granted. We dispose of solid waste,

plastics, and toxic chemicals in the soil. We burn our solid waste on its surface without concern for its rich biodiversity. The ecological impact of soil pollution incurs significantly higher costs. It is imperative to refrain from using contaminated soil for agricultural purposes, as the chemicals can seep into the crops, harming consumers. Utilizing polluted soil for crop cultivation typically leads to lower yields than uncontaminated soil, exacerbating the issue by causing additional erosion due to a lack of plant cover, thereby transferring toxins to previously uncontaminated areas. Addressing soil pollution is crucial for the long-term health of ecosystems, agricultural sustainability, and human well-being. Sustainable land management practices and a collective effort to reduce pollution sources are essential for mitigating the impacts of soil pollution. Healthy soils act as carbon sinks, sequestering carbon and mitigating the impacts of climate change. The fundamental meaning of the term "nature" is closely connected to notions such as natal, nativity, and native, indi-

ating that anything that is born and destined to die is intrinsically natural. Understanding this interdependence demonstrates that nature and mankind are inseparable. Hence, our interactions with nature have a direct influence on our own well-being. Our connection with nature is based on mutual reliance. It has been argued that the unrelenting destruction of rainforests and deciduous forests is justifiable to expand the amount of land used for agricultural purposes. Similarly, transforming agricultural lands into commercial areas is justifiable in the name of development. Our ignorance prevents us from seeing that even if we were to emerge victorious in this conflict, we would still be on the losing side. Our idea that the job of nature is to run the motor of our economy is the driving force behind this war against nature, which we intend to wage. The economy is an owned subsidiary of ecology. (The Writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN

BE STRONG AND HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

A mentally strong person always remains rooted in the present moment



RAVI VALLURI

Readers may recall that remarkable Sunday afternoon at Lords. The year was 1983 when India was defending a paltry 183 and Mohinder Amarnath ambled in and trapped Michael Holding, LBW. We won the World Cup - which was then known as the Prudential Cup - for the first time and Indian flags fluttered across the stadium and Indians in unison celebrated the victory.

This was a case of positive thinking by the Indian cricket team which metamorphosed in positive results. Bertha Calloway writes, "We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails." Why are some people mentally strong and some not? What distinguishes a decisive person from a person who only frets and fumes and lives in the past? Mental strength and attitudes greatly depend on two important factors. These are extraversion and introversion. Now who are extraverts and introverts? Extraverts are normally opened, sociable and socially assertive, oriented towards the world outside. On the contrary introverts are withdrawn and more than often shy by nature. They normally tend to focus on themselves, on their own thoughts and feelings. Noted psychologists like Carl Jung elaborate this in depth by stating that humans have strains of both the attitudes - that is extraversion and introversion.

Invariably extraverted thinking leads to logical and objective thinking which at times can become dogmatic. Such individuals are creative by nature and seize opportunities. On the other hand, introverted thinking leads to reserved and undermonstrative thinking. So, on that salubrious Sunday when Lords (the Mecca of Cricket) was soaked in brilliant sunshine the Indian cricket team became extraverted and the West Indian cricket powerhouse turned into introverts. Perhaps we can configure an equation



mathematically in our minds. Mental strength = Positive Attitude + Extraversion Attitude-Introversion Personality. From a different space humans can become achievers in life and surmount problems, by living in the present. A couple lost their daughter in a tragic accident, yet through the powerful techniques imparted by Art of Living in the form of Sudarshan Kriya, pranayama, yoga, meditation, and seva/service were able to confront the problem and reconfigure their lives.

Another colleague lost his wife, but by attending various courses of Art of Living regained his mojo. He is not only attending courses but is continuously conducting courses and spreading waves of happiness. Yet another friend from the railways discovered that his daughter was suffering from life-threatening cancer. It was his surrender to the Master and following the techniques of Art of Living that transformed his life. Today he has quit railways and is running a software firm which is making path breaking advances.

All these people have one common strand. Their unflinching belief in Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and following the fundamental tenets of Sadhana, Satsang, practice of Sudarshan Kriya, being in knowledge and performing seva. This has brought sanity to their lives. There are innumerable such instances, where Gurudev has provided the necessary direction and devotees have followed the path. And they are all living in the present moment. A mentally strong person does not succumb to macabre thoughts. Such an individual maintains a positive disposition and controls emotions and not the other way round. Such individuals do not fall prey to stress easily, improve the quality of their lives and enhance their performance. But this the seeker can achieve through regular practice. They do not wallow in self-pity. "Self-pity is easily the most destructive of the non-pharmaceutical narcotics; it is addictive, gives momentary pleasure and separates the victim from reality."

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd and is a faculty of the Art of Living. Views are personal)



RAJDEEP PATHAK

General Assembly proclaimed the International Day of Disabled Persons (IDDP) via resolution 47/3. Dedicated to promoting awareness of disability issues and advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities, it also ensures dignity for the differently-abled. This year's IDDP focuses on "United in action to rescue and achieve the SDGs for, with, and by persons with disabilities," as its theme. The aim is to deepen understanding, gain support for their rights and dignity, and highlight the benefits of their inclusion in all aspects of life, fostering overall well-being and societal inclusivity. Similarly, International Volunteers Day (IVD), observed yearly on December 5th, celebrates the invaluable

contributions of volunteers globally. Established by the UN General Assembly in 1985, IVD honours all those who selflessly dedicate time and skills to address societal challenges and make a difference in the lives of others. With over a billion volunteers worldwide, the day emphasises the transformative impact of collective efforts on social, economic, and environmental progress. India, propelled by the 2016 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act championed by activist Javed Abidi, has made notable strides in acknowledging and promoting inclusivity. Despite progress, challenges linger, including attitudinal barriers and many times, insufficient infrastructure. Drawing on a robust tradition

of volunteerism, ranging from grassroots initiatives to established NGOs, India taps into the transformative potential of volunteers to dismantle stereotypes, provide support, and cultivate inclusivity for individuals, society per se, and the differently-abled. The 'Accessible India' campaign launched by the Government of India, aims to make public spaces, transportation, and information more accessible to persons with disabilities. Volunteers have been instrumental in driving this initiative, actively participating in awareness campaigns, accessibility audits, and advocacy efforts. Similarly, their role in the Clean River (Ganga and Yamuna) campaign is undeniable. None can forget Hellen Keller

the American author and activist who has been instrumental in changing perspectives about disability. She not only overcame her challenges but also worked tirelessly to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. The journey towards inclusivity has been guided by the wisdom and advocacy of thinkers and activists who have tirelessly worked to dismantle barriers and challenge societal attitudes. The late Stephen Hawking, a renowned theoretical physicist diagnosed with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), made groundbreaking contributions to science. Also, great individuals like Beethoven, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Sudha Chandran and others have demonstrated unparalleled dedication to

their art. Beethoven composed remarkable music despite losing his hearing. Chaurasia mastered the flute despite a childhood finger loss, and Chandran, an acclaimed dancer, returned to the stage triumphantly after losing a leg in an accident. Their stories exemplify how passion and commitment can triumph over physical obstacles, challenging societal perceptions in the world of performing arts. In the sporting world, the Paralympic Games highlight extraordinary feats by athletes with disabilities, showcasing resilience and athletic prowess. Icons like Deepa Malik (paralyzed from the waist down), exemplify indomitable spirit. Moreover, India's stellar performance in

the 2023 Asian Para Games, with 111 medals, including 29 gold, 31 silver, and 51 bronze, reinforces admiration for these remarkable sportspersons and their unparalleled achievements. None can forget Arunima Sinha's determination as she scaled Mount Everest with her prosthetic leg. Volunteerism acts as a catalyst for social change by fostering inclusivity and challenging societal norms. Commitment to the UN CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) signals a global push for inclusivity. To truly make a difference, a shift in attitude is imperative for a more equitable world.

(The writer is programme executive Gandhi Smriti Sansthan, views are personal)

Consumer Protection Act needs to be revamped



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

Despite many changes, consumer protection is weak and not taken seriously by many companies. Besides, many consumers in rural areas cannot afford legal remedy

Consumer Protection Act 2019 needs root-level changes either in the Act itself or by modifications in rules so that the need for filing complaints may not arise. A very small fraction of consumers approach consumer forums for their consumer rights against the malpractices of big manufacturers.

Portal Jago-Grahak-Jago on the website of the Department of Consumer Affairs (Government of India) acts like a post office to deliver eye-wash replies from companies against whom complaints are lodged. Consumers are advised to approach Consumer Court if they are not satisfied with the replies of the companies received through the portal. The portal must be made practically effective with the Department made to scrutinise replies from the companies, and take the matter further in case replies are found unsatisfactory. It should be made compulsory that all companies on their websites provide contact details including names of concerned senior officers and Directors. All such websites of companies should compulsorily give details of government portals and consumer forms. Annual-Maintenance-Contracts (AMCs) should be practically made Extended Warranties since most companies fool consumers by not entertaining many aspects covered under AMCs.

All packaged commodities must be packed in the true metric spirit in either unit of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, or 1000 and thereafter in multiples of 1000 basic units abolishing any need for printing unit-price on packs. A popular milk brand (Namaste-India) has started packaging milk packs in 950 meters and 1900 meters to look like earlier packs of 500 meters and one litre respectively. There are so many packages in milk and milk products like 400 mltrs, and 450 mltrs, confusing consumers to look like 500 mltrs.

Drug manufacturers at times cheat consumers by packing commonly advertised medicines like cough lozenges in eight per strip rather than the normal ten. Many drug manufacturers started packing medicines in strips of 15 rather than 10 simply to increase sales. The suggested packaging system may be for medicines unless exemption is sought from the competent authority for dose-wise administration. At times free gifts given by manufacturers to promote other products are swallowed by traders. The system should be to tie free gifts with marketed products. "Not for sale alone" should be prominently printed on the free gift.

Commodities like Ghee are packed in litres in packs of 1 or 5 litres, but in packs of 15 kgs. A uniform system should be for marketing such products either by weight or by volume. Since the Supreme Court has allowed the use of A-4 size paper, any further production of legal-size paper must be banned. A slight modification in A-4 size paper is made from the present 29.5 cms x 21 cms to 30 cms x 20 cm to be in tune with the metric spirit.

Commodities with government-administered prices should be in round figure of rupee one per unit (like for petrol-diesel) and in multiples of rupee ten in commodities having sale price above rupees 100 (like LPG refill). It will not affect consumers, since delivery-persons never return balance coins. Rounding-off prices can earn extra revenue for governments.

