



THE HUNT FOR INDIA'S NEXT RACING STAR IS ON!
KARTING SUPER SERIES
POWERED BY **RPPL**
REGISTER NOW www.rplind.com

CHANCE TO WIN SPONSORED DRIVES AT
2023 MECO FMSCI NKC ROTAX MAX!

Logistics partner **FLYTTA** FUTURE OF MOVING

First 100% Sponsored, Second 50% Sponsored, Third 25% Sponsored, Fourth 10% Sponsored, Fifth 5% Sponsored

2023 RACING SCHEDULE

CHENNAI	BANGALORE	THRISSUR KERALA	MUMBAI	DELHI	HYDERABAD	HYDERABAD
APRIL 29 & 30	MAY 6 & 7	MAY 13 & 14	MAY 20 & 21	MAY 27 & 28	JUNE 3 & 4	JUNE 4

GRAND FINALE



INDORE TRAGEDY

Toll in temple stepwell roof collapse rises to 36

NEWS » PAGE 10

HOMEBOUND

U.S. museum to return 15 artefacts

STATES » PAGE 5



GILL ON SONG

Gujarat Titans begins title defence in style

SPORT » PAGE 15

Govt. vows swifter nod for exporters

New foreign trade policy aims at tripling goods and services exports by 2030; apart from a one-time amnesty, no major schemes announced

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Union Commerce, Industry and Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday unveiled a new foreign trade policy that moves away from providing incentives to exporters, but lowers a few costs for smaller firms and promises swifter clearances, along with a one-time amnesty scheme for export obligation defaults.

Replacing the extant policy that had been in place since 2015, the new policy kicks in from 2023-24 and aims to almost triple India's goods and services exports to \$2 trillion by 2030, from an estimated \$760 billion in 2022-23. India's exports were \$435 billion in 2015-16 when the previous policy was introduced and have

Policy overhauled

Key highlights from India's updated Foreign Trade Policy:



- It focuses on lowering costs for smaller firms and offering swifter clearances
- It aims at tripling exports to \$2 trillion by 2030 from \$760 billion in 2022-23
- Policy allows for adjustments based on world trade and industry feedback
- Export promotion initiatives include encouraging international trade settlement in Indian currency

grown nearly 75% to an estimated \$760 billion in 2022-23, Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh Kumar Sarangi said.

The new policy will have no sunset date and will be tweaked based on the emerging world trade scenario and industry feedback. While the policy will be open-ended, the schemes sanctioned under

it will be time bound.

There are no major new schemes, barring a one-time amnesty under the existing Advance Authorisation and Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) schemes, that allow imports of capital goods subject to specified export obligations.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

Indicted by grand jury, Trump likely to surrender next week

Associated Press
NEW YORK



Former U.S. President Donald Trump has been indicted by a Manhattan grand jury, a historic reckoning after years of investigations into his personal, political and business dealings and an abrupt jolt to his bid to retake the White House.

The exact nature of the charges was unclear on Friday because the indictment remained under seal, but they stem from payments made during the 2016 presidential campaign to silence claims of an extramarital sexual encounter.

Prosecutors said they were working to coordinate Mr. Trump's surrender, which could happen early next week. They did not say if they intended to seek prison time in the event of a conviction, a development that wouldn't

prevent the Republican leader from seeking and assuming presidency.

Mr. Trump, who has denied any wrongdoing and has repeatedly assailed the investigation, called the indictment "political persecution" and predicted it would damage Democrats in 2024. Defence lawyers Susan Necheles and Joseph Tacopina said Mr. Trump "did not commit any crime. We will vigorously fight this political prosecution in court".

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

IN BRIEF



Prohibitory orders imposed in Howrah

KOLKATA

Prohibitory orders were imposed in parts of West Bengal's Howrah town on Friday after violence erupted over Ram Navami celebrations on Thursday. » Page 4

Centre's scheme for Pak. refugees hits rough patch

NEW DELHI

A Union government scheme to provide financial aid to over 5,000 Hindu and Sikh families, who migrated to India from Pakistan after Partition, has hit rough weather. It has been extended after being dogged by issues such as lack of documents and tepid response from families. » Page 9

Race against time



Quick action: Firefighters try to douse a fire that broke out in a factory in Wazirpur Industrial Area in Delhi on Friday. No injuries were reported. PTI

IIT-B student death: FIR filed after 50 days

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

Nearly 50 days after the death by suicide of a first-year Dalit student at IIT Bombay, Mumbai Police has filed an FIR for abetment to suicide against an unknown person. The police also invoked sections of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The case has been filed at the Powai police station based on a complaint by the victim's father days after the police said they had

found a note by the victim, blaming his classmate.

"The FIR will be taken over by the SIT constituted by the State government in connection with the case," a police officer said.

Seeking justice

The student's kin have been holding protests demanding a probe into the death. "I hope there will be a fair investigation and my son will get justice," the victim's father said.

Those in distress can call Sanjivini Society for Mental Health at 011-40769002.

'Sisodia prima facie architect of criminal conspiracy' says court while denying bail

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday denied bail to former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia in the corruption case registered by the CBI in connection with alleged irregularities in the formulation and implementation of the now-scraped excise policy.

Special judge M.K. Nagpal observed that the investigation not only shows Mr. Sisodia's active participation, "as per allegations made by the prosecution and the evidence collected in support thereof so far, the applicant can prima facie be held to be the architect of the said criminal conspiracy".

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

ified to extend undue favours to licence holders, licence fee was waived or reduced, and L-1 (wholesaler) licences were extended without the competent authority's approval.

Based on the CBI case, the ED is conducting a money laundering probe and has arrested nine persons, including Mr. Sisodia on March 9 at Tihar jail.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

Gujarat HC sets aside CIC order seeking information on Prime Minister's MA degree, fines Arvind Kejriwal

Mahesh Langa
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court has set aside a 2016 order of the Central Information Commission (CIC) directing the Gujarat University to provide details of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's MA degree to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal under the Right to Information Act (RTI).

Justice Biren Vaishnav allowed a petition moved by the Gujarat University, which had challenged the direction of the CIC. The High Court had concluded hearings in the matter on February 9.

The court imposed a fine of ₹25,000 on Mr. Kejriwal, who was a party respondent in the case. It also declined to stay its order, dismissing a request made by senior advocate Percy Kavina, appearing for the Delhi Chief Minister.



Doesn't the country even have the right to know how educated their PM is? He vehemently opposed showing the degree in court. Why? And those who demand to see their degree will be fined? What is this happening? Illiterate or less educated Prime Minister is dangerous for the country?

BJP reacts

Responding to the remark, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "What Kejriwal is doing reflects his frustration. He is naturally frustrated as his government's Ministers are in jail on charges of corruption and

being involved in a liquor scam. His comments are a consequence of this."

Asserting that Opposition leaders can go to any extent to achieve their political goals, senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said in Patna that it is Mr. Kejriwal's nature to make a false allegation and seek apology for it. "It is unfortunate that perhaps for the first time in India's political history a Chief Minister has been given exemplary cost of ₹25,000," he said.

Violates privacy

On February 9, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the university, contended that no student's degree can be disclosed under the RTI Act as it violates the privacy of the individual.

Mr. Mehta submitted that information about the PM's degrees is "already in the public domain" and the university had placed

the details on its website in the past. He claimed that the 2005 Act is being used for settling scores and to make "childish jabs" for political purposes.

Citing past judgments of the Supreme Court and other HCs on exemptions granted under Section 8 of the RTI Act, Mr. Mehta said one cannot seek personal information "just because you are curious about it".

In response, Mr. Kavina said information on the PM's degree was not available in the public domain.

In his submission, the Delhi CM had asked what prompted the university to challenge the CIC's order. According to him, the PMO should have challenged the order if it was aggrieved.

In July 2016, the HC had stayed the order asking the university to provide information on the degree.

(With inputs from Amit Bhalera and PTI)

Enrol by scanning the QR code



IAS 2024

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE PROGRAM 2022

WWW.SRIRAMSIAS.COM

SRIRAM'S IAS

MORE THAN 35 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE NATION

UP TO 6 IN TOP 10 SINCE 2002
SRIRAM'S IAS Towers, 10-B, Pusa Road, Bada Bazaar Marg 01142437002, 9811489560
73-75, 1st Floor, Beside GTB Metro Gate No.1, Ring Road, Kingsway Camp, New Delhi 8447273027

Shashvat Sangwan AIR-34 Preetam Kumar AIR-9 Yasharth Shekhar AIR-12 Shruti Rajlakshmi AIR-25 Utsav Anand AIR-26 Saksham Goel AIR-27

AND MANY MORE..

New General Studies Batches

From April to October

at

OLD RAJINDER NAGAR and GTB NAGAR

Admissions are on First Come First Served Basis

BEWARE OF FAKE INSTITUTES WITH SIMILAR NAMES.

LOOK FOR THE SRIRAM'S IAS LOGO BEFORE ENROLMENT.

ENROL FOR ADMISSION SCANNING THE QR CODE



IN BRIEF



IPCW incident: students seek resignation of principal

Several students on Friday held protests at DU demanding action against trespassers who stormed a festival at Indraprastha College for Women (IPCW) earlier this week. "Around 200 students sought action against the accused, the resignation of principal Poonam Kumria and the establishment of a committee against sexual harassment," a protester said.

Nehru Place-IIT stretch of Chirag Dilli flyover reopened

Delhi Traffic Police on Friday said the Nehru Place-IIT Delhi carriageway of the Chirag Dilli flyover has been reopened to vehicles. The other carriageway has now been shut for repair work, it added.

6 killed after mosquito coil sets off blaze in Shastri Park house

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Six people, including a toddler, suffocated to death after a mosquito coil tipped over on a mattress and sparked a fire in a four-storey building in north-east Delhi's Shastri Park, the police said on Friday.

According to the police, the residents were asleep at the time of the incident

and lost consciousness due to the toxic fumes from the ground floor where the blaze had started.

Engulfed in smoke
DCP (North East) Joy Tirkey said the police received information regarding the incident around 9 a.m. When they reached the building at Mazar Wala Road in Macchi Market, residents were struggling to

rescue those who were lying unconscious. Eleven people were taken to Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital, the DCP said, adding that three fire tenders were rushed to the spot.

"Six of them died while two are being treated for burn injuries. Three others have been discharged after preliminary treatment," said a police officer.

According to Akbar Ali,

33, owner of the building, the fire started in a ground floor room. By the time the ground floor residents discovered the blaze, smoke had spread across the building.

Residents asleep
"The entire first floor was filled with smoke," Mr. Ali said, adding that most of the residents had gone to sleep after *Sehri* (pre-dawn

meal before Ramzan fasting).

The deceased have been identified as Hamza, 3, Pashirul, 36, Dinesh, 26, Nisha, 25, and Fazlu Choudhary, 40. The identity of the sixth victim is yet to be ascertained, the police said.

The victims belong to different families and four of them were living as tenants.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED
See Section U/82 Cr. P.C.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Lalita @ Babita D/o Diwan Singh R/o H.No. 58 (Now 438), Main Market, Badarpur, New Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 105/2017 U/S 323/341/506/34 IPC, P.S. Badarpur, New Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Lalita @ Babita cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Lalita @ Babita has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Lalita @ Babita of FIR No. 105/2017 U/S 323/341/506/34 IPC, P.S. Badarpur, New Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 03.05.2023.

By Order
Ms. Sonam Singh
Addl. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate
Room No. 515, South East District
Saket Court, New Delhi

CITY UNION BANK LIMITED
Credit Recovery and Management Department
Administrative Office: 612 001, E-Mail id: crmd@cityunionbank.in, Ph : 0435-243232, Fax : 0435-2431746
TENDER-CUM-AUCTION SALE NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002
The following properties mortgaged to City Union Bank Limited will be sold in Tender-cum-Public Auction by the Authorised Officer of the Bank, under Rule 8(6) & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, under the SARFAESI Act, 2002, for recovery of a sum of Rs.22,52,878/- (Rupees Twenty Two Lakh Fifty Two Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy Eight only) as on 22-03-2023 together with further interest to be charged from 23-03-2023 onwards and other expenses, any other dues to the Bank by the borrowers / guarantors etc. (2) The said properties are located in the following areas: 1. Plot No. 1/5, DLF Olisha Extn. - 2 Bhopura Sahibabad Distric - Ghaziabad U.P. - 200055. Bounded as Under: East - Plot No. B/1/60, West: Plot No. B-1/58, North: Property No. B-1/39, South: Road 30 ft., Wide.

Reserve Price : Rs. 27,00,00/-
(Rupees Twenty Seven Lakh only)

AUCTION DETAILS

Date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale Venue

09-05-2023 City Union Bank Limited, New Delhi-

Laxmi Nagar Branch, U-198, Shakarpur, Vikar Marg,

Near Laxmi Metro Station, New Delhi-110092.

Telephone No. 011-22501110, Cell No. 9312620592.