Since the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Association of India and the



INDIA BEING THE LARGEST CONSUMER BASE, CAN IMPOSE CONDITIONS ON FOREIGN COMPANIES EXPORTING COMMODITIES TO INDIA TO SET UP THEIR MANUFACTURING UNITS IN INDIA

National Restaurant Association of India challenged guidelines issued by the Central Consumer Protection Authority on levying service in bills of hotels and restaurants in the court, the Consumer Protection Act should be amended so that hotels and restaurants may not be able to impose any extra levy other than government-taxes. Moreover, the Consumer Protection Act should ban the colonial practice of paying tips directing hotels and restaurants to prominently display "No Tips" boards.

India being the largest consumer base, can impose conditions on foreign companies exporting commodities to India to set up their manufacturing units in India especially when many such foreign companies flood Indian markets with products manufactured in countries other than the country of origin. An example is the setting of the biggest manufacturing plant of Samsung mobile phones in Noida (UP). It will result in huge earnings of foreign exchange by way of export from India rather than the drain of foreign exchange in importing such commodities. The union government should ban the import of items that are already available in India of much superior quality.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) should call a meeting of printer manufacturers including representatives of foreign companies to minimise types of ink cartridges. The largest selling foreign company Hewlett-Packard (HP) has too many types of ink cartridges of similar shape and size for their vast range of inkjet and laser printers. Such standardisation will heavily reduce the cost of ink cartridges. The condition should be that such accessories may be allowed to be manufactured by Indian manufac-

turers. Standardisation of mobile chargers on lines of electrical plugs and sockets should also be done for mobile phones of all makes and companies.

The Union government should also induce standardization of common accessories like tyres and batteries so that the same parts may be used in different models of cars produced by various car manufacturers. It will heavily bring down the cost of consumables through their bumper production in extra large numbers in some limited sizes and specifications. It can be achieved by merging some nearing sizes and specifications. Such guidelines, though also mentioned in the auto-policy of the Union government, are never followed in actual practice. There may be just two variants apart from the third with automatic gears, one basic Lx for economy customers and the other Vx with all company-fitted extra accessories and luxuries for affording customers.

Presently there is no limit to the allowed total profit margin on a commodity between the Maximum-Retail-Price (MRP) and Ex-factory price of commodities allowing huge total trade margins. Even economically priced generic medicines have printed MRP which is ten times higher than their wholesale price. Such big trade margins induce corruption in purchases. Moreover, victims are normal consumers, especially in rural areas, who do not have access to and knowledge of wholesale markets. The Department of Consumer Affairs must fix the maximum total trade margin for any commodity to bring down the MRP of commodities.

Even renowned confectioners having daily sales in lakhs of rupees, do

not issue bills resulting in big losses to the exchequer. Confectioners should be directed to compulsorily stick a copy of the GST invoice on each box of unbranded sweets sold in loose. GST authorities should be advised to have a common GST rate of say 12 per cent on all food items presently luxury sweets attract a GST rate of just 5 per cent while salted items attract 12 per cent GST giving liberty to confectioners often selling both items to show more sale of sweets to save GST under composite-scheme. Such can be the case with other unbranded commodities taxable under GST sold loose. Fear psychology should be developed whereby traders may themselves voluntarily issue GST invoices to customers even without being asked for.

The National Anti-Profitteering Authority (NAPP) working under the Department of Revenue should be shifted to the Department of Consumer Affairs. There is no provision for entertaining suggestions coming from experts either by NAPP or by other authorities. There must be some authority that may have the power to study and implement suggestions (if feasible).

A consumer forum in Chandigarh once imposed a fine of rupees 9000 on a renowned shoe company for charging rupees 3 as the cost of paper-bags. But the same shoe company and many famous branded shopping malls, are still charging the cost of paper bags from the shoppers. The Department of Consumer Affairs should prohibit by law the "selling" of shopping bags just for packing goods.

(The writer is an RTI consultant holding the Guinness World record, views are personal)

Building an inclusive world without boundaries

The advocacy of activists has made a dent in societal attitude towards people with disabilities but still a lot needs to be done

December is a month of celebration, commemoration and above all recognition of the abilities of innumerable people who also make a difference. The world commemorated the 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities' on December 3rd, acknowledging the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities (different abilities) and advocating for their rights and well-being. This day emphasises the potential for empowerment through inclusion and support. Closely following this, on December 5th, 'International Volunteers Day' recognises the countless volunteers globally who contribute their time and effort to make a positive impact in their communities. In 1992, the United Nations



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(The writer is programme executive Gandhi Smriti Sansthan, views are personal)

Israel battles militants in Gaza's main cities

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants in Gaza's two largest cities on Monday, with civilians still trapped in the fighting even after hundreds of thousands have fled to other parts of the besieged territory. Israel has pledged to keep fighting until it removes Hamas from power, dismantles its military capabilities and returns all of the hostages taken by militants during Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attack into Israel that ignited the war.

The US has provided unwavering diplomatic and military support for the campaign, even as it has urged Israel to minimize civilian casualties and further mass displacement. The war has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians and driven nearly 85% of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes.

Residents said there was heavy fighting in and around the southern city of Khan Younis, where Israeli ground forces opened a new line of attack last week, and battles were still underway in parts of Gaza City and the urban Jabalya refugee camp in northern Gaza, where large areas have been reduced to rubble.

In central Gaza, an Israeli airstrike overnight flattened a residential building where some 80 people were staying in the Maghazi refugee camp, residents said.

Ahmed al-Qarah, a neighbor who was digging through the rubble for survivors, said he knew of only six people who made it out. "The rest are under the building," he said.

Several of the dead were brought to a nearby hospital, where their loved ones could be seen sobbing and holding funeral prayers.

In Khan Younis, Radwa Abu Frayeh saw heavy Israeli strikes overnight around the European Hospital, where the U.N. humanitarian office says tens of thousands of people have sought shelter. She said one hit a home close to hers late

Sunday. "The building shook," she said. "We thought it was the end and we would die."

Husseini al-Sayed, who fled Gaza City earlier in the war with his three daughters, is staying in a three-story home in the city with around 70 others. He said they have been rationing food for days. "I don't know where to go," he said. "No place is safe."

Hamas is believed to have suffered heavy losses, but on Monday it fired a barrage of rockets that set off sirens in Tel Aviv. One person was lightly wounded, according to the Magen David Adom rescue service, and Channel 12 broadcast footage of a cratered road and damage to cars and buildings in a suburb.

FEARS OF PERMANENT DISPLACEMENT

With very little aid allowed into Gaza, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods. Some openly worry that Palestinians will be forced out of the territory altogether in a repeat of the

mass exodus from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. That gave rise to built-up and seemingly permanent refugee camps like Jabalya and Maghazi.

"Expect public order to completely break down soon, and an even worse situation could unfold including epidemic diseases and increased pressure for mass displacement into Egypt," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a forum in Qatar on Sunday.

Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesman, called allegations that Israeli intends to drive people en masse from Gaza "outrageous and false." But other Israeli officials have discussed such a scenario, raising alarm in Egypt and other Arab countries that refuse to accept any refugees.

At the same time, it's not clear when or if Palestinians would be allowed to return to Gaza City and much of the north — home to some 1.2 million before the war — where entire neighborhoods have

been flattened.

Palestinians in Lebanon and the Israeli-occupied West Bank observed a general strike on Monday called by activists to demand a cease-fire, after the U.S. vetoed a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for one on Friday. A similar, nonbinding vote is planned in the General Assembly on Tuesday.

HARSH CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas, saying it endangers residents by fighting in dense areas and positioning military infrastructure — including weapons, tunnels and rocket launchers — in or near civilian buildings.

The military said five soldiers were killed in a battle in southern Gaza on Sunday, after militants fired at them from a school and set off an explosive device. It said the troops, backed by aircraft and tanks, returned fire and killed the militants. Forces operating in

Jabalya found a truck full of long-range rockets near a school, and a rifle, two rocket-propelled grenade launchers and explosives in a home, the army said. Israel has urged people to flee to what it says are safe areas in the south — and the fighting in and around Khan Younis has pushed tens of thousands toward the town of Rafah and other areas along the border with Egypt. But Israel has continued to strike alleged militant targets throughout the territory.

Associated Press reporters saw nine bodies brought to a local hospital on Monday after an airstrike hit a home in Rafah overnight. The aid group Doctors Without Borders said people in the south are also falling ill as they pack into crowded shelters or sleep in tents in open areas. Nicholas Papachryostomou, MSF emergency coordinator in Gaza, said "every other patient" at a clinic in Rafah has a respiratory infection after prolonged exposure to cold and rain.

Sunak apologises to COVID-hit families

AP ■ LONDON



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday apologised to the families who lost loved ones in the COVID-19 pandemic as he opened his evidence to an ongoing public inquiry in a tough week, which will also see him tackle a feared revolt over a parliamentary vote on his Rwanda policy to deport illegal migrants.

The British Indian leader said he was "deeply sorry" about the lives lost and stressed that he wanted to give his evidence to the COVID inquiry in the spirit of "constructive candour" so that lessons can be learnt from when he was chancellor of the exchequer 2020-21.

At several points he also defended Boris Johnson's decision-making pressures as prime minister at the time, saying he met his former boss even more than his wife Akshata Murty during the height of the first COVID lockdown period.

"I just wanted to start by saying how deeply sorry I am to all of those who lost loved ones, family members through the pandemic and also all those who suffered in various ways throughout the pandemic and as a result of the actions that were taken," said Sunak.

"I've thought a lot about this over the past couple of years, it's important we learn the lessons so we can be better prepared in the future. It is in that spirit, and with the utmost respect for all of those who were affected that I'm here today. I look forward to giving evidence in the spirit of constructive candour to help the inquiry with its deliberations," he said. The inquiry barrister, Hugo Keith, then took Sunak through

the entire timeline of the COVID pandemic decisions, starting from the first lockdown which was declared in March 2020. He was questioned about some missing WhatsApp messages, to which the UK prime minister claimed they were lost in the process of him changing his phone multiple times in recent years and also that he is not a "prolific" user of the messaging service for government business.

Asked if there was a clash between him as finance minister and scientific advice in favour of lockdown at the time, he responded: "I don't think I ever refer to it as a clash. I think I saw my role as chancellor of the exchequer as making sure the prime minister had the best possible advice, information, analysis relating to the economic impact and consequences of some of the decisions he was having to make." The official inquiry into the government's handling of the pandemic is being chaired by Baroness Heather Hallett, who has been hearing live telecast evidence in London since June.

Polling centres open in Egypt's presidential polls

AP ■ CAIRO



Polling centres in Egypt opened on Monday, the second voting day in a presidential election that is certain to see President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi secure another term. The vote, which began across the Middle Eastern nation on Sunday, has been overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, on Egypt's eastern borders.

The vote is also taking place amid a staggering economic crisis in Egypt, a country of 105 million people in which nearly a third live in poverty, according to official figures.

The crisis stems from mismanagement of the economy but also from the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, which rattled the global economy.

El-Sissi faces no serious challenger, although there are three other candidates: Farid Zahran, head of the opposition Social Democratic Party; Abdel-Samad Yamama, chairman of the Wafd Party; and Hazem Omar, head of the

Republican People's Party. El-Sissi came to power in 2014, a year after he, as defense minister, led the military removal of an elected but divisive Islamist president amid widespread street protests against his year of rule. More than 67 million people are eligible to vote in this week's election.

The vote is set to end on Tuesday, with a runoff scheduled for January 8-10 if no candidate secures more than 50 per cent of the vote, according to the National Election Authority, a judicial-chaired body that runs the electoral process.

Iraq scrambles to contain fighting between US troops and Iran-backed groups

AP ■ BAGHDAD

Dozens of attacks on US military facilities by Iran-backed factions in Iraq over the past two months have forced the government in Baghdad to perform a balancing act that is becoming more difficult by the day. A rocket attack on the sprawling US Embassy in Baghdad on Friday marked a further escalation as Iraqi officials scramble to contain the ripple effects of the Israel-Hamas war.

Iran holds considerable sway in Iraq and a coalition of Iran-backed groups brought Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani to power in October 2022. But at the same time, there are some 2,000 US forces stationed in Iraq under an agreement with Baghdad, mainly to counter the extremist Islamic State group.

Baghdad also relies heavily on Washington's sanctions waivers to buy electricity from Iran, and since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iraq's foreign currency reserves have been housed at the US Federal Reserve, giving the Americans significant control over Iraq's supply of dollars.

Al-Sudani's predecessors also had to walk a delicate line

between Tehran and Washington, but the Israel-Hamas war has considerably upped the stakes.

Since the onset of the war on October 7, at least 84 attacks on US bases in Iraq and Syria have been claimed by an umbrella group of Iran-backed Iraqi militants dubbed the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. The militants say their attacks are in retaliation for Washington's backing of Israel and its military presence in Iraq and Syria.

Al-Sudani has condemned the attacks and US counterstrikes as a violation of his country's sovereignty. He also ordered authorities to pursue militants involved in the attacks, most of which did not cause injuries or major damage. His office declined further comment.

Washington has sent messages that its patience is wearing thin.

After the embassy attack, the Pentagon said that Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin "is clear (to al-Sudani) that attacks against US forces must stop".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Al-Sudani that Washington expects Iraqi officials to take more action to prevent such attacks, and believes they have the capability to do so, a US official told The Associated Press. During a recent trip to the region, CIA Director William Burns warned al-Sudani of "harsh consequences" if Iraq does not act to stop the attacks, an Iraqi official said.

The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with briefing regulations.

In a call with the Iraqi premier earlier this month, Blinken said that the Americans would take matters into their own hands, arguing that Baghdad had not done enough to pursue the perpetrators, according to two Iraqi officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

Two days later, a US strike on a drone launch site near the Iraqi city of Kirkuk killed five militants. The US and much of the international community have scrambled to prevent the war in the besieged Gaza Strip from expanding across the region.

Analyst Renad Mansour said he believes Iran is making sure the attacks remain below a threshold that would provoke a major US response. "Both Iran and Iraq have maintained thus far a clear line that, at the moment, Iraq cannot turn into a playground that could destabilise the Sudan government," said Mansour, a senior research fellow at the Chatham House think tank.

He said that's partially due to Iraq's role of passing messages between Washington and Tehran. Sometimes the messenger is al-Sudani.

In early November, Blinken met with al-Sudani in Baghdad a day before the Iraqi prime minister was set to visit Tehran. Al-Sudani had won a specific promise from the militias that

no attacks would be launched during Blinken's visit, according to an Iraqi official and a member of the Kataib Hezbollah militia. Following the visit, al-Sudani carried a message from Blinken to Iran to restrain the militias. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

A week after the Iraqi premier's diplomatic efforts, the United States extended Iraq's sanctions waiver by four months to purchase Iranian electricity. Iran-hawks in Washington criticized the move, saying it would shore up revenue for Tehran while its proxies are at war with Israel.

Mansour says the US has used the sanctions waiver as "one of its cards" in economy-centred efforts to pressure Iran and Iraq.

Unlike Lebanon's Hezbollah group, seen as Iran's most powerful proxy in the region, Iraq's militias have so far only played a limited role in the conflict.

For now, only small number of militiamen from Iraq are in southern Lebanon, near Israel's northern border, said the official from the Kataib Hezbollah group. He said the Iraqis are working on "battle management" alongside Hezbollah and representatives of Hamas, the militant group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years and is currently battling Israel.

He said the Iran-backed groups in Iraq do not want the conflict to spread across the region, but are prepared to respond with force to any attacks.

Poland's outgoing govt loses confidence vote

AP ■ WARSAW

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's government lost a confidence vote in parliament on Monday, ending the rule of his national conservative party after eight years in power. The vote paves the way for the majority in parliament to elect Donald Tusk, a centrist and former EU leader, as prime minister, a role he held already from 2007-2014. The lawmakers plan to tap him later Monday. Morawiecki's government was defeated 266-190 in the 460-seat lower house.

The vote was a key step in a power transition that began Monday in the Polish parliament, where the outgoing national conservative leaders made their farewell statements as a majority of lawmakers prepared to elect Tusk.

The power transition, two months since Poles turned out in huge numbers to vote for change, was delayed for weeks

by the president, who chose to keep his political allies in office as long as possible. Parliamentary proceedings have ignited widespread curiosity and emotions, leading to a spike in the number of subscribers to the Sejm's YouTube channel.

Szymon Holownia, a former TV showman who leads a party allied with Tusk, became the speaker of parliament last month and has been trying to encourage discipline in the sometimes raucous assembly.

A Warsaw cinema which livestreamed Monday's proceedings drew hundreds of spectators who munched popcorn and erupted in laughter as the outgoing prime minister spoke.

"So many disturbing things took place in the past eight years that I'm not surprised by this joy that it's over," said Justyna Lemanska, a young female ad agency employee in the audience.

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Ground Floor, Zenith House, Keshavnagar Khayde Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai - 400034
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FINAL AUCTION CUM SALE NOTICE FOR GOLD ORNAMENTS

The borrower(s) (whose details are provided in the table herein below), in particular, and the public, in general, are hereby informed that the below mentioned accounts are overdue, and the borrower(s)/account holders have not responded/complied with the communication, and notice send by HDB Financial Services Limited (the "Company") requesting the borrower to clear his/her dues as per the documents in respect of the below mentioned loan signed/accepted by the borrower(s) [such documents, collectively "loan agreement" and therefore defined in terms thereof. The Company has in exercise of its rights as a pledgee, decided to enforce the pledge and therefore hold a public auction of the gold ornaments pledged to the company as security for the loan for the purpose of selling the same and realizing/recovering the dues owed by the borrower(s) to the company. The auction will be conducted on **12-12-2023** at the below mentioned local branch of HDB Financial Services Limited from 11.00 am onwards on the date and branches mentioned in the table below:-

Loan No	Customer Name	Date of Loan	Overdue Amount ₹	Branch Name
20579858	Pradeep Kumar	24/12/2021	14217	Delhi-NCR-Burari
29378771	Praveen Kumar Siddhu	21/11/2022	9815	Delhi-NCR-Burari
33426481	Sami Ullah	15/04/2023	70861	Delhi-NCR-Burari
28198974	Billu Singh	14/10/2022	16563	Delhi-Adarsh Nagar
35463115	Rekha Lal	15/06/2023	7000	Delhi-Adarsh Nagar
34474979	Prakash Kumar	17/05/2023	15700	Delhi-Badarpur
26423357	Gautam Sehgal	06/08/2022	560832	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
72679347	Ved Prakash Mishra	26/09/2022	13925	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
30404792	Mohd Zakir Idrissi	31/12/2022	27139	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
26710188	Rishpal Yadav	18/08/2022	9039	Delhi-Gandhi Nagar
31270201	Amandeep Singh	17/02/2023	22881	Delhi-Gandhi Nagar
33950180	Aakash Yadav	29/04/2023	8607	Delhi-Gandhi Nagar
32348735	Amandeep Singh	11/03/2023	12580	Delhi-Gandhi Nagar
34785370	Madan Kumar Jindal	25/05/2023	33698	Delhi-Gandhi Nagar
35710940	Madan Kumar Jindal	22/06/2023	9003	Delhi-Gandhi Nagar
29989098	Vasim Beg	16/12/2022	20898	Delhi-Jagatpuri
30540995	Shahzad So Mirza	05/01/2023	21469	Delhi-Jagatpuri
26284694	Moseen Khan	03/08/2022	383449	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
34914993	Mohd Parvez	29/05/2023	26044	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
34749249	Govind Singh	25/05/2023	11609	Delhi-Kamla Nagar
14758622	Gyan Prakash	24/03/2021	18961	Delhi-Karol Bagh

The auction shall be conducted on an "AS IS WHERE" and "AS IS WHAT IT" basis and the Company is not making and shall not make any representation or warranties as regards the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments. It shall be the sole and absolute responsibility of the potential purchaser to verify, examine and satisfy themselves about the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments prior to placing their bid and for such purpose it shall be open to potential purchasers to examine, at their sole cost and expense, and at the address set out herein above, the gold ornaments whether with or without expert advice 45 minutes prior to the time stipulated for the conduct of the auction. All the bid shall be subjected to such minimum reserve price as the company may deem fit to fix in this regards. The auction process and sale (if any) pursuant to such auction shall be subjected to such further terms and condition as the company may at sole discretion deem fit to impose.

If the borrower(s) mentioned above pays the amount due to the Company in terms of the loan agreement in his individual loan account in full before the auction as mentioned above, the pledged ornaments securing the said loan may be withdrawn from the said account without further notice. Please note that it is the absolute discretionary power of the undersigned authorized officer of the company, either to postpone or to cancel the auction proceeding without prior notice and without assigning any reason thereof and to reject any or all the bids or offer without assigning any reason for the same.