Terms and Conditions of Tender-cum-Auction Sale:

(1) The intending bidders should be present in person for the auction and participate personally

and give a declaration in writing to the effect that he/she is bidding for himself / herself. (2) The

intending bidders may obtain the Tender Forms from The Manager, City Union Bank Limited,

together with a Pay Order / Demand Draft for an EMD of 10% of the Reserve Price, drawn in favour of "City Union Bank Ltd.", on or before 12.00 Noon on the date of Tender-cum-

Auction Sale hereby notified. (4) For inspection of the property and other particulars, the

intending purchaser may contact Telephone No. 011-22501110, Cell No. 9312620592. (5) The

properties are sold on "As-is-where-is", "As-is-what-is" and "whatever-where-is" basis. (6) The

sealed tenders will be opened in the presence of the intending bidders at 01.00 p.m. on the date

of Tender-cum-Auction Sale hereby notified. Though in general the sale will be by way of closed

tenders, the Authorised Officer may, at his sole discretion, conduct an Open Auction among the

interested bidders who desire to quote a bid higher than the one received in the closed tender

process, and in such an event, the sale shall be conferred on the person making highest bid. The

sale, however, is subject to confirmation of City Union Bank Limited. (7) The successful bidder

shall have to pay 25% (inclusive of EMD paid) of the sale amount immediately on completion

of sale and the balance amount of 75% within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale,

failing which the initial deposit of 25% shall be forfeited. (8) The Sale Certificate will be issued by

the Authorised Officer in favour of the successful purchaser only after receipt of the entire sale

consideration within the time limit stipulated herein. (9) The successful purchaser shall bear the

charges/fees payable for conveyance, such as stamp duty, registration fee etc., as applicable

under law. (10) The successful bidder should pay the statutory dues (lawful house tax, electricity

charges and other dues), TDS, GST if any, due to Government, Government Undertaking and

local bodies. (11) The Authorised Officer shall have all the powers to accept or reject the bids or

postpone or cancel the sale without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Place : Kumbakonam Date : 30-03-2023

Authorised Officer

Regd. Office : 149, T.S.R. (Big) Street, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur District,

Tamil Nadu - 612 001 CIN - L65110TN1904PLC001287,

Telephone No. 0435-2402322, Fax : 0435-2431746, Website : www.cityunionbank.com

Delhi govt. fully prepared to handle COVID-19 outbreak: CM

All Delhi govt. hospitals directed to maintain COVID isolation wards, random testing of airport passengers being done, says Kejriwal; city has 7,986 beds for coronavirus patients, the CM adds; Capital reported 300 new cases, 2 deaths on Wednesday

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government is fully prepared to handle the spread of coronavirus, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Friday after chairing a meeting of senior officials to review the COVID-19 preparations in the city.

The CM's statement comes in the backdrop of a spurt in coronavirus cases in the national capital over the past two weeks. On Wednesday, the city logged 300 new cases for the first time since August 31 and reported two COVID-related deaths.

Mr. Kejriwal said all Delhi government-run hospitals



Mask up: The Delhi government advised people visiting hospitals, those diagnosed with respiratory ailments to wear masks. REUTERS

have been directed to maintain COVID-19 isolation wards.

He also said that random testing is being conducted on 2% of the passengers at Delhi airport.

wear them.

The CM said Delhi has 7,986 beds for COVID-19 patients, including those in the Intensive Care Units, of which only 66 are occupied. He added that the Delhi government conducted a drill on March 26 to check the response of 38 government hospitals in dealing with coronavirus cases. Another such drill will be conducted on April 10-11 in all the government and private hospitals here as per the Centre's directives.

Mr. Kejriwal said all COVID-19 samples are being sent for genome sequencing so that the government stays a step ahead in identifying new variants and coming up with an appro-

priate response.

He said the virus had been detected in some samples collected from different parts of the city's sewage since mid-February.

The CM also said that the Centre had, two weeks ago, identified six States – Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana – where COVID-19 cases had spiked and asked them to take necessary precautions. Although the Capital was not on this list, Mr. Kejriwal said, the Delhi government is nevertheless taking all precautions to contain the spread of the virus.

On Thursday, Delhi recorded 295 new cases with a positivity rate of 12.48%.

BJP calls for Atishi's sacking over 'false' claims on power subsidy

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday accused Power Minister Atishi of "lying" on the issue of subsidised electricity to farmers and demanded her resignation.

In a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi BJP chief Virinder Sachdeva also demanded compensation for farmers whose crops were affected by the unseasonal rains.

On Thursday, Ms. Atishi had alleged that the BJP and Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena were putting "pressure" on Power Department officials to "stop the subsidy" given to farmers and lawyers.

In his letter, Mr. Sachdeva claimed that the government "does not provide even a single unit of electricity for free" to farmers and that Ms. Atishi's claims were "false". "The government should apologise for this and you should take action against the Minister," he wrote.

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged that instead of giving free electricity, the farmers were being charged exorbitant rates.

Atishi meets farmers
Earlier in the day, Ms. Atishi met a delegation of farmers to discuss the power subsidy issue and assured them that the Delhi government will continue to provide subsidised electricity. "The government will ensure that all citizens have access to basic amenities, including affordable electricity. We will not allow any conspiracy to disrupt this goal," she said.

18-year-old arrested for 'insulting' saffron flag

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

An 18-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly insulting a saffron flag placed near a mosque in north-east Delhi's Jyoti Nagar, the police said on Friday.

The accused, Faiz Alam, a resident of Ashok Nagar, was arrested on Thursday.

"The accused said he, along with two of his minor friends, had made the video after the morning prayers on Wednesday."

deo of the alleged incident had gone viral on social media.

A police officer said the accused, Faiz Alam, a resident of Ashok Nagar, was arrested on Thursday.

"The accused said he, along with two of his minor friends, had made the video after the morning prayers on Wednesday."

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY Open Tender

NIT No.: JBP/M/Tender/08/2023, Dated 28.03.2023

E-Tender on behalf of the President of India acting through Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Coaching), Divisional Railway Manager (M) Office, West Central Railway, Jabalpur for the following works:- NIT No. & Date: JBP/M/Tender/08/2023, Dated 28.03.2023, Name of work with location: Road transportation of Wagon Wheel sets & wagon maintenance material from ROH depot NKJ/R to nominated Railway workshops/depots and back. Adv. Value of the work : ₹ 7081916.31/- Tender Doc. cost: ₹ 00 Earnest Money: ₹ 141600.00/- Completion period: 12 Months, Tender Closing & date & time: 25.04.2023 15:00 Hrs. Note: Pre-Bid conference date- 04.04.2023 16:00 Hrs. The complete information of the above E-tenders is available in website <https://reps.gov.in> and also placed on the notice board of the Divisional Railway Manager (Mech) office of West Central Railway, Jabalpur. Tenders other than in the form of e-bid shall not be accepted against above tenders.

DRM(W) WCR, JBP

कोरेनो को है हराना, तो ट्रैकिंग जरूर करना

HIMACHAL PRADESH Jal Shakti Vibhag NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

Online bids on item rate basis are invited by the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Sunder Nagar on behalf of the Governor of Himachal Pradesh, in electronic tendering system in Two bidders for the under mentioned work from the contractors/firms of an appropriate class enlisted with HP, Jal Shakti Vibhag.

Sr.No.1, Name of work:-Providing flood protection work to Jal Shakti in Tehsil Sundernagar Dist. Mandi (HP) (SH) C/O Gabion walls, walls on left bank from RD 0 to 140 and 1050 to 1290, on right bank from RD 0 to 100, 180 to 500 and 540 to 640 mtr. Estimated Cost, (RS)-Rs. 2,51,48,275/-, Earnest Money-Rs. 2,84,00/-, Cost of tender form-2500/-, Time- One Year.

Schedule of tendering:-

1. Bid Submission start date	31.03.2023	5:00 PM
2. Bid Submission end date and time	10.04.2023	11:00 AM
3. Opening of Cover-I	10.04.2023	11:30 AM
4. Opening of Financial bid		Date and place to be notified separately.

Terms and Conditions:-Tender documents, Term and

Timings		
DELHI		
SATURDAY, APR. 01		
RISE 06:12	SET 18:39	
RISE 14:21	SET 03:39	
SUNDAY, APR. 02		
RISE 06:11	SET 18:40	
RISE 15:17	SET 04:14	
MONDAY, APR. 03		
RISE 06:10	SET 18:40	
RISE 16:12	SET 04:45	

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	33	18
Safdarjung	33	18
Palam	33	20

Delhi Palam Today
27°C Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Few spells of rain and thundershower with gusty winds to occur.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
29°C The weather will be slight warm. Spell of light rain and thundershower with gusty winds to occur at some places.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2023
All rights reserved.

THE HINDU

DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. The HINDU, its parent company, the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, disclaim any responsibility or liability for any of the advertiser's products or services. The views expressed by the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Directors, Employees of this newspaper/company shall be held responsible for all damage in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

'Charges can't be framed together'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The charges of murder and disappearance of evidence can't be framed together, the counsel of Aftab Poonawalla, accused of murdering his live-in partner Shraddha Walkar, argued in a court here on Friday. The court posted the case for April 3 after the Delhi police counsel sought time to respond.

Aftab is charged with killing Shraddha, 27, on May 18, dismembering her body, storing the pieces in a fridge and throwing them in the forests of Delhi and Haryana over a period of three months.

Aftab's lawyer Akshay Bhandari said merely accusing his client of murder is not sufficient. He said the prosecution only has eyewitness statements to back its claim. "The prosecution has to show the manner in which the crime was committed," He told the court.

In response, Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad said in addition to eyewitness statements, the police had submitted a chain of evidence to establish the culpability of the accused, including records of past events and circumstances leading up to the alleged murder.

Meanwhile, the Delhi police also opposed a request by Shraddha's father, Vikas Walkar, seeking copies of the audio-video evidence submitted by them to the court, saying that the evidence could be leaked, jeopardising the trial.

BSY makes it clear that Vijayendra won't contest from Varuna

My son's electoral battle will be from Shikarpur and there is no question of him fighting the polls from Varuna, clarifies the former Chief Minister

The Hindu Bureau

MYSURU

Amid intense speculations that his son B.V. Vijayendra will be fielded against former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in Varuna constituency, former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa categorically stated on Friday that Mr. Vijayendra will fight the ensuing polls from Shikarpur, a constituency currently represented by him.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, Mr. Yediyurappa said there is "no question" of Mr. Vijayendra contesting from Varuna. "Of course, there may be pressure on him to contest from there but his electoral battle will be from Shikarpur," he clarified. "I will convey to him (Mr. Vijayendra) and also the party high command my opinion on Varuna," he said.

The senior BJP leader's statement has come as a surprise to party workers in Varuna since it was widely speculated that the party's Central leadership was contemplating fielding Mr. Vijayendra from Varuna instead of Shikarpur. Mr. Siddaramaiah is contesting from Varuna, though he wished to contest from Kolar, leaving the seat to his son Dr. Yathinendra Siddaramaiah who won from here in 2018.



Former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa speaking to the media in Bengaluru before leaving for Mysuru on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Vijayendra, who was in Mysuru on Friday, told reporters that the party high command and the Central leadership will take a call on the candidate for Varuna and expressed confidence that the BJP will romp home in Varuna this time any which way.

'Still collecting opinion'
"No decision has been taken on the candidates for 224 seats, including Varuna. The Central leaders will decide on it as they have been collecting opinions on the candidates. The party will decide on the seat from which I have to contest. I have been touring Shikarpur and meeting people. Of course, there are BJP workers who admire me and want me to contest from Varuna," said Mr. Vijayendra, who did not contest in 2018 despite campaigning in Varuna.

Mr. Vijayendra did not give a direct reply when asked whether he would contest from Varuna and Shikarpur. "I cannot say anything before the party makes a decision. I haven't even got ticket as yet."

He, however, said the BJP has emerged stronger in Varuna and the party workers are enthusiastic.

Mr. Vijayendra expressed confidence that his party would get a clear majority in the upcoming elections. "The party will put up capable candidates in all 224 constituencies and our leaders are in the process of finalising the list of candidates," he said.

"Whoever from the BJP is fielded in Varuna, the party will win," he said.

He expressed doubts that the people would be carried away by sentiments when asked whether Mr. Siddaramaiah's statement that it will be his last electoral battle from Varuna will make an impact on the voters.

According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, an online

U.P. draft hikes quota for women, SC candidates in local body polls

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

With Uttar Pradesh government's draft notification, issued on Thursday, the reserved seats for mayors in Municipal Corporations, and chairpersons of Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats for the three-tier urban body elections witnessed a jump in reservation for women and Scheduled Castes (SC).

Out of 760 seats whose draft roaster was declared by the Urban Development Department, 288 seats have been reserved for women candidates (including general, OBC, SC, and ST communities), making it 38% – a 5% increase from the previous notification.

The seats for Scheduled

Caste (SC) candidates increased from 102 to 110, while those for Scheduled Tribe (STs) candidates have increased to two from just one. The seats allocated to Other Backward Classes (OBC) candidates is 27%.

As per the draft, the post of mayor in Agra is reserved for Scheduled Caste (woman). The mayor seats of Shahjahanpur and Firozabad have been reserved for OBC women and Saharanpur and Meerut are reserved for OBC candidates.

Three mayoral posts in Lucknow, Kanpur and Ghaziabad have been reserved for women. Eight mayoral seats of Aligarh, Bareilly, Moradabad, Gorakhpur, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj and Mathura-

Vrindavan will be unreserved. The State government sought objections on the list of reserved seats within seven days and it is likely that the roaster will be declared in next 15 days.

A total of 760 seats in urban local bodies – 17 Nagar Niagams (municipal corporations), 199 Nagar Palikas (municipal councils), and 544 Nagar Panchayats (town councils) – will go for polls.

The State government issued the draft notification on the basis of an ordinance issued by the Governor, after the U.P. Cabinet on Wednesday passed the proposal for an ordinance to amend the rules of urban local bodies (Nagar Niagams and Nagar Palikas).

CBI conducts search at AIIMS Rishikesh over 'irregularities'

Press Trust of India

RISHIKESH

The CBI on Friday conducted a search at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here in connection with alleged irregularities in appointments and procurement made during the tenure of former director Ravi Kant.

Documents sought
AIIMS, Rishikesh law officer Pradeep Pandey said the investigating agency has sought additional documents related to the alleged irregularities which

are being provided to it.

The search is being conducted by a CBI team led by Deputy Superintendent of Police Rajeev Chandola, he said. The CBI conducted raids at AIIMS, Rishikesh in April 2022 and registered two separate cases against five people.

Before the CBI began its probe into the irregularities, the vigilance department had also conducted a probe into malpractices in the award of tenders for the procurement of equipment and allocation of space to a pharmacy inside AIIMS, Rishikesh.

NEW DELHI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL (Education Department)
Palika Kendra, Sansad Marg, New Delhi-110001

ADMISSION NOTICE FOR THE ACADEMIC SESSION 2023-2024

Admissions are open for Nursery to Class-I in Atal Adarsh Vidyalayas located in New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) area for the academic session 2023-24 from 01.04.2023. Interested parents may register for admission of their children in the school concerned as per prescribed application from available with the school and on the NDMC website www.ndmc.gov.in. Last date for registration is 30.04.2023. For detailed information, please visit our website www.ndmc.gov.in. In case of any further clarification, Deputy Education Officer (G) may be contacted on No. 9868846956 Sd/- (R.P. Sati) Director (Education)

Your feedback will keep us Cleaner, Sharper and Bolder

Call our toll-free number **1800 102 1878**
Or write to us at customerservice@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU businessline FRONTLINE SPORTSTAR YOUNGWORLD THE HINDU

DCW chief sends recommendations to help transgenders

Samridhi Tewari

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chief Swati Maliwal shared her recommendations with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Department of Social Welfare of the Delhi government, to improve the access of transgender people to government benefits in the Capital.

The commission found several gaps in implementation of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, especially in terms of issuing certificates of identity to transgender people to avail themselves of government welfare schemes, Ms. Maliwal said.

The commission said that only 76 certificates had been issued in Delhi over the past three years. According to the 2011 census, Delhi had 4,213 transgenders. Most districts have received very few applications seeking transgender certificates. Shahdara district, for instance, has received only four in three years.

North district has 27 applications pending out of the 74, DCW said, adding that most applications were rejected after considerable delay on arbitrary grounds, such as the applicant not belonging to the same district, or a signature or document missing from the form.

Lack of monitoring has also been an issue by the Delhi government and there is a mismatch reported between the data for districts and the State, the DCW said.

"The Social Welfare Department claimed to have received 324 applications in four years; districts claimed that they received only 234 applications," Ms. Maliwal said.

The commission found several gaps in implementation of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

portal facilitates applications for the certificate for people across the country without any physical interface.

The transgender certificate is nationally recognised and provided for by the ministry. It is a mandatory document to access benefits.

However, accessibility is an issue. Faraz, a 28-year-old transman, explains that while the process for getting a transgender certificate is online, not many are literate enough to be able to use the facility.

"People aren't even aware of what the certificate is, or how it benefits them. The government should create campaigns to promote it like they did for the Aadhaar and PAN cards. This would also help in sensitising people regarding gender and sexuality, and in accepting us," Mr. Faraz said.

Lack of monitoring has also been an issue by the Delhi government and there is a mismatch reported between the data for districts and the State, the DCW said.

"The Social Welfare Department claimed to have received 324 applications in four years; districts claimed that they received only 234 applications," Ms. Maliwal said.

IN BRIEF

Gehlot gives nod for creation of STF to prevent paper leaks

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday approved a proposal for the formation of a special task force to prevent paper leak incidents in competitive examinations in the State and to take action against the cheating mafia, officials said. According to an official release, the anti-cheating task force will be formed in the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Rajasthan Police. PTI

Navjot Singh Sidhu likely to walk out of prison today

Cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu, who is serving a one-year sentence in a road rage case, is expected to be released from prison in Patiala today. Mr. Sidhu, was sentenced to one-year rigorous imprisonment by the Supreme Court last year in a road rage case of 1988. A 65-year-old man, Gurnam Singh, had died in the incident. Mr. Sidhu surrendered before a court in Patiala on May 20, 2022, and since then, he has been in the prison.

Malegaon blast trial: another witness declared hostile

A witness in the Malegaon blast case, who had allegedly booked a hotel room for the accused days before the incident, turned hostile before a special court here on Friday. He became the 32nd witness to be declared hostile in the case. The witness, who worked at a hotel in Indore, had in his statement to the Anti-Terrorism Squad claimed that he had booked rooms for the accused in the case. However, during his deposition before special NIA judge A K Lahoti on Friday, the witness said he doesn't remember what he told the probe agency. PTI



HUID CODE
on gold jewellery mandatory from **TODAY**

#HallmarkHaiTohSonaHai

22K916
Purity of Gold in Carats & Fineness

Six Digit Alphanumeric HUID Code unique to each jewellery article

BIS CARE APP

Follow us
@IndianStandards

Download on



IN BRIEF

32 PFI activists held since ban on outfit, Goa CM tells House

Thirty-two alleged members of the Popular Front of India (PFI) have been arrested in Goa since the Centre imposed a ban on the radical Islamist organisation, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said in the Assembly on Friday. He was responding to a call attention motion moved by BJP MLA Pravin Arlekar on the activities of the PFI in Goa, which the latter said may lead to communal unrest in the State. "Even before PFI was banned, the Goa police had arrested 18 people in connection with a case of unlawful assembly registered against the outfit at Fatorda police station. After it was banned, a total of 32 PFI members have been arrested," the CM said. PTI



500 shops gutted as fire engulfs buildings in Kanpur

At least 500 shops were gutted in a massive fire that broke out in a multi-storey commercial building in Bansmandi area here on the early hours of Friday, a senior official said. Prime facie the fire broke out due to a short circuit following a massive dust storm. The blaze started at 2 a.m. in AR Tower also known as Afqa Rasool Tower and spread to Maqsood, Humraz complex and Nafees towers charring about 500 shops located in these four towers, the official said, adding strong winds fanned the flames. PTI

M.P. police get transit remand of 'bookie' Anil Jaisinghani

A sessions court in Mumbai on Friday allowed Madhya Pradesh police's plea, seeking the transit remand of alleged bookie Anil Jaisinghani in a bootlegging case registered against him there. Mr. Jaisinghani is currently in judicial custody following his arrest by the Mumbai police in a case related to demanding bribe and extortion from Amruta Fadnavis, wife of Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis. The M.P. police submitted that his transit remand was required in connection with the case registered against him under sections of the Excise Act. Meanwhile, additional sessions court is expected to pass an order on his bail in the case filed by Ms. Fadnavis on Saturday. PTI

CLASSIFIEDS MART

TO ADVERTISE VISIT

www.thehinduads.com

CALL: 011-43579738 • 011-43579797

or Contact your nearest Authorised space sellers

EDUCATIONAL

GENERAL

NICEIAS

INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SERVICES

Call Now : 9910944333, 7982900539,

011-47065959

Website: www.niceias.org

Outstanding Performance by

Our Sociology Students

Our 2021 Toppers



New Batch Regular Classroom Programme - 5th June

by - Praveen Kishore Sir

Early Bird Discount 30%

Till 20th April

Coupon Code: NICE30



Enroll Now

Download App

LEGAL NOTICE

ATUL KUMAR, SOLE ARBITRATOR

Former Director, NHAI

Office: 1002, 10th Floor, Dev Vihar,

New Delhi-110025

Mob. No: 9873322301

E-mail: md.akcm@gmail.com

Arbitration Case No.01/2023

IN THE MATTER OF:

Ms. Meenakshi AgrawalClaimant

Versus

Mr. Rototec, a partnership firm

.....Respondent

Notice for Appearance of Respondent Under

Order V Rule 20 of CPC

Notice for appearance of: Mr. Rototec, a

partnership firm represented through its Partner Sh.

Sarabjeet Singh, Office at-D-14/5, Okhla

Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110025.

Also at: R/o 5220, Ramjas Road, Karol Bagh,

New Delhi-110025.

Whereas it has been proved to the satisfaction of

this Tribunal that the respondent above named

cannot be served in the ordinary way of service.

Hence, this proclamation under Order V Rule 20

of CPC as amended upto date is hereby issued

against the respondent namely Mr. Rototec a

partnership firm represented through its Partner Sh.

Sarabjeet Singh, should appear

on 10-04-2023, at 04:30 PM, at Venue 16 Sukhdev

Vihar, New Delhi-110025, by their self or

their counsel to adjudicate the dispute between

the parties herein.

Take notice that, in default of his/her

appearance with the date and determined in

his/her absence according to law. Given under

my signature on 20-03-2023.

Sd/-

Atul Kumar

Sole Arbitrator

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Lavkush Kumar Nirmal S/O Lallu

R/o. C/o Lallu, House No.831, Saraswati

Vihar, Jnu Campus, JNU, South

West Delhi, 110067, Shall henceforth be

known as Lavkush Kumar.

BUSINESS OFFERS

SECURED & Unsecured (All Sectors)

Loan Min 50Lakhs & Above.

741913905

TENDERS

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Invited for supply of souvenirs

for sale in Periyar Tiger Reserve,

Thekkady, Kerala.

For Details:

www.periyartigerreserve.org

Last date: 25/04/2023, 11.00 am

Prohibitory orders imposed in parts of Howrah

Thirty-six persons arrested in connection with the violence; Trinamool Congress and Opposition point fingers at each other for clashes breaking out

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA



Police taking out route march on Friday in the areas affected by Thursday's violence in West Bengal. DEBASISH BHADURI

Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC were imposed in southern parts of Howrah town on Friday after violence erupted over Ram Navami celebrations on Thursday. Thirty-six persons were taken into custody in connection with the violence.

There was a huge deployment of police in the areas affected by the violence. Police personnel along with senior officers held route march in the area to bring the situation under control. A flare-up occurred near Shabpur police station where there was stone pelting in the afternoon but police was quick to act and bring the situation under control.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee blamed the BJP for the violence. She alleged that a conspiracy for inciting violence in Howrah was planned almost a month ago. The CM admitted to a goof-up by the police and said action will be taken. Ms. Banerjee on Thursday had said that there was a

clear instruction to the police that no procession will be allowed in an authorised route.

Governor C.V. Ananda Bose spoke to senior officials of State government and took stock of the situation. Union Minister Amit Shah also spoke to the Governor.

PIL in High Court
Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari raised questions on the Chief Minister's remarks. "The situation was allowed to go out of control only to save her [Ms. Banerjee's] vote bank," Mr. Adhikari said. He added that he had filed a public interest litigation at

the Calcutta High Court "pertaining to the incidents of violence and attack on the Ram Navami processions in Howrah and Dalkhola".

Mr. Adhikari said that he had sought a probe by the NIA (National Investigation Agency) and immediate deployment of central forces in such areas.

'No police permission'
TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee held a press conference in which he said that the organisers had neither taken police permission for the procession nor any guidelines laid by the police for such processions were adhered to.

1 dead, 7 arrested in Sambhajinagar clashes; MVA targets BJP for riots

Shoumojit Banerjee
PUNE



One man who was injured in the police firing after a riot-like situation prevailed on Thursday in Maharashtra's Sambhajinagar city (formerly Aurangabad) succumbed to his wounds on Friday, even as the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) held the ruling BJP responsible for creating a pattern of fomenting communal riots on Rama Navami day across India.

The Sambhajinagar police arrested seven persons in connection with the clashes and stone-pelting, which erupted in the wee hours of Thursday in the city's Kiradpura locality and had led to several police vehicles being torched.

An argument between two groups had escalated into violence, with irate mobs attacking police officers as well. Around 14 police and private vehicles were damaged and 17 officers were injured, causing the police to fire at the mob, sources said.

The police have lodged an FIR for arson and rioting against 500 people.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (Uddhav) MP Sanjay Raut accused the BJP of deliberately creating riots in the State as well as in other States on the occasion of Rama Navami, with a view to assert that their 'Hindutva' was of a hardline nature.

"The violence on Thursday was clearly State-sponsored and an attempt on the part of the State govern-

ment to stop the MVA from holding its rally in Sambhajinagar," Mr. Raut alleged.

NCP MP Supriya Sule said "This incident reflects the failure of the Shinde-Fadnavis government...the Home Minister is responsible if the citizens of the State are running scared," said Ms. Sule.

Shinde camp MLA Sanjay Shirsat hit back at the MVA. "Why would we [ruling government] want a riot-like situation to prevail in the State...and that too in Aurangabad which is an industrial zone," Mr. Shirsat said.



Bhim Army has alleged that on the pretext of development, houses of Scheduled Castes, Muslims and Backward Classes have been bulldozed. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Stalin promises action on Kalakshetra issue

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin informed the Assembly on Friday that legal action would be taken if investigation proved the charges of sexual harassment of Kalakshetra students.

"An appropriate investigation will be conducted, and if the charges are proved, appropriate legal action will be taken against whoever they may be," he said in reply to the special calling attention motion moved by a few MLAs.

The Chief Minister said a team from the Revenue and Police Departments – comprising the Revenue Divisional Officer, the Tahsildar, the Joint Police Commissioner, the Assistant Commissioner of Police and others – were conducting an investigation to collect more information. The team visited the campus on Friday, too, and held talks with students and the management. A police security team, led by a woman inspector, was deployed on the campus.

Team sent for probe
Mr. Stalin said that soon after the information reached him, he got additional information from the Collector. Thereafter, the team was sent out for investigation.

The Chief Minister said the National Commission for Women (NCW) made a post on the social

media about "sexual harassment" on March 21 and sent a communication to the Director-General of Police. "In this connection, the Director of Kalakshetra Foundation met the DGP and said there was no complaint of sexual harassment in the organisation."

The NCW, in a communication to the DGP on March 25, said it inquired into the issue on the basis of a media report and closed the probe. However, the NCW chairperson arrived at Kalakshetra and held inquiries with 210 women students. "She said the police need not accompany her. There is no written complaint received by the police in this regard." Following a sit-in protest by the students on the campus, it was announced that the college would remain closed and students would have to vacate the hostel.

While moving the motion, S.S. Balaji of the VKC said the police were being "soft" on the case. Panruti MLA T. Velmurugan questioned how the Kalakshetra Director could withdraw a complaint when students staged a protest. K. Selvaranunthagai of the Congress named four persons, who he said were involved in the sexual harassment.

The Chief Minister said a team from the Revenue and Police Departments – comprising the Revenue Divisional Officer, the Tahsildar, the Joint Police Commissioner, the Assistant Commissioner of Police and others – were conducting an investigation to collect more information. The team visited the campus on Friday, too, and held talks with students and the management. A police security team, led by a woman inspector, was deployed on the campus.

Team sent for probe
Mr. Stalin said that soon after the information reached him, he got additional information from the Collector. Thereafter, the team was sent out for investigation.

The Chief Minister said the National Commission for Women (NCW) made a post on the social

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

The Bareilly Development Authority's (BDA) decision to remove structures and houses said to be illegally built on the land acquired by the authority in two-three villages of the district has led to major protests and pushback.