Date : DELHI
Date : 12-12-2023

Authorized Officer
(HDB Financial Services Ltd)

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Ms. Sonia who is purchasing the first floor, (Front Side R/S), part of Plot No. 4 and 4-A, New No. B-22, area measuring 177.25 Sq. Mtrs., out of Khastri No. 112/18, Block B, situated at village Palam, Madhu Vihar, Near Dwarika, Sector-II, Delhi; from Mr. Vinod Kumar Jain (2) Mrs. Anita Jain & (3) Mr. Dheeraj Gupta, who are owners of the aforesaid property vide Authorization Slip (PM-UDAY) dated 16.07.2022, which is registered vide Document No.8347, at Sub-Registrar-X, New Delhi/Delhi, on 16.07.2022, and same is finance and mortgage by Addiya Birla Housing Finance Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NFC, we give this public notice that if any person having any type of claim / right / title / interest / creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, hence. **Lucern Legal LLP Plot No.136, (Basement) Uday Park New Delhi-110049. Contact # 011-49846316**

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform public in general that Kotak Mahindra bank Ltd has organized an auction in below mentioned respect of Vehicles. **VEHICLES FOR SALE**

- 1) TATAMOTORS TACEGOLD REG. NO. DL1LAE9095-YOM-2021
- 2) TATAMOTORS TATAACE REG. NO. DL1LAJ9437-YOM-2023
- 3) EICHR VECEV_1059 REG. NO. DL1LX0463-YOM-2016
- 4) TATAMOTORS TLPT1109FB REG. NO. HR55U5340-YOM-2014
- 5) TATAMOTORS TLPT1109FB REG. NO. HR55T5724-YOM-2014
- 6) TATAMOTORS TLPT1109FB REG. NO. HR55U7058-YOM-2014
- 7) TATAMOTORS TLPT1109FB REG. NO. HR55T6735-YOM-2014
- 8) PIAGGIO GR PIAGGIO_GR REG. NO. DL1S1GD1696-YOM-2022
- 9) ASHOK_LEY AL4923FBT REG. NO. UP14GT6891-YOM-2018
- 10) EICHR VECEV PRO_2110 REG. NO. HR38AD0153-YOM-2022

PUBLIC NOTICE OF AUCTION OF GOLD ORNAMENTS

Capri Global Credit Ltd - Gold Loan
Registered & Corporate Office Address: 502, Tower A, Peninsula Business Park, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. Pincode-400013. Telephone: 40888100. Fax: 40888170.

GOLD AUCTION NOTICE
Notice is hereby given for the information of all concerned that gold ornaments pledged with under the below mentioned branches of the company which were overdue for redemption and have not been redeemed so far in spite of repeated notices. We will conduct the auction at the concerned branches on **12th December 2023 at 11:00 AM** Address of such Participants/Customers has been listed at the end of this notice. The Capri Global Credit Ltd has the authority to sell any or all items of the account from the auction lot without prior information and has the right to cancel/change the auction date without any intimation.

Mention Below Is The District Name and Gold Loan Number
Delhi - GL220091706, GL230113143, GL230115276, GL230215112, GL230215198, GL230215363, GL2302155261, GL230215810, GL230215826, GL230216075, GL230228740, GL230242492, GL230242705, GL230242817, GL230247214, GL230247216, GL230247217, GL230247218, GL230247219, GL230247220, GL230247221, GL230247222, GL230247223, GL230247224, GL230247225, GL230247226, GL230247227, GL230247228, GL230247229, GL230247230, GL230247231, GL230247232, GL230247233, GL230247234, GL230247235, GL230247236, GL230247237, GL230247238, GL230247239, GL230247240, GL230247241, GL230247242, GL230247243, GL230247244, GL230247245, GL230247246, GL230247247, GL230247248, GL230247249, GL230247250, GL230247251, GL230247252, GL230247253, GL230247254, GL230247255, GL230247256, GL230247257, GL230247258, GL230247259, GL230247260, GL230247261, GL230247262, GL230247263, GL230247264, GL230247265, GL230247266, GL230247267, GL230247268, GL230247269, GL230247270, GL230247271, GL230247272, GL230247273, GL230247274, GL230247275, GL230247276, 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Russia targets Kyiv with ballistic missiles

Ukraine says it intercepted all of them

AP ■ KYIV

Russia fired eight ballistic missiles at Kyiv early on Monday, all of which were shot down, Ukraine's Air Force said. The thwarted attack still left one person injured by shrapnel and three more suffered severe stress reactions, officials said. A series of loud explosions rang out in Ukraine's capital just after 4 a.m., as the city was under its nightly curfew, followed by air raid sirens.

Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said that in Darnytskyi district of eastern Kyiv the debris of an intercepted missile fell without catching fire, and elsewhere in the capital the explosive wave damaged the windows of a house. The attack also left 120 households in the city without electricity, Ukraine's Ministry of Energy said. Last winter Russian troops were deliberately targeting Ukrainian energy system causing power outages and blackouts across the country. Over the weekend the UK Ministry of Defence noted that Russia last week used its heavy bomber fleet for the first time since September. It predicted the start of a more concerted campaign aimed at degrading Ukraine's energy infrastructure as winter sets in.

Kyiv is routinely targeted

by Russian drone and missile attacks. Just over two weeks ago, Kyiv came under what Ukrainian officials said was the most intense drone attack since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 75 Iranian-made Shahed drones against the capital, of which 74 were destroyed by air defences.

Monday's attack on the capital happened as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was in Argentina, where he attended the swearing-in of the country's new president, Javier Milei. It was the Ukrainian leader's first official trip to Latin America as Kyiv continues to court support among developing nations for its 21-month-old fight against Russia's invading forces.

Zelenskyy met with Milei as well as with the presidents of Uruguay, Paraguay and Ecuador. During the inauguration ceremony, Zelenskyy could be seen exchanging words with Hungarian leader Viktor Orban, widely considered one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest allies in Europe and one of the few European leaders who hasn't sided with Ukraine in the war.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said he had a "highly straightforward conversation" with Orban, "focused on our European affairs". He said

he also spoke by phone with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen "about joint work at the EU level and about the joint defense of Europe".

EU leaders are meeting later this week in Brussels. Orban has demanded that EU membership talks with Ukraine and billions of euros in funding meant for Kyiv be taken off the agenda. Zelenskyy was due to travel to Washington for meetings on Tuesday with President Joe Biden and other US officials.

"Volodymyr Zelenskyy will focus on ensuring unity among the United States, Europe and the world in supporting Ukraine's defense against Russian terror and strengthening the international order based on rules and respect for the sovereignty of each nation," his office said in a statement.

Biden has asked Congress for a USD 110 billion package of wartime funding for Ukraine and Israel, along with other national security priorities. But the request is caught up in a debate over US immigration policy and border security. Elsewhere in Ukraine on Monday, Russia fired 18 drones overnight, and the Air Force intercepted all of them, mostly over the southern Mykolaiv region.

Voter turnout plunges below 30 per cent in Hong Kong elections

AP ■ HONG KONG

Voter turnout plunged below 30 per cent in Hong Kong's first district council elections since new rules introduced under Beijing's guidance effectively shut out all pro-democracy candidates, setting a record low since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

According to official data on Monday, 27.5 per cent of the city's 4.3 million registered voters cast ballots in Sunday's polls — significantly less than the record 71.2 per cent who participated in the last elections held at the height of anti-government protests in 2019. The pro-democracy camp won those polls in a landslide victory, in a clear rebuke of the government's handling of the protests. Beijing loyalists are expected to take control of the district councils after Sunday's elections, with results showing big pro-government parties winning most directly elected seats.

"The newly elected district councilors come from diverse backgrounds," Hong Kong leader John Lee said. "They will make the work in the districts more multidimensional ... better aligning with the interests of the citizens."

The district councils, which primarily handle municipal matters such as organising construction projects and public facilities, were

Hong Kong's last major political bodies mostly chosen by the public. But under new electoral rules introduced under a Beijing order that only "patriots" should administer the city, candidates must secure endorsements from at least nine members of government-appointed committees that are mostly packed with Beijing loyalists, making it virtually impossible for any pro-democracy candidates to run.

An amendment passed in July also slashed the proportion of directly elected seats from about 90 per cent to about 20 per cent. Many prominent pro-democracy activists have also been arrested or have fled the territory after Beijing imposed a harsh national security law in response to the 2019 protests.

Critics say the low voter turnout reflects the public sentiment toward the "patriots" only system and the government's crackdown on dissent. The previous record low for participation in the council elections since the handover to Chinese rule was 35.8 per cent in 1999. The electoral changes further narrowed political freedoms in the city, following a separate overhaul for the legislature in 2021. Following those changes, turnout in the last legislative election two years ago plunged to 30 per cent from 58 per cent in 2016.

SC verdict upholding abrogation of Art 370 has 'no legal value': Pak

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Monday said India's Supreme Court verdict upholding the abrogation of Article 370 has "no legal value", asserting that the international law does not recognise New Delhi's "unilateral and illegal actions" of August 5, 2019. The Supreme Court on Monday unanimously upheld the Centre government's decision of August 2019 to abrogate Article 370, which bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

"International law doesn't recognise India's unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019. The judicial endorsement by the Indian Supreme Court has no legal value. Kashmiris have an inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant UN SC resolutions," caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas Jilani said. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Jilani said India has "no right to make unilateral decisions on the status of this disputed territory" against the will of the Kashmiri people and Pakistan.

"Pakistan categorically rejects the judgement

announced by the Supreme Court of India on the status of" Jammu and Kashmir, he said. He said that the judicial endorsement of India's "unilateral and illegal actions" was "a travesty of justice".

He said that Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally-recognised dispute, which remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council for over seven decades. "The final disposition of Jammu and Kashmir is to be made in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and as per aspirations of the Kashmiri people," he said. "Pakistan does not acknowledge the supremacy of the Indian Constitution over Jammu and Kashmir. Any process, subservient to the Indian Constitution, carries no legal significance. India cannot abdicate its international obligations on the pretext of domestic legislations and judicial verdicts," he said.

Relations between India and Pakistan have often been strained over the Kashmir issue and cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. However, their ties nose-dived after India abrogated Article

370 as Pakistan expelled the Indian envoy and downgraded the trade ties. India has time and again said that Kashmir is an internal matter, and added it desires normal, friendly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, violence and hostility.

Gilani alleged that India's "unilateral and illegal measures" since 5 August 2019 have been aimed at changing the demographic structure and political landscape of Kashmir.

"They remain a matter of grave concern for Pakistan as their ultimate goal is to convert the Kashmiris into a disempowered community in their own land. These measures must be rescinded to create an environment for peace and dialogue," he said. The minister said Pakistan will continue to extend its full political, diplomatic and moral support to the people of Kashmir for the realisation of their inalienable right to self-determination.

"We will soon call a meeting of all stakeholders and determine our future course of action," he said. To a question, he said that Pakistan would like to maintain peace on the LoC after this decision.

Allies of Navalny say they haven't heard from him in 6 days

Tallinn (AP): Allies of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny sounded the alarm on Monday, saying that neither they nor the politician's lawyers have heard from him in six days. Navalny, who is serving a 19-year term on charges of extremism, was due to appear in court Monday via video link but didn't, spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said. She said prison officials cited electricity problems. Lawyers in recent days also haven't been able to access Navalny, according to Yarmysh.

"It is already the sixth straight day that we don't know where Alexei is and what is happening to him," Yarmysh wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. Navalny, 47, has been behind bars since January 2021. As President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe, he campaigned against official corruption and organised major anti-Kremlin protests. His arrest came upon his return to Moscow from Germany, where he recuperated from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin. Navalny has since been handed three prison terms and spent months in isolation in a penal colony in the Vladimir region east of Moscow for alleged minor infractions. He has rejected all charges against him as politically motivated.

Yarmysh said on Friday that the developments were concerning given that Navalny recently fell ill: "He felt dizzy and lay down on the floor. Prison officials rushed to him, unfolded the bed, put Alexei on it and gave him an IV drip. We don't know what caused it, but given that he's being deprived of food, kept in a cell without ventilation and has been offered minimal outdoor time, it looks like fainting out of hunger."

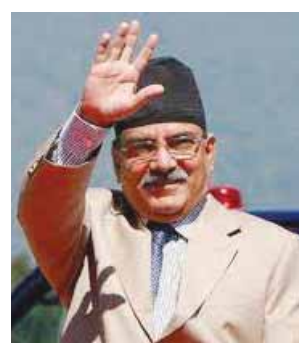
Nepali soldiers employed in both Russian and Ukraine armies: PM Prachanda

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Monday said that Nepali citizens are not only serving in the Russian Army but reportedly also serving in the Ukrainian Army. The Nepal government recently confirmed that six Nepalese nationals who fought for the Russian Army died in the war between Russia and Ukraine.

There are reports about over 200 Nepalese serving in the Russian Army, the Prime Minister said while interacting with pro-Maoist journalists here. "We have also learnt that Nepalese soldiers are serving in the Ukrainian Army too," he said. We are finding out the truth in this matter, Prachanda said while inaugurating a Press Centre Nepal central office bearers' meeting.

The Press Centre Nepal is



affiliated with the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist). "I have got reports that over 200 Nepalis are in Russian Army and there are also reports about Nepalis working for the Ukraine army," Prachanda said.

The Nepal government has, however, clarified that it has no policy of sending Nepalese to the Russian Army and that people in search of foreign employment have gone to join the armies of other countries.

Philippines military chief angered by confrontations in SCS

AP ■ MANILA

The Philippine military chief said on Monday he was with Filipino forces aboard a supply boat when it was blasted with a water cannon, surrounded and bumped by Chinese coast guard ships over the weekend in the disputed South China Sea. Gen Romeo Brawner Jr. told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that China was escalating its aggression in the contested waters but said it would not deter Filipino forces from defending the Philippines' territorial interests in the busy waterway.

More than 100 Chinese government and suspected militia ships have swarmed the high seas around the contested Second Thomas Shoal, where a long-marooned Philippine navy ship that Brawner visited has stood for decades. He said the swarm of Chinese ships was much bigger than in previous months. "It's pure aggression," Brawner said of China's high-seas maneuvers. "I witnessed how many times the big Chinese coast guard and militia ships cut our path. They water-cannoned us, then bumped us. It's angering."

"This really needs a diplo-

matic solution at the higher level," he said, but added that the Philippine "armed forces will continue our mission because it is lawful and it's our obligation to bring supplies to our troops in the frontlines, and it's our obligation to protect our fishermen."

Brawner, the US-educated chief of the 150,000-member Armed Forces of the Philippines, joined navy personnel in a wooden-hulled supply boat, the Unnaiza Mae I, which brought Christmas gifts, food and other supplies to a small contingent of Filipino marines and navy personnel stationed aboard the BRP Sierra Madre at the Second Thomas Shoal. Although now crumbling with rust and holes, the slightly listing BRP Sierra Madre remains an actively commissioned Philippine navy ship, meaning any assault on it would be considered an act of war. It has become a fragile symbol of the territorial claims of the Philippines in the strategic waterway, which China claims virtually in its entirety. After the Philippines deliberately grounded the Sierra Madre in the shallows of Scarborough Shoal in 1999, China surrounded the atoll with its coast guard, navy

and suspected militia ships to isolate the Filipino forces there.

The yearslong territorial standoff has flared regularly and became one of the most delicate flashpoints in the South China Sea and a delicate fault line in the US-China regional rivalry.

The United States has repeatedly warned it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, ships or aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. China has warned the US not to meddle in what it says is a purely Asian dispute.

Brawner said he conveyed President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's Christmas greetings to the Filipino forces aboard the BRP Sierra Madre, where he shared a traditional rice lunch eaten by hand with them. The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said it summoned the Chinese ambassador on Monday and filed diplomatic protests against Beijing. A Philippine coast guard spokesman, Commodore Jay Tariella, called the Chinese coast guard's actions "barbaric" in a news conference and said the Philippine coast guard would not use its water

ed militia ships targeted

Philippine vessels two days in a row with water cannon blasts and rammed one of them, causing damage and endangering Filipino crew members off the Second Thomas Shoal and separately in the Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines. The Philippines, along with the US and Japan, condemned the maneuvers by the Chinese coast guard and accompanying ships. More than a dozen countries, including the European Union, Germany, France, Canada and Australia, also expressed support to the Philippines and expressed alarm over the incident, Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Teresita Daza said.

Over the weekend, Philippine officials said the Chinese coast guard and suspect-

United Kingdom sends two minehunters to Ukraine

London (AP): Britain is transferring two minehunting ships to Ukraine as part of a package of long-term support to bolster security in the Black Sea, the Ministry of Defence said on Monday. Transfer of the two Sandown class vessels, which are designed to help clear mines from coastal waters, comes as Britain and Norway announce plans for a new maritime coalition to increase support for Ukraine in the war with Russia.

The coalition will work with the Ukrainian navy to expand its forces in the Black Sea, develop a Ukrainian Marine Corps and enhance the use of river patrol craft to

defend inland and coastal waterways, British authorities said. "These minehunters will deliver vital capability to Ukraine, which will help save lives at sea and open up vital export routes, which have been severely limited since (Russian President Vladimir) Putin launched his illegal full-scale invasion," Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said in a statement.

Britain first announced a deal to sell the two minehunting ships to Ukraine in June 2021, before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainian soldiers began training on the ships last year in Scotland.

Rohingya Muslims struggle to find shelter

AP ■ BANDA ACEH

His face showed exhaustion, restlessness, and confusion. It has been more than 36 hours since Muhammad Amin landed in Indonesia. He arrived in a wooden boat with 136 other Rohingya Muslims who left their refugee camp in Bangladesh. Their boat had been at sea for nearly 1 1/2 months, with no water or food for days.

Amin, 27, wore a Paris Saint-Germain soccer jersey that bore the marks of being worn for days. He, together with his wife, his children and hundreds of other Rohingya refugees, tried to get some rest as they waited at a skateboard park in the city of Banda Aceh, next to the governor's office. They have been relocated five

times in less than two days and are yet to find shelter. Two boats carrying two groups of more than 300 Rohingya Muslims, including emaciated women and children, reached Indonesia's northernmost Aceh province on Sunday. A third boat, carrying more refugees, remains missing.

The UN refugee agency warned that people onboard could die if more is not done to rescue them. Amin and his family left the refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh and arrived at Lamreh village in Indonesia's northernmost Aceh province. "It was not safe at the camp in Bangladesh," he said while holding his two toddler daughters to calm them down. "We, the Rohingya men, had to keep on guard every night. We couldn't sleep." Amin

claimed that they were being shot at, and one night a couple of Rohingya refugees got killed.

About 740,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar to camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, following a brutal counterinsurgency campaign. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of Rohingya homes, and international courts are considering whether their actions constitute genocide. The refugees have been trying to find shelter in other countries including Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia.

After their boat docked at Lamreh village, Amin and the other Rohingya refugees saw the locals were unwelcoming of their arrival. On Sunday

evening, residents loaded the Rohingya Muslims in four trucks and took them to the place near the governor's office, about 1.5 hours from where they landed.

When they arrived, police officers drove them for another hour to a scout camp in Pidie regency, only for residents there to block the camp's entrance and deny them entry. Authorities escorted them to a convention centre run by the Ministry of Social Affairs, but locals still wouldn't allow them to stay.

Finally, the refugees were driven back to where the governor's office was located. They stayed overnight in a convention hall complex in Banda Aceh city owned by the government. Shahidul Islam, 34, arrived with Amin.

Office of Superintending Engineer Civil Circle, P.W.D., Devpura Haridwar						
websit: http://pwd.uk.gov.in , E-mail: sepharpwduk@gmail.com						
Letter No. 2852/06C-Civil Circle/23				Date : 11/12/2023		
National Competitive Bidding (E-Tendering)						
On the behalf of "Governor of Uttarakhand" Superintending Engineer, Civil Circle, PWD, Haridwar invites item rate bid through E-tendering under Two Bid system (In anticipation of the financial sanction). All information will be available from 19.12.2023 and onwards on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in .						
Sr. No.	Name of work	Earnest Money (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of Tender (Rs.)	Time of Completion of work (Months)	Validity of Tender (Days)	Category of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Construction of drain on both sides of remaining part of NH-58 from ROB to Bijhauri drain in Roorkee Constituency of district Haridwar Under Honorable Chief Minister announcement number 101/2021 (State Plan Year 2021-22)	32.00	Rs. 5000.00+ 18% GST	12 Months	120 Days	Registered in category A or above for Road work in any of the Govt. department /Govt. undertaking of Uttarakhand state or registered in category A or above for Road work in any other State Govt./ Central Govt. department/Govt. undertaking.
Note:- Submission of following documents in original is essential in office of undersigned on/before the last date and time of uploading tender by the bidders.						
1-	Cost of tender document Rs. 5000.00+G.S.T. as applicable only in the form of demand draft in the name of Executive Engineer, Construction Division, PWD, Roorkee. Bank Draft for Rs. 5000.00 & GST Rs. 900.00 to be submitted separately.					
2-	Rs 100.00 Non Judicial stamp affixed with duly signed Rs. 1.00 Revenue stamp for the validity of the Tender including certificate for validity up to 120 days and the name of work/Tender ID.					
3-	Earnest Money to be pledged in the name of Superintending Engineer, Civil Circle, PWD, Haridwar.					
4-	Attach Copy of Registration.					
5-	The undersigned reserves the right to cancel any or all tenders without explaining any reason. No claim from anyone will be valid in this regard.					
Superintending Engineer Civil Circle, PWD, Haridwar						

'Retail inflation now stable'

TEMPORARY INCREASES DUE TO DEMAND SUPPLY MISMATCHES: FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said retail inflation is now "stable" and temporary increases in inflation on a few occasions are caused by demand-supply mismatches arising out of global shocks and adverse weather conditions.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said India's retail inflation has declined from an average of 7.1 per cent in April-October 2022 to 5.4 per cent in the corresponding period of 2023.