Organisations like the Bhim Army have alleged that on the pretext of infrastructure development and smart city only for the rich and not to poor people. Bareilly Development Authority has so far demolished about 465 houses in Chandrapur, Bichpuri, Doharia and Rammagar Gauti villages and made about 2,500 people homeless for the Smart City and Chief Minister's dream project 'Rammanga Nagar Project' in Bareilly," Vikas Babu, the division

"The meaning of infrastructure development and smart city is only for the rich and not to poor people. Bareilly Development Authority has so far demolished about 465 houses in Chandrapur, Bichpuri, Doharia and Rammagar Gauti villages and made about 2,500 people homeless for the Smart City and Chief Minister's dream project 'Rammanga Nagar Project' in Bareilly," Vikas Babu, the division

"The meaning of infrastructure development and smart city is only for the rich and not to poor people. Bareilly Development Authority has so far demolished about 465 houses in Chandrapur, Bichpuri, Doharia and Rammagar Gauti villages and made about 2,500 people

Famed U.S. museum to repatriate 15 stolen Indian artefacts

R. Sivaraman
CHENNAI

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is returning 15 antiquities to the Government of India after having learned that these were "illegally removed" from India.

All the sculptures were sold at one point by Subhash Kapoor, a dealer currently lodged at Central Prison, Tiruchi. Mr. Kapoor was arrested in Germany in 2012 and handed over to the Idol Wing CID of Tamil Nadu Police. Last November, he was convicted and handed a 10-year imprisonment for the of-

fences of burglary and illegal export of 19 antique idols estimated at ₹94 crore from a temple in Ariyalur to the Art of the Past Gallery, New York, a few years ago.

Museums and art galleries across the world have been handing over artworks sold by him to Indian authorities. In 2019, Mr. Kapoor, who is an U.S. citizen, was charged by prosecutors in Manhattan, U.S. with stealing and possessing artefacts worth mil-

Svetambara-enthroned Jina, with attendants Yaksha and Yakshi. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

lions of dollars over a period of 30 years.

Recently, the Supreme Court of the State of New York issued a search warrant to a special agent of the Department of Homeland Security-Homeland Security Investigations (DHS-HSI) describing 15 properties which were

cited as stolen and constitute evidence in criminal cases. The officials executed the warrant on Thursday. Sources said the antiquities would be returned to India.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Museum in a statement said it had contacted Homeland Security



"about works from Kapoor in 2015 and is acting on this matter" as a result of the criminal investigation by the Manhattan District Attorney's office. The sculptures date back from the 1st century BCE to the 11th century CE, and include terracotta, copper, and stone works. Among the antiquities is an enthralling sandstone sculpture of Apsara, the celestial dancer. The 33.5-inch tall sculpture from Madhya Pradesh dates back to the mid-11th century CE and is worth \$10,000 (around ₹82 crore).

A 1st-century BCE ceramic pot from Chandraketu-

garh (archaeological site near Kolkata), a stone bust of Kamadeva, the God of Love, from the second half of the 8th century CE, and a Svetambara-enthroned Jina, with attendant Yaksha and Yakshi, belonging to the 11th century CE, are also part of the antiquities.

"Today's forfeiture is proof that despite Mr. Kapoor's indictments in India and America, there are still hundreds, if not thousands, of antique objects sold by him with prestigious collections worldwide," said S. Vijay Kumar, art enthusiast and Co-Founder, India Pride Project.

IN BRIEF



President meets makers of *The Elephant Whisperers*

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday met the makers of the Oscar-winning documentary *The Elephant Whisperers*. It is the maiden Indian production to win in the Documentary Short Subject category at the 95th Academy Awards. "President Droupadi Murmu met the makers of Oscar-winning documentary *The Elephant Whisperers*, Kartiki Gonsalves and Guneet Monga. She congratulated them on winning the award and praised them for showcasing India's tradition of conservation and living in harmony with nature," the Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted along with pictures of the meeting. PTI

ED should probe money laundering in TSPSC paper leak: Congress

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress president A. Revanth Reddy approached the Enforcement Directorate seeking its intervention in the ongoing Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) paper leak as the case involved the exchange of money and suspected money laundering as there were some NRIs too who benefited from the paper leak.

A team led by Mr. Reddy visited the ED office in Hyderabad and submitted a memorandum to the Joint Director stating that only a central agency like the ED, which is empowered with the powers and resources to investigate money laundering, would be able to do a thorough investigation to unearth the receipt of illegal gratification.

The Congress chief also alleged that the SIT was working as per the directions of IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao as it was evident from the press conference held by him on March 18 where he had claimed that only two people were involved in the paper leak.

Sensitive information' Further, the Minister in a public meeting on March 27 referred to sensitive information about the applicants who appeared for the TSPSC exams. This proves that he was privy to the details of the investigation, which ought to have been exclusively in the knowledge of SIT. Under these circumstances, the probe by ED will reveal many other aspects of the case and it should immediately take over the case, the Congress team argued.

Kerala Lok Ayukta leaves CMDRF case to larger Bench

Difference of opinion between two judges leads to split verdict; complaint of nepotism had been filed against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his Cabinet colleagues in the previous LDF govt.

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A difference of opinion between two judges of the Kerala Lok Ayukta has resulted in a split verdict in a nepotism complaint against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his Cabinet colleagues in the previous Left Democratic Front government. The Lok Ayukta, therefore, referred the matter to a larger Bench on Friday.

The Lok Ayukta weighed whether it had the jurisdiction to investi-

gate an "impugned" 2017-18 Cabinet decision to compensate the next of kin of two late political allies and a deceased personal security officer of a departed ruling party leader from the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF) meant mandatorily for mitigating the deprivation of those in dire need.

The Bench headed by Lok Ayukta Cyriac Joseph and Upa Lok Ayukta Hareen-Ul-Rashid ruled that "as there is difference of opinion between us on the basic issue whether the action of respondents 2 to 18

tions raised by the complainant, we are constrained to place this complaint for investigation by the Lok Ayukta and both the Upa Lok Ayuktas together as required under Section 7(1) of the Kerala Lok Ayukta Act, 1999," the order said.

Hence, it constituted a full Bench comprising the Lok Ayukta and two Upa Lok Ayuktas to weigh the maintainability of the petition seeking a declaration disqualifying Mr. Vijayan and his former Cabinet colleagues from holding public office.



Pinarayi Vijayan

in taking the impugned decisions as members of the Cabinet can be subjected to investigation under the provisions of the Kerala Lok Ayukta Act, 1999 and on the merits of the allega-

Sahitya Akademi winner Sarah Thomas passes away

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Writer Sarah Thomas, who passed away here on Friday at the age of 89, was someone who let only her writing do the talking. A quiet observer of life around her, she weaved in all that she imbibed into her seventeen novels and more than hundred short stories, some of which were potent enough to stir the conscience of the opposing classes.

As a girl growing up in a conservative household, an early passion for writing closed many doors for her, rather than opened them. She had to wait till the age of 34, to get her first work *Jeevitham Oru Nadhi* published. In later years, she would talk about how her wings were clipped earlier on, in her childhood. Yet,



Sarah Thomas

within those limitations, she soared high with the sheer quality of her prose and the relevance of the subjects she chose to weave her stories around.

She is best known for her 1978 novel *Narmadipu-dava*, about the travails of Kanakaambal, who gets married and becomes a widow as a teenager, and her

struggles to overcome the stifling customs of the community. The book won her the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979. *Deivamakkal*, another popular work of hers, focused on the prejudice and discrimination that Dalits have continued to face.

Her novel *Murippadukal* was adapted to the movie *Manimuzhakkam*, directed by P.A. Backer. Some of her other works which were adapted to the screen include *Asthayamayam*, *Paavizhamuthu* and *Archana*. Her other notable works include *Ag-nishudhi*, *Neelakurinjikal*, *Chuvakkum Neri*, *Grahamam*, *Thanneerpanthal*, *Yathra* and *Kaveri*.

She also received the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award in 2010 for overall contribution to Malayalam literature.

Festival delicacy



Strands of rice: A woman drying vermicelli at a factory in the old city area of Malkpet in Hyderabad on Friday. Vermicelli is used to make Id delicacy sheer khurma, which is consumed during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. NAGARA GOPAL

Bengaluru-Mysuru highway toll goes up

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Barely a month after the toll collection started on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway, the charges will increase from Saturday in accordance with the National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) decision to increase toll charges on all the highways. Commuters who were upset with the earlier decision to collect the toll itself, are now seeing red.

While the toll charges for a single-way journey on the expressway for cars was ₹135, it will be increased to ₹165 and for a return journey on the same day, the charges will

jump from ₹205 to ₹250. Similarly, light commercial vehicles (LCV) and minibuses will have to pay ₹270 instead of ₹220 for one-way trip and ₹405 (earlier ₹330) for a return journey while buses and trucks will have to pay ₹565 and ₹850 for a single-way and two-way journey, respectively.

Commuters argued that toll collection was not justified when the work on the expressway itself was not complete and said that the NHAI should have waited for the work to get over before increasing the toll.

Those travelling to and from the Kempegowda International Airport will also have to pay more in toll charges now.

The Hindu Bureau
IDUKKI

Residents of Sankukandam and 301 Colony, near Chinnaikanal, in Kerala's Idukki launched a day and night protest on Friday demanding that the High Court-appointed committee should hear them before submitting its report to the court on April 5.

P.N. Sunil, Idukki district committee member of the Kerala Independent Farmers Association, said the people would continue their protest until the expert committee visited them. "We demand that the panel recommend immediate steps to capture Arikompan," he said.

The repeated wild elephant attacks give sleepless nights for us. We cannot live here unless the tusker is captured. We have no option to move to safe places," Bhagyalakshmi, a resident of Sankukandam said.

Two persons had a nar-

row escape after a wild elephant, locally called Chakkakompan, attacked them at Sankukandam on Thursday. JOMON PAMPALVALLEY

Arikompan: Idukki residents say HC panel should hear them



Jumbo issue: Wild tusker Arikompan seen near Chinnaikanal on Thursday. JOMON PAMPALVALLEY

Arunachal district forms panels to check human trafficking

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Changlang district administration in southern Arunachal Pradesh has issued an order forming panels to prepare a village-wise list of minors who have migrated out of the district for purposes other than education.

The order, issued on March 27, follows the case of a minor missing from the district for some time and reports of girls on either side of 18 years sent off by their families without formal agreements to work as housemaids elsewhere in the country.

Most minors and girls above 18 years of age missing or staying away from their homes for months are from the Chakma and Adi-vasi communities, officials in the district said.

Changlang's Deputy Commissioner, Sunny K. Singh said a committee has been formed for Bordumsa, Diyun, Miao, Namphai and Kharsang. Most of the cases have been reported from Bordumsa and Diyun circles.

Apart from the administrative and police heads of a circle, each committee has the district labour officer, a member of the Child Welfare Committee concerned and a representative from an active NGO, women's group or students' union nominated by an appropriate authority. "Reports on children being trafficked from holding public office.

The order said: "The committee shall also identify the children who are taken out by employers for jobs which fall under the category of child labour."

The committee shall also identify the children who are taken out by employers for jobs which fall under the category of child labour."

struggles to overcome the stifling customs of the community. The book won her the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979. *Deivamakkal*, another popular work of hers, focused on the prejudice and discrimination that Dalits have continued to face.

Her novel *Murippadukal* was adapted to the movie *Manimuzhakkam*, directed by P.A. Backer. Some of her other works which were adapted to the screen include *Asthayamayam*, *Paavizhamuthu* and *Archana*. Her other notable works include *Ag-nishudhi*, *Neelakurinjikal*, *Chuvakkum Neri*, *Grahamam*, *Thanneerpanthal*, *Yathra* and *Kaveri*.

She also received the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award in 2010 for overall contribution to Malayalam literature.

19-year-old raped in moving car; four held

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 19-year-old girl was allegedly gang-raped in a moving car in the intervening night of March 25 and 26 in a chilling reminder of the 2012 gang rape case of New Delhi that spurred protests and changes to laws dealing with sexual abuse.

Four youth, all in the 22 to 24 age group, were arrested within eight hours of the crime being reported. According to the police, the rape survivor was reportedly sitting in a car near the National Games Village, Koramangala.

One of the accused approached them and want-

ed to know what the girl was doing in the park "late in the night with a male friend", leading to an argument.

When rebuffed, the accused allegedly came back with three of his friends, dragged the girl into a car and sped away, the police said.

The girl in her complaint alleged that four men took turns to rape her in the car.

The police said that the car, now recovered, travelled the city's streets via Domlur, Hosur Road, and NICE Road.

The accused have been booked under Section 376D of the IPC for gang-rape.

A ND-ONE



Debatable indictment

Donald Trump's indictment will politically polarise Americans further

In a dramatic, but not unexpected, turn of events, former U.S. President Donald Trump has been indicted by a grand jury in New York **in the case of hush-money paid to adult film actor Stormy Daniels in 2016**, before the presidential election of that year. While the indictment, the first one ever against a former U.S. President, remains under seal and the specific charges and the extent of evidence remain unclear still, media reports and comments by Mr. Trump's lawyers indicate that the charges could include the fact that Mr. Trump's erstwhile attorney Michael Cohen paid \$1,30,000 to Ms. Daniels on the **45th President's behalf, apparently to stop her from going public with the story of their consensual (and earlier) extramarital encounter**. Mr. Trump is said to have reimbursed the amount to Mr. Cohen after he won the election, which was then passed off as legal expenses. In this regard the charge in the indictment is expected to be a falsification of business records, but that is only a misdemeanour offence in New York, not a felony. To prosecute Mr. Trump for a felony, the onus is on Manhattan District Attorney (DA) Alvin Bragg to not only link the falsified bookkeeping to Mr. Trump directly but also to show that the business records in question were falsified to cover up an entirely different crime. Speculation is rife that the crime that will be cited for this charge will be a potential violation of campaign finance laws – yet, this is where the prosecution case appears less firm. Following Mr. Cohen's claim that he had paid Ms. Daniels at Mr. Trump's behest, there was a question of whether Mr. Trump would be liable under federal campaign finance laws, which require monies received as campaign donations to be disclosed transparently and be subject to specified legal limits. However, a federal investigation into this matter was closed in 2019, which suggests that the weight of evidence here may not have been compelling at the time.

The broader question underlying the indictment is whether Democrats are scoring a self-goal. While more serious issues that could be potential charges against Mr. Trump are on the scanner of the Justice Department, including certain dealings of the Trump Organization, his role in inciting the January 6, 2021 insurrection and withholding classified information after demitting office, the Manhattan DA's reliance on the hush-money case could end up as blowback for the Democrats, especially given the dangers that it will polarise Americans further and be seen as pure political partisanship. Mr. Trump will of course extract every ounce of political capital that he can from what he has described as "political persecution" and a "witch hunt", and that too will likely not favour Democrats in the 2024 election.

A busy season

All-format cricketers will soon have to choose one over the others

It is the season of Twenty20 and just as the inaugural Women's Premier League (WPL) concluded at Mumbai, it is time for the 16th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL). With Friday night's clash between defending champion Gujarat Titans and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, the IPL's annual summer tryst is back in vogue. Launched in 2008, the IPL has become a money-spinning brand while the WPL finally found its feet with five teams. Women's cricket in India is carving a niche and it is a progressive step as not long ago this brand of sport was deemed an afterthought before the BCCI bridged the gender divide. The board initiated corrective measures including central contracts, pay parity in terms of match fees and the WPL became an essential milestone. In the pathways laid by Diana Edulji, Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami, to name a few, the current generation of women cricketers has also gained commercial heft. And when Harmanpreet Kaur's Mumbai Indians won the maiden WPL with a seven-wicket triumph over Delhi Capitals, it was a significant moment in the history of Indian women's cricket. With the Under-19 team having won the World Cup recently, the WPL's arrival should further enhance the quality within the Indian ranks.

Just as the women rest, their male counterparts are already busy with the IPL that stretches up to May 28. The 10-team championship can sap energy from the very best of players. Not surprisingly, 'workload management' has become an oft-repeated expression as the cricketers look at the immediacy of the IPL while also being aware of the World Test Championship final in England and the World Cup in India, later this year. All-format players such as Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and some bowlers have to make choices while juggling between their IPL stints and India duties. M.S. Dhoni turning out for CSK at 41, is a testament to longevity. Equally, it is revelatory of the career choices that players make these days through staggered retirements starting with Tests, then ODIs while keeping the T20 exit for the last. A Sachin Tendulkar playing top-flight cricket for 25 years will perhaps remain an exception as the present generation pick and choose their formats. The latest IPL has drafted in the 'impact player' concept wherein a team could effect a substitution, as in football, and use the star's core skills unlike the usual cricketing substitute relegated to just fielding. The stage is set and new stars will emerge in a year during which India could eventually chase glory in ICC events.

The Madras High Court effectively gave former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Edappadi K. Palaniswami a shot in the arm when it saw off, this week, an interim challenge to his control of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) issued by former Deputy Chief Minister and party coordinator O. Panneerselvam. In February, the Supreme Court of India ruled that Mr. Palaniswami would continue as the head of the AIADMK and that Mr. Panneerselvam would have to abide by the decisions made during the party's General Council meeting on July 11, 2022. It is quite likely that these rulings might turn out to be far-reaching decisions impacting the long arc of State politics.

The reason is obvious: ever since the death of former AIADMK leader Jayalalithaa, in December 2016, the party has been riven by factional infighting, the surest indicator that her autocratic style of governance failed to nurture green shoots of leadership to take over the mantle after her time. The impact of the Court's decision will be considerable because after more than six years of squabbling to capture power from the social base of the AIADMK – which also included V.K. Sasikala and her nephew T.V. Dhinakaran – the victor, Mr. Palaniswami, now has a clear mandate to take the party forward into the next election with a firm grip on its 'two leaves' election symbol, the support of an overwhelming majority of General Council members, and the end of Mr. Panneerselvam's challenge for control of the party following his ejection from the AIADMK.

Back to the future

Given the recent rulings, is Tamil Nadu set to return to its old model of two-party competition between the AIADMK and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)? The fact is that old world of nearly half a century of Jayalalithaa and former DMK chief, the late M. Karunanidhi, going toe-to-toe in an escalating competition to provide the population of the State with welfare goods has faded into the haze of the new India and its altered ground realities.

Several such realities are significant in this context. First, neither polarity of the Dravidian movement has a leader that is beyond political challenge. Consider the ruling DMK, headed by M.K. Stalin, son of Karunanidhi. While it is true that he was elected President of his party unopposed, and any potential challenge from his brother M.K. Alagiri was swiftly seen off by the party cadres who coalesced behind their leader, the difference in context between Mr. Stalin and Karunanidhi matters considerably. As a five-time



Narayan
Lakshman

Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi is a legendary figure within the pantheon of the Dravidian movement, scripting not only the many movie screenplays and poems that he was famous for but also the political pathways chosen by the DMK, whether it was to make fierce opposition to Hindi imposition in Tamil Nadu a vector of mass mobilisation, or to act upon the imperative of expediency and align with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party at the Centre during 1999-2004.

For Mr. Stalin, there is an unspoken pressure that rests upon his shoulders, and it stems from the fact that performance in office and the delivery of good governance through policies impacting the citizenry's daily lives, matter more than ever before. This could explain why his government, on the balance of policy priorities, has kept economic growth, investor confidence, urban infrastructure, climate change, and other such areas of day-to-day interest to the common Tamil man and woman in the foreground, while periodically reminding voters that on State autonomy concerns, including the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and Hindi imposition, the DMK would hold firm to the values enunciated by its forebears during the heyday of the Dravidian movement.

Regarding the AIADMK, there is no less pressure upon Mr. Palaniswami to redefine himself as an able administrator of his party in the aftermath of several years of internecine squabbling within the party. He certainly delivered upon the mandate to perform superbly for the people of Tamil Nadu in the realm of public policy when he held the Chief Ministerial throne for more than four years – and that he could do so while awaiting the resolution of deleterious intra-party wrangling speaks to the clarity of his purpose and political vision, and perhaps also to the negotiation skills that he would surely have needed to forge compromises between AIADMK bosses from different regions and representing variegated social groups. Yet, for Mr. Palaniswami too, the same paradigm shift in voter demands and public discourse, which has led to expectations that the Stalin government will deliver economic prosperity and social justice, will shape what he can and must do as leader of the Opposition in the State, and then as a campaigner in the 2024 Lok Sabha election and the 2026 State Assembly elections.

Saffron's southern spread

Nevertheless, the greatest challenge to both major parties has come from beyond the safe shores of the Dravidian movement, in the form of

the steady but rapid rise of Hindutva politics across the country. In this context it is important to not overstate the impact that the BJP has had in Tamil Nadu. Yes, having four seats in the State Assembly is better than having no seats at all, as was the case for the BJP until the 2021 elections, but more important than the number of seats are voter attitudes towards the core values enshrined in the Hindutva ethos, and the history of their clash with the Dravidianist worldview.

On the essential question of religion in politics or religiosity as a way of life, few would deny the great distance between the BJP and the DMK. The same is true of caste composition in a historical context – the BJP's control of government in the Centre and the States is quintessentially the perpetuation of upper caste power in many cases.

Culturally, the BJP's policies point towards an aggressive, pan-India, homogenising intent based on specific Hindutva idioms, and these include the domination of Hindi over regional languages and English, the subordinate social position of women and some minorities, and jingoistic nationalism that is, in its idealised format, hostile towards other cultures.

Yet, the DMK and the AIADMK were built on the notion of social justice from the earliest days of the Dravidian movement under Periyar E. V. Ramasamy and C.N. Annadurai, a concept that to a great extent focused on improving the social status and rights of women. Dravidianist political mobilisation by its very definition sought to forge a social rainbow coalition of a breathtakingly broad range of middle and lower castes, a strategy that has kept either the DMK or AIADMK in power for the past 56 years.

Similarly, both Dravidian parties have historically excelled at using the power of the Tamil language to mobilise voters and bring them into the fold – including not only the language campaigns during the DMK's radical phases of anti-Brahminism in the 1960s but also former AIADMK head M.G. Ramachandran's ingenious use of Tamil cinema to foster an image of himself as a paternalistic hero-saviour of the ordinary Tamilian.

In a sense, the lines between the Dravidian parties and the BJP have been drawn ever more clearly now than they were during the preceding five years, especially with what appears to be frictions between the unified AIADMK and the BJP. Which way the politics of the State swings in the coming decades has never depended more on the core beliefs of its electorate.

narayan@thehindu.co.in

Prospects for Dravidian renewal

The Madras High Court effectively gave former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Edappadi K. Palaniswami a shot in the arm when it saw off, this week, an interim challenge to his control of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) issued by former Deputy Chief Minister and party coordinator O. Panneerselvam. In February, the Supreme Court of India ruled that Mr.



Narayan
Lakshman

Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi is a legendary figure within the pantheon of the Dravidian movement, scripting not only the many movie screenplays and poems that he was famous for but also the political pathways chosen by the DMK, whether it was to make fierce opposition to Hindi imposition in Tamil Nadu a vector of mass mobilisation, or to act upon the imperative of expediency and align with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party at the Centre during 1999-2004.

For Mr. Stalin, there is an unspoken pressure that rests upon his shoulders, and it stems from the fact that performance in office and the delivery of good governance through policies impacting the citizenry's daily lives, matter more than ever before. This could explain why his government, on the balance of policy priorities, has kept economic growth, investor confidence, urban infrastructure, climate change, and other such areas of day-to-day interest to the common Tamil man and woman in the foreground, while periodically reminding voters that on State autonomy concerns, including the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and Hindi imposition, the DMK would hold firm to the values enunciated by its forebears during the heyday of the Dravidian movement.

Regarding the AIADMK, there is no less pressure upon Mr. Palaniswami to redefine himself as an able administrator of his party in the aftermath of several years of internecine squabbling within the party. He certainly delivered upon the mandate to perform superbly for the people of Tamil Nadu in the realm of public policy when he held the Chief Ministerial throne for more than four years – and that he could do so while awaiting the resolution of deleterious intra-party wrangling speaks to the clarity of his purpose and political vision, and perhaps also to the negotiation skills that he would surely have needed to forge compromises between AIADMK bosses from different regions and representing variegated social groups. Yet, for Mr. Palaniswami too, the same paradigm shift in voter demands and public discourse, which has led to expectations that the Stalin government will deliver economic prosperity and social justice, will shape what he can and must do as leader of the Opposition in the State, and then as a campaigner in the 2024 Lok Sabha election and the 2026 State Assembly elections.

Saffron's southern spread

Nevertheless, the greatest challenge to both major parties has come from beyond the safe shores of the Dravidian movement, in the form of

India's semiconductor mission might need a compass

The United States Department of Commerce and its Indian counterpart have recently concluded a memorandum of understanding in March 2023 to ensure that subsidies by each country do not come in the way of India's semiconductor dreams, as espoused by the much publicised semiconductor policy launched in December 2021. The U.S. Department of State has also engaged with India to beef up sector-specific export control laws in the semiconductor space – which India has agreed to, as in recent media reports.

While these seem pre-conditions in a long dance orchestrated by bureaucrats on both sides, will they lead to a global major such as Intel to invest in India in order to set up a greenfield 300mm wafer fabrication plant costing over \$10 billion? The premise of this question is based on the ongoing two-year dance between Intel and Indian government ministers who were seen courting the Intel CEO at Davos, and New Delhi hoping that Intel Foundry Services (a business unit within Intel formed after Intel's takeover of the U.S.-Israel based Tower Jazz Speciality Foundry) will build a greenfield plant, most likely in Dholera, Gujarat.

The facts on the ground do not support such an eventuality in a world where Intel remains preoccupied with setting up fabs inside the U.S. So where does Indian semiconductor policy need to go from here?

The Semi-Conductor Laboratory (SCL) was set up in Mohali in 1983 by the then central government, with the vision of creating an electronics ecosystem in an era when Keltlon, Uptron and Webel were fledgling entities in a pre-liberalised India aimed at consumer electronics. However, shocks, of the opening up of markets for consumer goods in 1991 and a fire that broke out in 1989 at the SCL, dashed these hopes. Some funding from the central exchequer



Saurabh Dutta
Chowdhury

is currently working at power integrations (NASDAQ: POWI), and has 30 years experience in semiconductor fabrication

The facts on the ground,

especially in connection with the
Semi-Conductor Laboratory, do not support the country's ambitious plans

to revive the plant to a 180 nm node pilot line to meet the strategic needs of the country did come by but the facility has, by and large, remained an unfulfilled dream in its mission of creating a domestic semiconductor ecosystem. SCL Mohali can be viewed as a technology stack similar to others such as Aadhaar, Aarogya Setu and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) acting as a force multiplier effect, encouraging many integrated circuit design startups in India to consider designing for India.

The way forward

The institutional framework for such a shift in focus already exists with the transfer of SCL back to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY) after a 15-year stint as a laboratory within the Department of Space, as part of the new semiconductor policy announcement in December 2021. However, a year into such an announcement, no joint venture partner has been found, keeping SCL employees in limbo. During this period, the focus at MeITY seems aimed at attracting Intel into India to set up a fab. This can be inferred from the wording of the request for proposals and signalling from MeITY Ministers. However, Intel primarily operates at >22nm node and 300mm, requiring over \$10 billion in upgrade cost to the SCL.

An alternate approach could be to leverage human and capital assets at the SCL to build on what exists in a targeted manner, to jumpstart the semiconductor mission by taking advantage of recent technological breakthroughs in a class of semiconductors that do not need advanced lithography equipment. The "More than Moore" segment of >180 nm node involving mixed signal analog (BCD and SiGe), wide bandgap (GaN, GaAs, Silicon Carbide) for RF and power markets leveraging existing lithography capability already

in place at the SCL. In this scenario, an investment of \$50-\$100 million may result in the development of Indian solutions for automotive electronics (EV traction inverters/on board chargers), PV-Inverters, 5G infra-power amplifiers, railway electronics (traction inverters), creating the Indian equivalent of Bosch, Siemens, ABB, Mitsubishi Electric, Thales and ELTA.