"The retail inflation is now stable and within the notified tolerance band of 2 per cent to 6 per cent. A steady decline in core inflation, estimated after removing volatile food and fuel items from retail inflation, has been

critical in weakening the inflationary pressure in the Indian economy," she said.

The core inflation rate has declined from 5.1 per cent in April 2023 to 4.3 per cent in October 2023.

The minister said retail inflation in India has been mostly within acceptable limits after the notification of the inflation tolerance band in 2016.

"Temporary increases in inflation on a few occasions are caused by demand-supply mismatches arising out of global shocks and adverse weather conditions," Sitharaman added.

Proactive supply-side initiatives by the government and effective demand stabilisation measures by the Reserve Bank of India have helped resolve the demand-supply mismatches and rein in inflation, she added.



The measures taken by the government to restrain inflation include strengthening buffers for key food items, making periodic open market releases, easing imports of essential food items through trade policy measures, and preventing hoarding through imposition/revision of stock limits, and channelling supplies through designated retail outlets.

To ensure food security for the poor, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which provides free foodgrains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries, has been extended for five years with effect from January 1, 2024.

In October 2023, the government also increased the subsidy under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana from Rs 200 to Rs 300 per 14.2 kg cylinder.



Sensex scales 70,000 peak

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex breached a new milestone of 70,000 points before closing 102 points higher, while Nifty settled just shy of the 21,000 mark on Monday, driven by gains in banking, IT and metal shares.

After a gap-up opening, the 30-share index rose to a record intra-day high of 70,057.83 points. Later, it shed some of the gains to close at 69,928.53 points, showing a rise of 102.93 points or 0.15 per cent.

As many as 18 Sensex shares closed in the green, 11 declined, and one settled unchanged.

The broader Nifty also hit its record trading high of 21,026.10 amid early gains in global markets. The 50-share index gained 27.70 points or 0.13 per cent to settle just below the 21,000 level at 20,997.10, its all-time closing high.

Among Sensex shares, Ultratech Cement jumped the most by 3.04 per cent. Nestle rose 1.3 per cent, Power Grid 1.05 per cent and Tata Motors 0.85 per cent. Gains in IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, TCS, Tech Mahindra, NTPC, ITC, JSW Steel and Tata Steel helped the barometer scale a fresh high.

Axis Bank fell the most by 1.26 per cent, M&M by 0.99 per cent and Hindustan Unilever by 0.67 per cent. Maruti, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, and HDFC Bank and Infosys also declined.

"The market crossed 70,000 levels today, while the broader market outperformed the main indices. However, profit booking was evident at higher levels as traders anticipated clues from tomorrow's significant data releases on inflation from the US and India, as well as the IIP," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Investors will be closely watching the upcoming FOMC meeting tomorrow for clues about potential future rate cuts while expecting to keep rates the same this time, Nair added.

The US Federal Reserve will announce its next move on interest rates on Wednesday. The US government will report on consumer inflation on Tuesday.

In the broader market, BSE LargeCap advanced by 0.21 per cent, BSE MidCap by 0.91 per cent, while SmallCap rose by 0.71 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Commodities rose by 1.16 per cent, BSE Metal by 1.1 per cent, BSE Services by 0.95 per cent, BSE Capital Goods by 0.76 per cent, BSE Utilities by 0.67 per cent, and BSE Auto by 0.48 per cent.

However, BSE Healthcare dropped 0.38 per cent and Oil & Gas by 0.15 per cent.

On the Nifty scaling 21,000 level, Rupak De, Senior Technical analyst at LKP Securities, said, "The Nifty traded mostly sideways as traders stayed on the sidelines at the beginning of a data-packed week. There's a strong resistance at 21,000, with call writers actively building positions. A decisive breakthrough above 21,000 is necessary to resume the uptrend. Until then, it's anticipated that the market will consolidate within a broader range."

Meanwhile, Asian markets were mixed. Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 0.8 per cent, and the Shanghai Composite added 0.7 per cent, while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index gained 1.5 per cent.

In Europe, Germany's DAX was unchanged, and the CAC 40 in Paris gained 0.2 per cent. In London, the FTSE 100 was down 0.4 per cent.

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have turned bullish, investing Rs 26,505 crore into domestic equities in the first six trading sessions of December.

'406 instances of aircraft malfunctioning reported in January, November 2023'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic airlines reported 406 instances of aircraft malfunctioning in the first 11 months of this year, according to the government.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation VK Singh shared the data in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

From January to November 2023, IndiGo reported 233 instances of aircraft malfunctioning, while SpiceJet reported 44 such cases.

Air India reported 52 instances of malfunctioning of aircraft, followed by the now-grounded Go First (22), Akasa Air (20), AirAsia (India) Ltd (15), Vistara (13), Fly Big (5) and BlueDart Aviation (2).



In 2022, these airlines had reported 542 instances of malfunctioning of aircraft.

"Technical snags in aircraft are caused due to improper function/malfunction of components/accessories fitted on the aircraft," the minister said.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has laid down regulations under Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR), which requires that the aircraft is maintained in accordance with the manufacturer and DGCA guidelines, and all snags reported on the aircraft are rectified before it is released for flight, he added.

In a separate written reply, Singh said there was no shortage of pilots in the country.



India bioeconomy grew to \$80 billion in eight years, target to reach \$600 billion by 2030: Mandaviya

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday said India's bioeconomy has grown eight-fold in the last eight years to \$80 billion, and the country has set a target to reach \$600 billion by 2030.

The minister was speaking at the pre-Vibrant Gujarat seminar on 'Biotechnology: The Path of Innovation and Wellness for Viksit Bharat'.

"The Indian bioeconomy has grown eight times in the last eight years to \$80 billion from \$10 billion earlier. India has set a target for the biotechnology industry to grow to \$150 billion by 2025 and \$600 billion by 2030. There are more than 760 companies and 4,240 startups in the biotechnology sector in the country," he said.

The country is not far from being among the top 10 in the biotechnology global ecosystem, he said at a seminar organised as part of the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024.

"Biotechnology will become the biggest foundation for health treatment, and will help resolve complex questions in the fields of agriculture, environment, industrial production, and several such areas," Mandaviya said.

The economy will be based on biotechnology because of all these factors, he added.

The National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2022-25 has focused on skill develop-

ment, R&D, knowledge sharing, commercialisation facilities and public-private partnership mode to connect to the markets, the minister informed.

As of 2020, the pharmaceutical sector contributed 62 per cent to the Indian bioeconomy, followed by bio-agriculture (16 per cent), and bio-services and bio-industries (together accounting for 22 per cent), he said.

By developing five vaccines for COVID-19, India showed its biotechnology prowess to the world, and it was made possible due to the biotechnology skills available in the country, he said.

"India provided affordable vaccines to more than 125 countries. In coming times, India will make available many such biotechnology-based products for the welfare of the world," he said.

Speaking at the seminar, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said biotechnology is a rapidly growing "technology of hope".

Under the visionary leadership of the then chief minister and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gujarat has focused on the development of the biotechnology sector since 2004, he said.

A golden era has begun in the field of biotechnology in the country and Gujarat is poised to be a leader in it as well, he said.

Patel expressed confidence that the biotechnology sector will prove to be important in achieving the goal of a developed India through a developed Gujarat.

Kinetic Green launches e scooter ZULU, targets big play in 2, 3 wheeler market

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Electric vehicle maker Kinetic Green on Monday said it is looking to play big in the electric two and three-wheeler space as it rolled out its all-new e-scooter ZULU in the domestic market.

The Made-in-India Fame-II compliant high-speed electric scooter comes at an introductory price starting from Rs 94,990 (ex-showroom, Mumbai), the company said.

The Pune-based company also announced a new brand identity as part of its commitment to sustainable mobility plans.

The all-new Zulu will offer "Battery as a Subscription" plans and a fast-charging, long-life lithium-ion battery with oil-cooled immersion technology, the company said.

Kinetic Green aims big with the launch of all-new e-scooter ZULU, the company said.

"This is a significant moment for the Kinetic Green family and the EV industry at large. With the launch of our e-scooter Zulu, Kinetic Green is excited to announce that we will be developing and bringing to our customers a range of two and three-wheelers in the coming years," said Sulajja Firodia Motwani, Founder and CEO of Kinetic Green.

"We are indeed excited to re-begin the 2-wheeler journey in this new avatar! In addition, our rebranding marks a momentous milestone in our pursuit of innovative and sustainable mobility solutions for the masses," she added.



The battery subscription model ensures that the customer does not pay for the battery upfront, as the customer can subscribe for the battery on a "pay as you use" model, reducing the initial purchase cost of the scooter and eventually, can also own the battery at the end of the subscription term, the company said.

This structure results in a reduction of more than 35 per cent in acquisition cost and great savings on running costs as well, the company said, adding the system is fully integrated with a mobile app for a seamless user experience.

With a range of 104 km and a city speed of 60 kmph, ZULU is powered by a 2.27 kWh (kilo-watt hour) lithium-ion battery capacity and is equipped with a portable charger, facilitating convenient charging at home. The e-scooter also comes with a range of features such as front and rear disc brakes, under-seat storage, LED Daytime Running Lights (DRL), a digital speedometer, front storage space, a front bag hook, an auto power-cut charger, a USB port and a boot light, among others, Kinetic Green said.



Adani group EBITDA jumps 47 per cent in H1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Group on Monday said pre-tax profit or EBITDA of its portfolio companies that span from apples to airports jumped 47 per cent in the first half of the current fiscal year to Rs 43,688 crore on growth across businesses.