However, the upgrade has to be backed by subsidies aimed at fabless design houses with proven design (sales of >\$100 million per year) willing to fabricate at the SCL in the 180nm+ node (and possibly transfer process intellectual patents if they have any). The subsidies have to be aimed at global design companies with products aimed at India-specific markets such as motor drives for BLDC fans or e-bike chargers. Unfortunately, the existing DLI/PLI schemes provide no such incentives to proven global fabless design companies.

The recent efforts by the India Semiconductor Mission to open up subsidies to global small and medium-sized enterprises in the upstream supply chain are welcome because an existing facility like the SCL will benefit from this. But this is not enough in itself unless coupled with the incentives defined above and also upgrades targeted at different sets of players.

The stakes are high as a lack of clarity and inaction may lead to India completely missing out on the semiconductor fabrication bus, yet again, unless there is course correction on incentive targets. Finally, to execute this vision in the next five years, the SCL needs a full-time director with prior "More than Moore" foundry experience than have a career scientist from the Department of Space, as is the case now. This is because there is a multifaceted market that needs to be served.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No to *dahi*

The leaders of certain States taking offence to the printing of the word *dahi* on dairy products on the premise that it shall promote Hindi is ridiculous and is the height of *insecurities*. (Inside pages, "Will not print *dahi* on Aavin curd packets: Tamil Nadu", March 30). All States are gradually evolving a cosmopolitan outlook and generic names of products that originate in one particular State are becoming accepted. In the

same breath, southern-made films are a big draw in the northern States. Does this amount to sacrificing Hindi at the altar of other languages?

Deepak Singhla,
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Court on hate speech

Hate speech is fast becoming a routine feature of public life in India. The rise of the right wing has increased the insecurities of the minorities. (Inside pages, "SC slams 'silence of state' on 'vicious circle' of hate

against minorities", March 30). The dissemination of hate is threatening to change the liberal secular polity. Bigots seem to adopt their own rules with only one end game.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

NEt and format confusion

Medical students confront another problem – the conduct of the National Exit Test (NEt) that is required for admission to post-graduate medical programmes and to obtain

a licence to practise medicine in India. It could be held next year, in January 2024. With nine months left, medical students face uncertainty. Authorities in many colleges

are unsure of the examination format – whether it is 'MCQ' or multiple choice questions, and valuation by 'OMR', or optical mark recognition. Students are just not ready

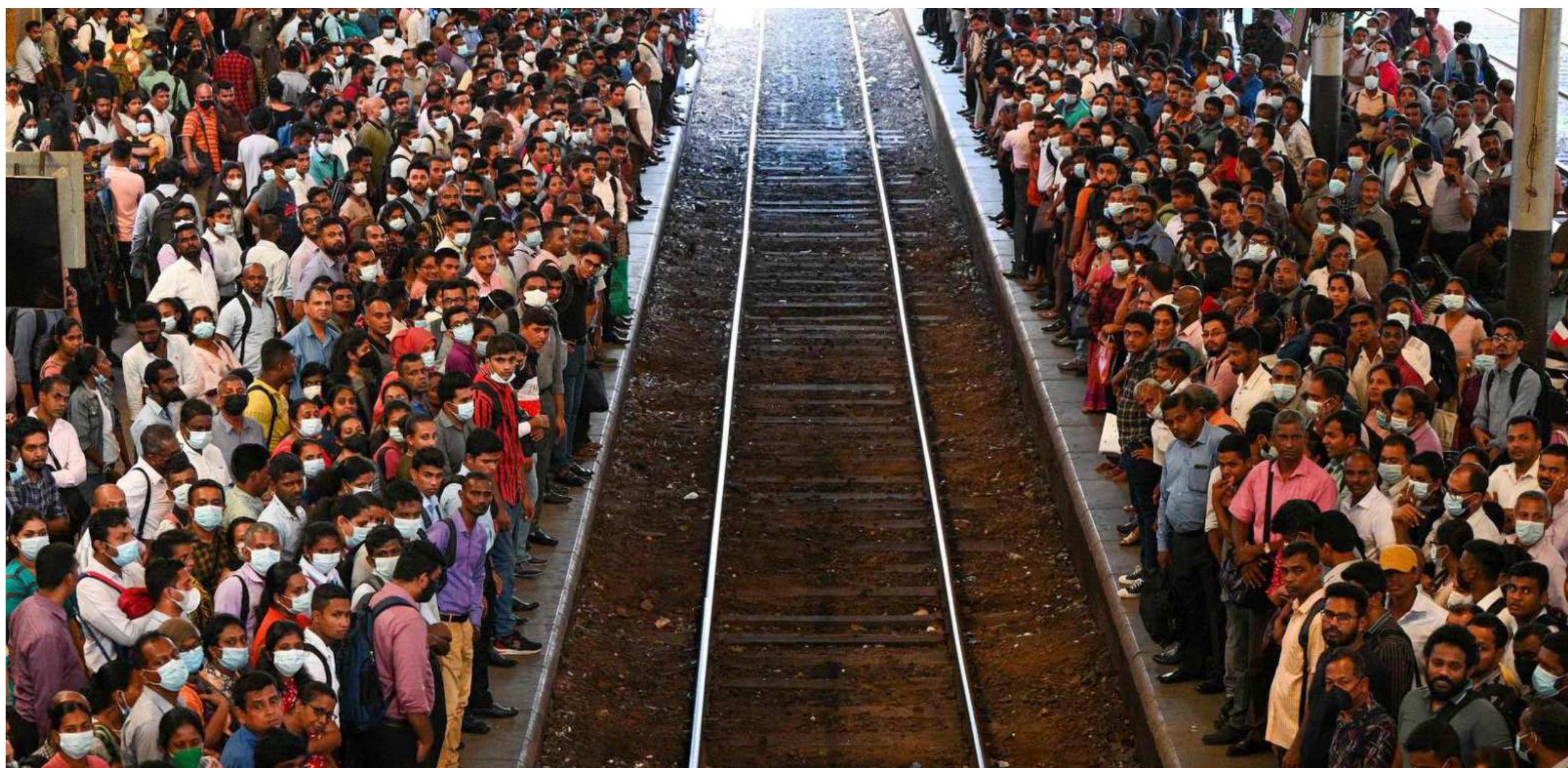
Corrections & Clarifications

The headline of a story on adult literacy programme (March 31, 2023) needs to be changed to "Back to school: 22.7 lakh adults sit for literacy and numeracy skills exams this year". Part of the opening paragraph should be recast to say: "... these are among the 22.7 lakh unlikely students from 10 States and Union Territories who in a bid to be called 'literate', appeared for the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test for 2022-23. More than 40% of the aspirant candidates were from Madhya Pradesh alone."

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

and the authorities need to act quickly to clear the air. The draft regulations

GROUND ZERO



Commuters wait to board a train at the Fort railway station during a nationwide strike in Colombo on March 15, 2023. Sri Lanka deployed armed troops as trade unions protested against the high income taxes imposed as a precondition for a crucial IMF bailout. AFP

A long and rocky road to economic recovery

The International Monetary Fund has approved a \$3 billion package for Sri Lanka. When the government implements the conditions stipulated by the Fund, it is Sri Lanka's poor who will bear the brunt, reports Meera Srinivasan from Colombo

For Sri Lanka's ruling establishment and its backers, March 20 was a good news day. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) finally responded to the government's distress call following the collapse of the debt-ridden economy last year, by approving a \$3 billion loan aimed at restoring economic stability and growth. "Sri Lanka will no longer be deemed bankrupt," President Ranil Wickremesinghe said during a special address to Parliament, projecting the deal, which he desperately coveted, as a crucial economic milestone. "We have the opportunity to uplift our motherland again." Sri Lanka would "regain recognition" in the international arena, its banks' letters of credit would be respected by international financial institutions, it would now be able to borrow low-interest loans from other international financial institutions, foreign investors' confidence in the country would be restored, new opportunities would emerge, and the foundation to build a strong new economy will be laid, he said optimistically.

Wickremesinghe's supporters rejoiced; some burst firecrackers. For them, it was not just a breakthrough in economic recovery, but also the political redemption of an accidental president. The United National Party (UNP) helmed by Wickremesinghe was virtually wiped out of Parliament in the last general election in 2020. His ascent to presidency was made possible only with support from the party of Sri Lanka's disgraced former ruling clan, the Rajapaksa, who were dramatically ousted in a citizens' uprising last year. While the diminished UNP is now represented in Parliament in a lone seat, Wickremesinghe loyalists see his credentials as a crafty, resolute, veteran politician restored in three other letters: IMF.

The IMF deal for Sri Lanka – its 17th since 1965 – entails a \$3 billion loan over four years based on several conditions, including arresting corruption. An IMF governance diagnostic mission has started to assess Sri Lanka's governance and anti-corruption framework in the agency's first such exercise in Asia. The government hopes to tap more rapid credit, including from other multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. A year after defaulting on its sovereign debt, Sri Lanka is looking to borrow more to stabilise its economy.

Global scrutiny

Sri Lanka's political parties and civil society organisations are mostly united in the conviction that an IMF programme is the "only way out" of the crisis despite the agency coming under growing global scrutiny for the painful aftermath of its programmes in indebted countries. Evidence from the developing world shows that an IMF loan is no "bailout." Its "structural adjustment" programmes rarely see countries decisively exit debt traps. In fact, critics accuse the IMF of facilitating more external borrowing in already heavily indebted countries. Economists and foreign debt experts around the world have also been urging the IMF to suspend the use of surcharges, in addition to potentially high-interest rates, arguing that these punish developing countries, aggravate their financial vulnerabilities, and act as sanctions on a country for being poor.

“
An outsider would think things are normal in our country. But many families are skipping meals, pawning jewellery or taking loans just for daily survival.
KOLIN PETER
Community worker and digital marketing professional

In Sri Lanka's case, the IMF officially stepped in as an arbiter of economic affairs in September 2022 when it reached a staff-level agreement with the government. Anticipating an IMF package, the government took a slew of measures, including a pre-emptive default on its \$51 billion foreign debt, a sharp hike in banking interest rates, a decision to float the Sri Lankan rupee (it depreciated from around 200 to 360 against the U.S. dollar), revise taxation, and increase fuel prices and electricity tariffs.

But Sri Lankans did not have to wait for the austerity measures to fully kick in to experience the effects. They had been facing acute shortages of essentials, long power cuts, and staggering food inflation of over 90% for months in 2022. The year saw the Sri Lankan economy contract about 8%, and crash. Coming on the heels of job losses and a drastic fall in real incomes during the pandemic, the economic crisis pushed poor citizens into existential agony. Depending on supplies available, families carefully chose what to eat, and how much. Many others who could not afford the food items had to consider which meal to forego or, worse, which child to feed.

Regardless of the government's cheer over securing the IMF programme, almost everybody in Sri Lanka admits that it will be a painful year. But there is considerably less acknowledgement that some citizens may feel the pain much more than others. While poverty is hard to miss, inequality is convenient to ignore.

Deepening disparity

For a tourist visiting any of Colombo's upmarket restaurants or bars, the crisis would seem a dated story. Affluent residents throng these venues in their SUVs and comfortably foot big bills. Away from the music and lights, at virtually every traffic junction are men, women and children asking motorists for money – a rare sight until the crisis.

There are "many Columbos," pointed out Kolin Peter, a community worker and digital marketing professional. Peter, 29, lives in a high-rise government housing complex in Colombo, where about 3,000, mostly working class, families reside. They were all displaced from different parts of the city as part of a "beautification" drive some years ago. "An outsider would think things are normal in our country... no more protests, no more shortages. But many families are skipping meals, pawning jewellery or taking loans just for daily survival," he said. "Some children go to school just so they can have the mid-day meal. In



Trade union members protest against the big hikes in taxes and electricity rates, in Colombo in February 2023. REUTERS

some other homes, parents are unable to send children to school because they can't afford the transport costs anymore."

The disparity, in Peter's view, is also geographic: "We are a small country with enviable natural resources. But every youngster outside Colombo sees a job prospect only in the capital. Why can't the government create jobs in other areas?"

For him, the real chances of recovery lie in addressing these glaring disparities and not merely in securing billions in new loans. "I don't get the euphoria around the IMF programme. At the end of the day, it is a loan for an interest, right? The IMF won't bother whether we recover meaningfully or not. What has changed for people to warrant celebrations like this? More people are starving every day and our leader is talking about holding grand Vesak (an important Buddhist festival in May) celebrations. We just don't learn."

The government's exuberant celebration of Sri Lanka's 75th year of Independence also came under attack from some. Detractors see no justification for pomp when authorities postpone local government elections citing the lack of funds, or seek urgent private funding to keep the country's critical ambulance service afloat.

On the other hand, eager to project a positive image to attract potential foreign investors and tourists, both of which are crucial now, the government frequently spotlights the indicators that signal a version of recovery – more tourists, increasing exports, vanishing queues, waning protests, and declining inflation.

Authorities unfailingly highlight "reduced" inflation, now around 50%, but the number belies the persisting economic strain on the consumer who still pays steep prices for food and other essentials, while incomes remain stagnant or have fallen. Pointing to a "rapid erosion" of purchasing power, Colombo-based independent economist Rehana Thowfeek contended that over the long term, incomes must be adjusted in line with inflation rates to maintain purchasing power. "Last year, Sri Lanka had really high inflation rates which meant the cost of living rose rapidly. Now, the inflation rate is less than last year. A lower, positive inflation rate means the prices are still rising, but at a slower rate compared to last year," she said. The inflation rate measures the year-to-year change in the general price level. "This year's price increase is on top of last year's, so cost of living is in fact still increasing," she said.

The World Food Programme found that a third of Sri Lankan families continue to be food insecure. The government and mainstream economists see austerity measures as inevitable while reviving a battered economy. However, these "austerity measures" look different depending on whether they are abstract numbers from a selective reading of macroeconomic indicators or realities of daily life and basic survival. Inflation figures, without factoring in real wages, are deceiving. The country's economy, after all, is that of its people.