"Core infrastructure businesses that provide a high degree of predictability, stability and multi-decadal visibility contributed 86 per cent of total EBITDA," it said in a statement.

Trailing 12-month EBITDA of Rs 71,253 crore (USD 8.6 billion) is around 3x of FY19 (April 2018 to March 2019 fiscal year) EBITDA.

"The integrated business portfolio, which focuses on fortifying India's infrastructure development, has delivered a strong performance across all its businesses. The substantial cash flows from these businesses lay the foundation for sustained future growth," the statement said.

The group had the highest-ever cash balances of Rs 45,895 crore (USD 5.5 billion) at the end of September.

Headquartered in Ahmedabad, the Adani portfolio is the largest and fastest-growing portfolio of diversified businesses in India with interests in logistics (seaports, airports, shipping and rail), resources, power generation and distribution, renewable energy, gas and infrastructure, agro (commodities, edible oil, food products, cold storage and grain silos), real estate, public transport infrastructure, consumer finance and defence.

"The incubation continues to be a success story with airports, green hydrogen and other incubating assets emerging strongly and now contributing near 8% of the portfolio EBITDA," said Jughesinder (Robbie) Singh, Group CFO.

"The Portfolio has withstood the test of time and has a track record of tremendous growth in spite of macroeconomic and other challenges."

In the first half of fiscal year 2024, the Adani portfolio of companies demonstrated robust financial performance while further enhancing its strong credit profile.

During the April-September period, the portfolio level EBITDA stood at Rs 43,688 crore (USD 5.3 billion), up 47 per cent year-on-year. This growth outpaced the portfolio's historical five-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) trajectory of 26.3 per cent.

"The H1 FY24 EBITDA surpassed the full-year EBITDA of FY22. Additionally, trailing 12-month EBITDA is notably close to three times FY19 EBITDA," the statement said.

The growth was driven by performance of the core infrastructure businesses, which grew by 52 per cent to Rs 37,379 crore, contributing 86 per cent of the total EBITDA.

These businesses include the utility (Adani Green Energy, Adani Energy Solutions, Adani Power and Adani Total Gas), transport (Adani Ports & SEZ) and other infrastructure businesses (those being incubated by Adani Enterprises - green hydrogen integrated manufacturing, airports and roads).

"The expansion reflects the portfolio's focused investment in infrastructure development, which is yielding significant results. AEI's strategic initiatives to bolster its infrastructure portfolio are in line with the rising demand for sustainable and robust infrastructure in India and beyond," it said.

On major business-wise highlights, the Adani group said the incubation under Adani Enterprises continues to progress well, with the assets contributing 8 per cent of the overall EBITDA.

The emerging business of the low-cost green hydrogen integrated manufacturing delivered 212 per cent year-on-year revenue growth and 10x EBITDA growth. The airports business under Adani Enterprises witnessed a 29 per cent y-o-y growth in passengers in the first half, thus resulting in revenue growth of 42 per cent.

States should look at asset sales in infra sector to bolster revenues: RBI report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

States' finances improved in FY23, and there is a need to look at asset monetisation to help garner non-tax revenues, a Reserve Bank report said on Monday.

In the report on state budgets, which is done annually, the Reserve Bank said road, trans-

port and power sectors hold considerable potential where the states can undertake asset sales.

"States need to scale up their initiatives for asset monetisation in order to increase non-tax revenue. The monetisation of assets unlocks their value, eliminates their holding cost and enables scarce public funds to be

Majority of Indian workers likely to stay if given good organisational culture: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has emerged as the leading country in terms of workplace culture, as a significant percentage of Indian workers consider a positive organisational culture as a primary factor for their commitment, according to a report.

As per the recent research conducted by SHRM, 64 per cent of Indian workers are likely to stay if given good organisational culture, significantly higher than the global average of 37 per cent among employees.

The study, based on 1,000 responses from India out of a global sample of 11,080 participants, noted that the key drivers for employee retention include a favourable organisational culture, job security, and fair treatment.

"Specifically in India, the data reveals a noteworthy trend, with a significant number of employees expressing high ratings across all five dimensions: Respectful Workplace Interactions, Good Manager Communication, Work/Life Integration, Career Fulfilment, and Equitable Leadership Practices,"

Seven airlines owe more than ₹95 crore to AAI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in a written reply, three domestic carriers - Alliance Air, SpiceJet and IndiGo together owe Rs 86.89 crore to the AAI. Out of them, the maximum dues amount is that of Alliance Air at Rs 83.38 crore, followed by SpiceJet (Rs 2.13 crore) and IndiGo (Rs 1.38 crore).

Among the four foreign airlines, Biman Bangladesh Airlines has the highest dues of Rs 4.02 crore, followed by British Airways (Rs 1.85 crore), Emirates (Rs 1.44 crore) and Qatar Airways (Rs 1.01 crore). "No dues exceeding Rs 10 lakh have been reported on the part of any now-defunct airlines to AAI since 2021," Scindia said.

'ONDC has to address liability issue'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh on Monday asked the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) to resolve the issue relating to liability, which is important for consumers to get satisfactory services.

He said that the government-promoted ONDC has to work on fixing liability in case a consumer does not get the right product.

ONDC is an initiative of the Commerce and Industry Ministry to create a facilitative model to help small retailers take advantage of digital commerce. It is not an application, platform, intermediary or software but a set of specifications designed to foster open, unbundled, and interoperable open networks.

"If I order through an app of a bank through Amazon and buy it from a seller located elsewhere and I get the wrong phone, then who is liable? So the issue of liability..."

"I keep telling (ONDC CEO) Mr T Koshi that you have to address the issue of liability otherwise this thing is not going to work," Singh said at the 'Deloitte Growth with Impact Government Summit'.

JUNIOR WORLD CUP HOCKEY

INDIA FACE TOUGH DUTCH TEST

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Two-time champions India will need to raise their game by a few notches while curbing complacency during their quarter-final encounter against a formidable Netherlands in the men's Junior World Cup hockey tournament here on Tuesday. India won the tournament twice in 2001 in Hobart, Australia and at home in Lucknow in 2016. Besides they were runners-up once way back in 1997 in Milton Keynes, England, losing 2-3 against Australia in the final. The Indians started the tournament on a bright note, beating Korea 4-1 and then suffered a 1-4 defeat at the hands of Spain before getting their acts together to thrash Canada 10-1 in their final pool match. India sealed their quarterfinal place as the second-placed team from Pool C with two wins out of three games behind Spain, who had an all-win record. The Netherlands, on the other hand, finished atop Pool D with two wins and a draw. Having started off on a positive note, the Indians were taken to the cleaners by Spain, who relied on crisp, short passes



to create spaces in the Indian defence which worked perfectly for them. So, the Indian team will have to be on its toes against a clinical side like the Netherlands, which is capable of breaching any defence with its structured hockey. The Indians will also have to do away of their habit of conceding unnecessary penalty corners when put under pressure. A big win against Canada should act as a confidence booster for India going into Tuesday's match, a fact which skipper Uttam Singh agreed. "We have played some good hockey in this World Cup. Coming off a big 10-1 win certainly boosts our confidence going into the knockout stages. We'll look to put our best foot forward and play to the best of our ability like we always do," he said. India coach CR Kumar said his players are ready to tackle whatever comes in their way. "The players are in a good space and are ready to take on whatever is thrown at them. We'll continue to take this tournament one match at a time. "Yes, the quarterfinal is a big match but it's nothing the boys aren't prepared for." The semifinals and final will be held on Thursday and Saturday.



Oosthuizen overcomes Schwartzel

AP ■ MALELANE (SOUTH AFRICA)

Louis Oosthuizen came out on top in his final-round duel with close friend and fellow South African Charl Schwartzel to win the Alfred Dunhill Championship on Monday for his first European tour title in five years. Oosthuizen closed with a 3-under 69 to win by two strokes, but only after a nervy finish that saw him make bogey at No. 17 and roll in a long par putt at the par-5 18th hole after hitting his drive into water. "Just got lucky on this one," said the 2010 British Open champion, who finished on 18-under 270. The climax to the tournament was pushed back a day after much of Sunday's play was wiped out because of stormy weather. Oosthuizen and Schwartzel, major champions and friends since their days playing junior golf, resumed on the eighth hole in a tie for the lead - three strokes clear of their nearest challenger, Christiaan Bezuidenhou - and with puddles dotted around the course at Leopard Creek Country Club because of heavy rain on Sunday. They were still tied with six holes to play, when Oosthuizen made birdies from 10 feet, 30 feet and 6 feet to move into a three-shot lead. He gave one back on No. 17 and arrived at the 72nd hole with a two-stroke lead over Schwartzel, only to push his tee shot into a water hazard. He took a drop, chipped into the fairway and hit his fourth shot to about 25 feet, with Schwartzel on the green for a birdie opportunity from closer in. However, Oosthuizen holed his putt and pumped his fist, knowing he'd claimed a 10th win on the European tour and a first since the South African Open in December 2018. Schwartzel, who was looking to win the event for a fifth time, shot 71 and finished in second place, two strokes clear of Bezuidenhou. "I knew I needed to play well - Charl plays really well around this place," Oosthuizen said. "I made a few putts there in the middle of the round and got ahead of Charl. I was in between what to do on 18, and made five the hard way." It means the tour's three season-opening events in South Africa were all won by home players, with Dean Burmester triumphing in both the Joburg Open and the South African Open Championship. Oosthuizen and Burmester are both players in the Saudi-funded breakaway LIV Golf series. There is another tournament in Africa - the Mauritius Open starting Thursday - before the tour takes a break until mid-January ahead of events in the Gulf region.