The electricity tariff hikes are a case in point. Sri Lanka increased tariffs twice since the crisis escalated last year – first in August 2022 by 75% on average, and in February 2023 by 66%. "The hike came during acute fuel shortages, when families were struggling without gas, and food inflation had hit about 90%. Bills suddenly doubled or tripled, and consumers were threatened with notices of possible disconnection if they didn't pay up," said Perera, Director of Colombo Urban Lab, a think tank working on urban development policy. This coincided with the huge backlog of bills accumulated during the pandemic. "There is a misunderstanding about energy consumption in poor, working-class households," she explained. "Some think they use about 30 units, but most families in an urban settlement use between 100 and 150 units. They need fans, lights, a refrigerator. Families switched to electric rice cookers when there was no gas. The reliance on electricity grew even more after the shortages last year."

In what Perera termed the "weaponisation of the grid," authorities, such as the Urban Develop-

ment Authority, have issued letters and notices threatening to cut water supply for some consumers who failed to pay their electricity bills, even though the two utilities are handled by different entities.

If it is hard enough to be poor in a booming economy, it only gets much worse in an enduring crisis, where even those minimal choices available to the poor disappear. A debilitating crisis such as this has a multi-generational impact on their health, livelihood, education, and hard-earned assets. The World Bank estimated that between 2021 and 2022, poverty doubled to 25% in Sri Lanka. During the same period, urban poverty tripled. A further increase of over two percentage points has been projected for 2023. The crisis will push more people into poverty, and those already poor into destitution.

The IMF and the government emphasise the need for "social safety nets" to protect the poor and vulnerable. However, Perera sees little promise in the new enumeration exercise undertaken by the government's Welfare Benefits Board. A questionnaire with 22 indicators will determine whether a family is poor enough to receive financial support. "This kind of targeting is cruel," Perera said. "You can own a small house, but still struggle to put a meal on the table, still drown in debt, still be unable to send your children to school because transportation costs are so high. Targeted social welfare will also cut off many people from future social security services." Perera argued that Sri Lanka must opt for universal social security instead.

Resistance and recovery

Meanwhile, the government appears to be on guard. Trade unions protesting tax hikes or moves to privatise have been labelled "disruptors" standing in the way of stability and recovery. Police habitually tear gas agitators. Ministers threaten protesting "essential services" workers with termination of employment.

Most unions are not protesting the IMF programme per se, but the specific austerity measures that they associate with increased economic hardships. Even so, Leslie Devendra, General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya (Free Workers' Union), one of the country's largest unions with nearly 80,000 members spanning the energy, electricity, mining, and civil aviation sectors, said that workers must "play their part" and not "add to the problem" during a crisis. "Going to the IMF was a very difficult decision to take, but there is no alternative to help us get out of this mess. Our union feels we must face the stark reality of economic recovery. That will mean everybody will have to make certain sacrifices," he said. These include the government's move to restructure state enterprises by privatisation, which some other unions are opposing. "Whether enterprises are run under socialism or capitalism, they have to be run according to basic economic principles. Transparency and social dialogue are very important in the reform of public enterprises."

For Sri Lankans, the months ahead will be far from easy. A messy and likely long-drawn process of debt restructuring with a diverse set of creditors awaits the government, while ordinary citizens reel under its "corrective" fiscal measures.

Scores of people are fleeing economic deprivation, looking for educational or employment opportunities elsewhere. Official estimates show that more than a million Sri Lankans left the country in 2022. "We witnessed the Aragalaya (struggle) last year. The protesters wanted Gota (then President Gotabaya Rajapaksa) to go home and made sure he did. They also wanted a system change, but are we seeing that? The same set of politicians are calling the shots," said Peter, voicing the disillusionment among the young. He worried that despite a historic people's uprising, the ruling class has returned to politics and business as usual. Meanwhile, ordinary citizens continue to bear the ever-increasing cost of the crisis. "All that our politicians care about is holding on to their power and wealth," he said.

From Page One

Govt. vows swifter nod for exporters

While the industry noted that there was precious little in the policy for services exporters, the Minister said that goods exporters need to work a bit harder to maintain their growth momentum.

"We have ensured there is no end-date to this policy to be able to update it as and when required. The approach is to move from an incentive-based regime to a remission of taxes regime," Mr. Sarangi said.

"We are looking at improving the ease of doing business by digitising applications, reducing timelines for processing applications and lowering transaction costs for exporters. The application fee is being reduced for Advance Authorisation and EPCG schemes for MSMEs, which will benefit 55% to 60% of these schemes' beneficiaries," Mr. Sarangi added.

Opening up a new area of potential exports, the policy has included "merchandising trade" within its ambit. "Exporters in India can source goods from another country and send them to a third country without touching Indian shores. This will also enable exports of restricted goods," Mr. Sarangi noted.

"We are also coming up with an attractive amnesty scheme for exporters that have not been able to fulfil their obligations under the EPCG and Advance Authorisation schemes," the DGFT added. These two schemes will continue with process tweaks, including a reduction in export obligations for some items pertaining to green energy development.

Sisodia architect of criminal conspiracy'

The ED chargesheet states that a portion of the alleged kickbacks was diverted through "hawala" channels for AAP's Assembly poll campaign in Goa last year.

After several rounds of hearings over the past month, the court observed on Friday that Mr. Sisodia had played the "most important and vital role" in the criminal conspiracy and "had been deeply involved in the formulation as well as the implementation" of the excise policy.

The payment of advance kickbacks of around ₹90 crore-₹100 crore was meant for him and his other colleagues in the GNCTD [Delhi government]," the court said, adding ₹20 crore-₹30 crore was found to have been routed through the co-accused Vijay Nair, Abhishek Boimpally and Dinesh Arora [who has turned approver] to preserve the interests of the so-called 'South lobby'.

Declining bail, the court said his release may adversely affect the ongoing investigation and seriously hamper its progress "keeping in view his conduct as reflected from destruction or non-production of his previous mobile phones".

Trump indicted; likely to surrender next week

A spokesperson for the Manhattan District Attorney's office said prosecutors had reached out to Mr. Trump's defence team to coordinate a surrender. Mr. Tacopina said Mr. Trump is "likely" to turn himself in on Tuesday. "We're working out those logistics right now," Mr. Tacopina said on NBC's *Today* show. He insisted that Mr. Trump would not take a plea deal: "There's no crime."

Mr. Trump was asked to surrender on Friday but his lawyers said the Secret Service needed additional time as they made security preparations, two people familiar with the matter told *The Associated Press*.

Rijiju recalls Emergency to mount attack on Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Taking yet another dig at the Congress after its senior leader Digvijaya Singh had tweeted to thank Germany for taking note of Rahul Gandhi's disqualification, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday said democracy was actually "murdered" during the 1975 Emergency but none went around seeking help from foreign powers.

"When Indian democracy was truly murdered in 1975 by the Congress Party, no one went around crying in foreign land to seek foreign power intervention. Indian people fought and restored democracy because democracy lives in the minds and souls of Indians," he tweeted. Mr. Rijiju had accused Mr. Gandhi of inviting foreign powers to interfere into India's internal matters.

NATO is open to stronger ties with India, says U.S. envoy

Kallop Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

A leading U.S. official has said the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is "open" to deepening ties with India. Speaking at a virtual press briefing on Friday, Ambassador Julianne Smith, U.S. envoy to NATO, said Russia should withdraw from Ukraine and that NATO is watching China-Russia relation in the backdrop of Russia's continued military operation in Ukraine.

"NATO's door is open to more cooperation if India seeks that. NATO is more than happy to sit down anytime with India," said Ambassador Smith confirming that officials of NATO held "informal" exchanges with Indian counterparts on the sidelines of the recently held Raisina Dialogue in Delhi. The Ministry of External

Party may take legal action on Speaker's inaction against OPS, other expelled leaders: AIADMK

Contemplating filing a case since the Legislative Assembly Speaker has so far not taken any call on the party's request to not consider OPS and other expelled leaders as AIADMK legislature party members, says AIADMK to Madras High Court

Mohamed Imrullah S.
CHENNAI

The AIADMK on Friday told the Madras High Court that it is contemplating filing a case, since the Legislative Assembly Speaker M. Appavu has so far not taken any call on the party's request to not consider O. Panneerselvam and other expelled leaders as members of the AIADMK legislature party.

Appearing before the third Division Bench of Justices R. Mahadevan and Mohammed Shaffiq, Senior Counsel Vijay Narayan said, the AIADMK MLAs were unable to discuss anything among themselves in the House because the Speaker had not even changed the seating arrangement of Mr. Panneerselvam and the other expelled members.



Party bylaws require a contestant to the post of general secretary to be proposed by 10 district secretaries and seconded by 10 more district secretaries, said the Senior Counsel.

The submission was made during the hearing of individual appeals preferred by four expelled AIADMK leaders against a single judge's March 28 order, refusing to grant an interim injunction restraining the party from implementing its July 11, 2022 general council resolutions and the consequent

election held to the post of general secretary.

When Justice Mahadevan wanted to know why the appellants should not be provided some kind of interim protection either until the disposal of the present appeals or the main civil suits pending before the single judge, Mr. Narayan said, no injury

would be caused to Mr. Panneerselvam who was not supported by more than 95% of the party members.

Referring to the party bylaws, which require a contestant to the post of general secretary to be proposed by 10 district secretaries and seconded by 10 more district secretaries, the Senior Counsel said, he could produce before the court the affidavits of at least 68 out of 70 district secretaries who do not want to endorse Mr. Panneerselvam's candidature.

Deny interim injunction
On the other hand, Senior Counsel P.S. Raman, C. Manishankar, Abdul Saleem and A.K. Sriram told the court that the single judge had come to a *prima facie* conclusion of infraction of bylaws in the expul-

sion of the four appellants without issuing any notice to them. Yet, he had refused to grant an interim injunction as prayed for, by considering the balance of convenience.

Stating that they have a fair chance of succeeding in the appeals due to the *prima facie* satisfaction recorded by the single judge, the counsel insisted that some kind of interim protection be granted to the appellants, until the disposal of the appeals or the disposal of the civil suits, especially because the Legislative Assembly was in session at present.

After hearing the preliminary arguments advanced by both sides, the judges decided to hear the matter at length on Monday and asked the counsel to complete their pleadings by then.

Poll bonds on sale for 10 days starting from April 3

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The government on Friday announced the 26th tranche of electoral bond sales to be undertaken over a ten-day window starting April 3 and closing on April 12, at all authorised branches of the State Bank of India.

While the move comes ahead of the Karnataka Assembly elections, a ten-day sale window in April is part of the stated schedule of sale of such bonds. As per the original scheme, the bonds are made available for 10 days each in January, April, July and October, on dates specified by the Centre, and an additional 30-day period in the year of the Lok Sabha elections.

Last November, the scheme was amended to grant the Centre the power to declare an extra fortnight of electoral bond sales in years when States and Union Territories with a legislature have polls. That window was used to issue bonds ahead of the Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh Assembly elections.

Ministry says MGNREGS workers will build almost 75% of anganwadis this year

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Almost three out of every four anganwadi centres to be constructed in the current year will be built in convergence with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Women and Child Development Ministry has said.

The Ministry has informed the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Youth and Sports that the ₹12 lakh cost of construction of each anganwadi would also be split, with ₹8 lakh being provided under MGNREGS. The remaining ₹4 lakh will be paid by the Central and State governments in equal amounts.

There was a demand for 27,000 anganwadi centres in the country in the current year, out of which



The Ministry said that of the ₹12 lakh cost of construction of each anganwadi, ₹8 lakh will be provided under MGNREGS. FILE PHOTO

20,000 are to be constructed under MGNREGS, the Ministry said. The government has also identified 40,000 anganwadi centres for upgradation in aspirational districts across the country this year.

The Centre has also informed State governments that under the Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 schemes, it is proposed that States may seek CSR funds on their own discretion, apart from accepting

donations from individuals, companies, business houses and institutions of repute for construction of anganwadis.

The Ministry also requested all States to revisit the actual requirements of anganwadi centres vis-à-vis the population of the area, the number of children actually attending, and the number of centres already available, and then furnish a detailed proposal.

Mr. Murmu said henceforth all new audit work in the institution would take place only through the application and physical paper-based workflow would cease starting Saturday.

"The only exception would be the Defence Audit offices which would take some more time because of security issues. From tomorrow onwards, the digitisation process would be irreversible," he said.

Audit process to be fully digitalised from today

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), Girish Chandra Murmu, on Friday announced full activation of the One Indian Audit & Accounts Department One System (OIOS), a web-enabled IT application with support for multiple languages, offline functionality and a mobile app, for complete digitalisation of the audit process from April 1, 2023.

Mr. Murmu said henceforth all new audit work in the institution would take place only through the application and physical paper-based workflow would cease starting Saturday. "The only exception would be the Defence Audit offices which would take some more time because of security issues. From tomorrow onwards, the digitisation process would be irreversible," he said.

IN BRIEF



Equal say in shaping new information order needed

Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Friday said India, as the world's largest democracy, should be an equal participant in giving shape and form to the new information order in the world. Speaking at the valedictory session of 52 Indian Information Service (IIS) officials of the 2018, 2019 and 2020 batches, Mr. Thakur said: "...we are now witnessing the birth of a post-pandemic new information order as geopolitical lines of alignment are being redrawn and geo-strategic concerns are being re-framed."

BSP may deny ticket to Atiq Ahmed's wife in local election

After the conviction of criminal-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed in the Umesh Pal kidnapping case, his wife Shaista Parveen, who was being considered for the Prayagraj Mayor post by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), is likely to lose her candidature. After the reservation status on the post of Mayor is clarified in the coming weeks, the BSP is likely to declare a new mayoral candidate. Dates for the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation elections are set to be announced in two weeks.

TIPRA Motha leaders hold 'fruitful' meet with Assam CM

The leaders of TIPRA Motha Party (TMP), the primarily tribe-based Opposition party in Tripura, held a "fruitful" meeting with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati on Thursday. The outcome of the meeting has practically averted TMP chairman Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma's threat to go on an indefinite hunger strike if the Centre did not appoint an interlocutor by March 27 for pursuing "constitutional solutions" to his demand for Greater Tipraland.