Girona trying to lower expectations



AP ■ MADRID

Girona was trying to lower expectations after proving itself a genuine contender for the Spanish league title with its biggest win yet in a historic start to the season. A 4-2 statement win at defending champion Barcelona on Sunday put the Catalan club in sole possession of first place nearing the halfway point, and showed that it might have what it takes to keep up with the usual powerhouses in Spanish soccer. But coach Michel Sánchez was quick to point out that winning the league still isn't the team's main goal. He acknowledged that Girona can aspire for more than just avoiding relegation, which was the main objective at the start of the season, but it is too early to think about the possibility of lifting a trophy. "I think mathematically we have escaped demotion, which was the goal," Michel said. "I don't think we can keep up with Barcelona, Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid and win the league. It's not our objective. But we are very pleased. Today soccer fans are a bit of Girona fans as well. A lot of people are saying, these guys can play." Girona has won 13 of its 16

Spanish league matches and is the team with most victories in the top five European leagues so far. It has a two-point lead over Madrid and is seven ahead of both Atletico Madrid and Barcelona. Michel praised his team for not being scared of Barcelona and challenging the defending champion from the start at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium on Sunday. He said it showed that the team has the character and attitude to try to fight for loftier goals. "We are not in the lead because the top teams are struggling. It's been a historic year for us," Michel said. "But winning it all still is something too far away to think about. When we get to the final third of the season we will see how things are and what our goals will be." Girona, partly owned by Manchester City's Abu Dhabi ownership, has finished 10th in the league last season after three consecutive years in the second tier. "Girona deserves a lot of credit. It has a great team," Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández said. "It's the best team I've seen play so far." Girona, which has the league's best attack with 38 goals, has been near the top of the standings from the start. There were

some doubts regarding Michel's team after it failed in its first big test - a 3-0 loss at home to Real Madrid in September. But that was Girona's only defeat of the season. Its other setbacks were a draw at fifth-place Real Sociedad in its league opener and a home draw against sixth-place Athletic Bilbao last month. "We'll see what happens," said Girona defender Miguel Gutierrez, who scored one of the goals on Sunday. "We are in the lead and we will keep fighting to stay in the lead. We have been doing things well and we need to continue like this." **BARCELONA'S REALITY** Xavi said it was an even match against Barcelona's Catalan rival but the loss represented a step backward in the club's rebuilding process. "It's our reality," he said. "This is a Barcelona team that is being rebuilt. And this is part of it. You take a step backward to be able to take two steps forward." Barcelona next visits Valencia in the Spanish league, while Girona hosts Alaves. Barcelona visits Antwerp in the Champions League on Wednesday. It has already secured a place in the knockout stage, something it had failed to do in the last two seasons.



Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting, Youth Affairs and Sports, Anurag Singh Thakur, inaugurates the first ever Khelo India Para Games, in New Delhi, on Monday. Photo: Ranjan Dimri / The Pioneer

Want to put up a show in bigger events: Ashwini

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A sensational run over the last two weeks has given wings to Ashwini Ponnappa's Olympics dreams, and the ace Indian shuttler now wants to continue her fine run in the upcoming bigger tournaments to stay on course for a trip to Paris. Ashwini, 34, and the 20-year-old Tanisha Crasto, who joined hands in January this year, secured their third women's doubles title and the second Super 100 crown with a 21-13, 21-19 win over Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun and Yu Chien Hui in the final of the Guwahati Masters on Sunday. The pair had finished runners-up at the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournament last week in Lucknow and will start as favourites this week at the Odisha Open Super 100 in Cuttack. Their exploits in Guwahati will lift them to world No. 23 when the BWF ranking is issued on Tuesday, taking them closer to top 16, which is the cut off mark for the Paris Games. "... The goal of course is to play at the Olympics but since we are a new pair, our focus is to do well in every single tournament we



are playing, to put up a good show and that is what we are focusing on right now," Ashwini, a two-time Olympian, told PTI. "I think there are a lot of factors to get to the Olympics, and for us it is important to simplify our journey and focus on our performance, and if we are meant to be in the Olympics, then it's fine." Currently, world No. 19 pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly are the frontrunners in the Olympic race. Ashwini and Tanisha had won the Abu Dhabi Masters Super 100 and Nantes International Challenge also this year. "Now, we will get an entry in to

bigger tournaments. We actually started off the year playing in a Super 500 event (Indonesia Masters) where we reached the quarterfinals, that gave us a lot of confidence because it was our first tournament together. "Now, having had this journey of playing smaller tournaments and gradually working our way up, it gives us a lot of confidence. We have a lot of matches under our belt. So, now, the idea is to take all this positivity into next year but before that our focus is giving our best in Odisha." One of India's finest doubles exponents, Ashwini has enjoyed a lot of success with Jwala Gutta, winning the 2011 World

Championships bronze and gold and silver medals at the 2010 and 2014 Commonwealth Games respectively. Ashwini and Jwala had also participated in the 2012 and 2016 Olympics in London and Rio de Janeiro but couldn't cross the group stage on both the occasions. After the 2016 Games, the duo parted ways and Ashwini forged an alliance with N Sikki Reddy. The pair parted ways last year. Asked how she sees her role of a senior partner, Ashwini said: "Tanisha makes it easy for me because she is someone who is a fast learner and understands things really well. She holds her own on court and she keeps me calm when I go off track, having that freedom makes a difference." It is not easy to keep performing at 34 and Ashwini said focus on her diet and nutrition was the key. "I made a few changes, especially in terms of looking after my body. I now understand the importance of being mindful of what I am eating and drinking. In the past, I got away by eating things in moderation but now it doesn't work. I used to love sweets but now I don't even eat sweets in moderation."



May go pro but don't know what I will do: Kom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic bronze medallist pugilist Mary Kom is not ruling out turning pro in the coming years as the veteran boxer admitted that she can no longer fight in amateur boxing due to age restrictions. The six-time world champion boxer has not competed since tearing her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) during the Commonwealth Games selection trial in 2022 though she is yet to announce her retirement. As per the rules, a boxer above the age of 40 cannot compete in amateur category and Mary Kom is 41 now. "If I say from my heart, I am still hungry to do something. I still want to compete and represent the country. But I am not being able to compete from this year because of age limit," Mary Kom told PTI after giving away medals to the podium finishers of the inaugural Khelo India Para Games here on Monday. "But I will still try to do something relating to boxing. (I) May go to pro but don't know yet what I will do. I still have the spirit to play one to two years or even four years," she added. The legendary boxer said she missed competitions because of injuries also. "I could not compete this year due to age bar, I missed a lot of competitions. I had a major injury, an ACL and after recovery I missed a lot of competitions like Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and World Championships." She said the para athletes are the real heroes as they had to fight against odds to bring laurels for the country.

AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

Bayern Munich brings anger, unbeaten record to Man United

Six years and 39 games. That's how long it's been since Bayern Munich lost a Champions League group stage game. That makes Tuesday's game against Bayern an especially daunting task for Manchester United. After its own loss to Bournemouth, United needs to beat Bayern to have any chance of avoiding an embarrassingly early exit from the Champions League. Bayern - which is already qualified for the knockout stages - won't just be playing to add a 40th game to that unbeaten record. After a shock 5-1 loss to Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday, forward Thomas Müller called on his teammates to show their emotion at Old Trafford. "There has to be a reaction following this. We need to tap into our anger, but we can't lose our heads," he said. The Frankfurt game was much closer than the score suggests - Bayern actually had four more

shots than its opponent - but Bayern is keen to bounce back. Midfielder Leon Goretzka suggested Bayern hadn't been helped by having 10 days without a game after its last Bundesliga match was called off because of heavy snow. He told broadcaster ZDF that Bayern had been training well, though "we couldn't have sensed in training that we'd fallen into a hole, but after kickoff today it looked very much like that." Against United, Bayern needs to show the Frankfurt loss was just a "slip-up," Goretzka said. It was Bayern's third loss of the season but the first with England captain Harry Kane in the starting lineup. Kane had tasted defeat on his debut for Bayern against Leipzig in the German Super Cup in August, but on that occasion



Bayern was already 2-0 down before Kane came on for a half-hour cameo - and he had the excuse of having been up late the night before for a medical and contract signing. Kane was an unused substitute in Bayern's

only other loss of the season, an upset away defeat to third-division Saarbruecken in the German Cup. Kane has 22 goals in 19 games for Bayern, numbers that resemble his Munich predecessor

France to host Germany in a friendly game

AP ■ PARIS

World Cup runner-up France will face Germany in a friendly next March as part of its European Championship preparations. Coach Didier Deschamps' side take on Julian Nagelsmann's struggling Germany team on March 23 at Lyon's Groupama Stadium in its first friendly match leading up to Euro 2024, which will be hosted by Germany from June 14-July 14. Germany's 2-0 loss to Austria last month capped a year of bad results, with Germany having lost six of the 11 games it played and winning just three. One of those, however, was a 2-1 friendly win over France in Dortmund in September under caretaker coach Rudi Völler. Of the teams who beat Germany - Belgium, Poland, Colombia, Japan, Turkey and Austria -

only Belgium is ranked in the top 10 in the world. By contrast, free-scoring France coasted into Euro 2024 on the back of seven wins and a draw in qualifying, scoring 29 goals and conceding only three. France routed Gibraltar 14-0 along the way for a record win, while star striker Kylian Mbappe led Les Bleus with nine goals in qualifying. Germany also confirmed a friendly for March 26 against the Netherlands in Frankfurt. The Dutch team lost twice to France in European Championship qualifying this year but finished the year with three consecutive wins without conceding a goal. "Two tradition-rich duels against big soccer nations are the perfect way to start the European Championship year," Nagelsmann said in a statement.

KOHLI IS A MASSIVE PLAYER: KALLIS



Virat Kohli's form and knowledge about South African conditions will be key to India's success in the upcoming two-Test series...

Kallis told Star Sports. Kohli amassed 932 runs from 30 innings to emerge as the highest run-scorer for India during the last WTC cycle.

guys and give them ideas on how to manage these conditions and then what to expect. Kohli, 35, scored two of his 29 Test centuries against the Proteas away from home.



Gavaskar urges CSA to follow Eden Gardens model

Legendary Sunil Gavaskar urged Cricket South Africa to take a leaf out of Eden Gardens' book after rain forced the abandonment of the first T20I between India and South Africa at Durban without a ball being bowled.

taken by Sourav Ganguly when he was at the helm of the Cricket Association of Bengal. The former Indian captain then pointed at the 2019 World Cup in England where four matches were washed out.

Holder, Pooran, Mayers decline West Indies central contract



Joining the growing tribe of cricketers who stay away from the country's central contract, premier white ball players Nicholas Pooran, Jason Holder and Kyle Mayers have declined to join the West Indies roster for the 2023-24 season.

Stop clock trial to get underway during West Indies, England series

The stop clock trial, which will restrict the amount of time taken between overs, will get underway during the white-ball series between West Indies and England, the sport's governing body ICC said on Monday.

time in an innings (following two warnings) will result in a five-run penalty being imposed against the fielding team. "We are continually looking at ways to speed up the pace of play across international cricket."

Holder, Pooran, Mayers decline West Indies central contract

Former captain Holder last played for the West Indies in July - Test and T20I against India at home and in ODIs against Scotland during the ICC World Cup qualifiers in Harare.

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