Shah to attend two BJP events on his Bihar visit tomorrow

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Bihar on April 2, for the fourth time since the JDU snapped its ruling ties with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the State in August 2022. During his visit, Mr. Shah will address public and party meetings at Sasaram and Nawada to mark the birth anniversary of emperor Ashoka. Earlier, Mr. Shah had visited Purnia, Kishanganj in September 2022; Sitab Diara in Saran district in October last year; and Valmokinagar and Patna on February 25, 2023.

Rijiju recalls Emergency to mount attack on Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Taking yet another dig at the Congress after its senior leader Digvijaya Singh had tweeted to thank Germany for taking note of Rahul Gandhi's disqualification, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday said democracy was actually "murdered" during the 1975 Emergency but none went around seeking help from foreign powers.

"When Indian democracy was truly murdered in 1975 by the Congress Party, no one went around crying in foreign land to seek foreign power intervention. Indian people fought and restored democracy because democracy lives in the minds and souls of Indians," he tweeted. Mr. Rijiju had accused Mr. Gandhi of inviting foreign powers to interfere into India's internal matters.

NATO is open to stronger ties with India, says U.S. envoy

Kallop Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

A leading U.S. official has said the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is "open" to deepening ties with India. Speaking at a virtual press briefing on Friday, Ambassador Julianne Smith, U.S. envoy to NATO, said Russia should withdraw from Ukraine and that NATO is watching China-Russia relation in the backdrop of Russia's continued military operation in Ukraine.

"NATO's door is open to more cooperation if India seeks that. NATO is more than happy to sit down anytime with India," said Ambassador Smith confirming that officials of NATO held "informal" exchanges with Indian counterparts on the sidelines of the recently held Raisina Dialogue in Delhi. The Ministry of External

As Trinamool seeks unity against BJP, Opposition in West Bengal draws closer

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

At a time when the Trinamool Congress leadership is giving a call for united Opposition against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at Centre, the Opposition parties in West Bengal have come on the same page to oppose the Trinamool government in the State.

On Thursday, when State Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee called for unity within the Opposition parties during a dharna, several leaders of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) joined the protest of State government employees, demanding parity in DA (Dearness Allowance) with the Union government staff.

A few moments later, Leader of the Opposition



Power games: Workers of the CPI(M) protesting against the State government in Kolkata. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Political observer and psephologist Biswanath Chakraborty said such calls by the Opposition will give a message to voters at the ground level to vote strategically against the ruling party. "So in places where the Left is strong the Opposition will vote for Left and vice-versa, where BJP is strong Opposition votes will rally behind the BJP," he said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Bihar on April 2, for the fourth time since the JDU snapped its ruling ties with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the State in August 2022. During his visit, Mr. Shah will address public and party meetings at Sasaram and Nawada to mark the birth anniversary of emperor Ashoka. Earlier, Mr. Shah had visited Purnia, Kishanganj in September 2022; Sitab Diara in Saran district in October last year; and Valmokinagar and Patna on February 25, 2023.

Scheme for refugees from Pakistan hits rough patch

Financial aid was announced by the Centre in 2018; Hindu and Sikh families who migrated from West Punjab after Partition say scheme is mired in corruption and officials are demanding bribe

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

A Union government scheme to provide a financial assistance of ₹5.5 lakh per family to over 5,000 Hindu and Sikh families who migrated to India from Pakistan's West Punjab after the 1947 partition, has hit rough weather. The scheme sanctioned in 2018, has been extended till March 31, 2024, amid several issues, ranging from lack of documents to tepid response from families. Of the 5,764 eligible families, 70% of them are Dalits. The claims have been settled for only 903 families so far.

A senior J&K government official told *The Hindu* that several claims could not be processed, as the individuals were not able to produce original

Demanding their due

The scheme for West Pakistani refugees has hit a roadblock as they claim that J&K officials are delaying the process



Long battle: Members of the PoK Refugee Front raise slogans during a protest, in Jammu. PTI

5,764: Eligible families
70%: Dalit families
903: Claims settled
₹5.5 lakh: Assistance per family
₹25 crore: Allocation in Union Budget for FY 2023-24
₹317 crore: Scheme outlay

documents such as refugee cards, when they entered India from Pakistan's Sialkot in 1947. The administration conducted special camps a year ago to help the families apply for the Union government grant. In the 2023-24 budget, ₹25 crore has been allotted for the scheme. The total

outlay for the scheme after it was implemented stood at ₹317 crore.

However, Labha Ram Gandhi, president, West Pakistan Refugees Action Committee, said, "We have made several pleas before the tehsildar (revenue officials), but they do not initiate any action. Of the ov-

er 5,000 eligible families, only 900 have got the money so far."

Another resident added that the entire scheme was mired in corruption and the revenue officials were demanding bribes.

The J&K official said that in some cases, the claimants did not show enthusiasm as families had expanded in the past 75 years, and the total amount when divided among all members came out to be very low.

"In the cases where the original claimant who came to India in 1947 is still alive, the process is smooth. But when it comes to dividing the amount among several members of the family, it takes time. Many do not apply as they settled in other parts of India, and the amount is too small," the official said.

CERT-in may be exempted from giving information under RTI Act, says Centre

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The waiver will allow the agency to reject applications for information, even on policy matters

pulled their servers out of India, arguing that the directions would compromise users' privacy on the internet.

CERT-in coordinates with public and private organisations in India when cyber incidents like data breaches and ransomware attacks are reported. It also issues advisories for software vulnerabilities as guidance for organisations.

When deliberations on exempting CERT-in from the RTI Act were first reported last May, the Delhi-based Internet Freedom Foundation said in a statement, "On the one hand, CERT-In wants our logs [under the April 2022 Cyber Security Directions], non-compliance with which will lead to one year jail time, but on the other hand, doesn't want to be transparent to the citizens in return."

Govt. flags 'unverified' tweets on Punjab issue

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has continued its crackdown on posts on Twitter, according to public filings obtained by *The Hindu*. While some of the removed tweets and accounts contain unverified information on the situation in Punjab, where police continue to search for the pro-Khalistan preacher Amritpal Singh, the tweets flagged by the government included older posts related to anti-minority speeches made by political leaders.

@HindutvaWatchIn, a Twitter handle that says it "monitor[s] reports of attacks on members of religious minorities in India," had four videos pulled down on government orders issued on Wednesday, that was disclosed and implemented on Friday. *The Hindu* has reached out to MeitY for comments.

United States Congresswoman Ilhan Omar had on Thursday expressed concern on the "human rights situation in Punjab". Ms. Omar said the Indian government had "blocked the Twitter accounts of civic leaders, journalists including the BBC Punjab, and a Canadian Member of Parliament". *BBC News Punjabi* Twitter account was withheld in India for a few hours on Tuesday, before it was restored.

In March, Twitter disclosed at least 10 takedown requests containing several hundred accounts and tweets. In the latest batch of takedowns, the account of Gurpreet S. Sahota, the editor of the Canada-based CK News Group, was restricted.

Russia promises to deepen strategic partnership with India

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Russia on Friday described India and China as "friendly sovereign global centres of power" and vowed to give importance to comprehensive deepening of ties and enhancement of coordination with them.

Unveiling its new concept of foreign policy, approved by President Vladimir Putin, Moscow also asserted that its attitude towards other countries and multilateral bodies is con-

tigent on the constructive, neutral or unfriendly character of their policies with respect to it.

Russia said it places special emphasis on increasing the volume of trade with India, strengthening investment and technological ties, and ensuring resistance to destructive actions of "unfriendly states and their alliances". In the document, Russia underlined that it will build on a privileged strategic partnership with India. "A comprehensive deep-

ening of ties and enhancement of coordination with friendly sovereign global centres of power and development and committed to approaches which coincide in principle with the Russian approaches to a future world order and solutions for key problems of the world politics, is particularly important for achieving strategic goals and objectives of the foreign policy of the Russia," the policy statement said in its sub-section on China and India.

China poses challenge to rules-based order in Indo-Pacific: German envoy

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

The Indo-Pacific may be the area where the biggest challenge we have to face with China materialises, said German Ambassador to India Philipp Ackermann while stating that Indo-Pacific is growing in importance on the European agenda. Expanding on the European focus on the Indo-Pacific, he said on Friday, "India will be our preferred partner. India is a very courted country. Eve-



Philipp Ackermann

rybody is coming here..." In this regard, he said for the first time European Union (EU) is also in the political thinking of India. Referring to the war in Ukraine, the envoy said borders are not safe any more.

In Europe, sovereign states could be invaded, he said and added, "In Indo-Pacific, this kind of aggression can happen."

Speaking at a seminar on the 'India and the EU and the transiting security order in the Indo-Pacific' organised by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) in partnership with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Mr. Ackermann said, "What we want in the Indo-Pacific is preserving the international rules-based order."

Referring to various multilateral and mini-lateral groupings in the region, he said what we are seeing is the seeding of the security framework in response to China. He further said that their experience is not to put all the eggs in one basket, referring to their dependence on Russia for gas imports which he said have now been reduced to zero. With China the business interests are 100 times more, he said while adding, "We cannot fully decouple from China."

Uttarakhand told to probe Patanjali ads

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre asked the Uttarakhand government to examine at least 53 such cases against Patanjali Ayurved. Sarbananda Sonowal, AYUSH Minister, said in the Rajya Sabha in response to a question on banning five drugs – Divya Madhugrit, Divya Lipidom, Divya Egript Gold, Divya Thyrogrit, Divya BPgrit and Divya Lipidom.

"In 2022, the Ministry has forwarded advertisements of Divya Madhugrit, Divya Lipidom, Divya Egript Gold and Divya BPgrit to Ayurveda and Unani Services in Uttarakhand to examine the matter for withdrawal of advertisements," Mr. Sonowal stated.

Office of the Assistant Secretary

Electricity Department

Thirissur Corporation, Thirissur

TCED/RDSS-3117/22 Dated: 31.03.2023

THRISSUR CORPORATION - ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT E-TENDER NOTICE

Appointment of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Service Provider under RDSS, log on to:

www.etenders.kerala.gov.in
(Sd/-)
Assistant Secretary

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, TIRUPATI
(An Autonomous Institute under Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)

RECRUITMENT FOR THE POST OF "REGISTRAR"

Refer to the Advt. No.11/2023 published in this Newspaper on 25th February 2023 for recruitment to the post of Registrar in Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Tirupati. The last date for submission of online Application is extended till 17th April, 2023. However, the crucial date for ascertaining eligibility like age, experience etc. shall remain the same.

Sd/-
Director

Extension/Advt. No.11/2023/IISER-T/Rect./25.02.2023

**Office of The Additional Chief Engineer, PHED, Region-Kota
Notice Inviting Bid**

Bids for works under JMM are invited from interested bidders upto 11-04-2023 18:00 Hours. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the <http://www.eproc.rajarshan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.rajarshan.gov.in>, and <http://rjawater.gov.in> departmental website detail are following:-

NIT No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Date & time for online submission of tender
28/22-23	Work of "Augmentation of various RWSS/JYJ&P T Schemes of PHED Sub Dn Shahbad to provide FHCTC including one year defect liability period of SVSS under JMM in the jurisdiction of PHED Dn Baran, District Baran. UBN No. PHE2223WLOB15021	Rs. 1080.97 Lacs	22-03-2023 at 10:00 Hrs upto 11-04-2023 (upto 18:00 Hrs)

(Mahesh Jagird) Additional Chief Engineer PHED, Region, Kota

DIPR/C/4677

JODHPUR VIDYUT VITARAN NIGAM LIMITED

Corporate Identity Number (CIN) -J40198J2005G016483

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (RA&C), Regd. Office: New Power House, Jodhpur - 342003 Email: xenredsnjv@vsnl.com seracommjv@gmail.com www.jdvvn.com

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

(TN-DSM-04 - UBN No. JV2223WLOB00578,

TN-DSM-05 - UBN No. JV2223WLOB00579)

E-tenders in two parts (Techno-commercial bid & Price bid) are invited from eligible bidders for design, survey, supply, installation, testing, commissioning, operation & maintenance for 25 years from COD of grid connected solar power plants through RESCO mode, its associated 33kV or 11kV line to connect the plant with various 33/11 kV Sub-Stations and remote monitoring system (RMS) of solar power plants under KUSUM Scheme-Component C (Feeder level solarization) in various sub-divisions of Jaisalmir Division under Jaisalmir circle (TN-DSM-04 / UBN No. JV2223WLOB00578), and various sub-divisions of Pokaran Division under Jaisalmer circle (TN-DSM-05 / UBN No. JV2223WLOB00579).

All the details regarding tender is available at web site www.energy.rajarshan.gov.in/jdvvn, www.eproc.rajarshan.gov.in and sppp.rajarshan.gov.in in vide NIT No. JDVN/SE (RA&C)/TN-DSM-04 and NIT No. JDVN/SE (RA&C)/TN-DSM-05.

In future, corrigendum/extension, if any, shall be published only at web site www.energy.rajarshan.gov.in/jdvvn, www.eproc.rajarshan.gov.in and sppp.rajarshan.gov.in.

Raj.Samwad/C/22/17078 SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (RA&C)

नियमित दस्तावेजों के लिए दोपां ज्ञान 1800 180 6045

DIPR/C/4677

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY

PARADIP PORT-754142, Odisha (India)

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT (Estate Wing)

AD/EST/GENL-01/2021/1010 Dt.28.03.2023

E-Tender Notice

An e-Tender notice invites bids for the work "Providing field/office assistance for Estate Works for a period of 2 (Two) years" is available in the website from 29.3.2023 to 19.04.2023. Interested bidders may log on the website:-

[https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app](http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app)

Sd/-
PPA/PR/239/2022-23 Sr.Ass't Estate Manager
29/3/23

JODHPUR VIDYUT VITARAN NIGAM LIMITED

(MATERIAL MANAGEMENT & CONTRACT WING) NEW POWER HOUSE,

INDUSTRIAL AREA, JODHPUR-342003 PHONE: (0291) 2742223, FAX: (0291) 2746539

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

E-Procurement Tenders are invited for purchase of Non contact type AC Voltage Detector Under TN-1867 (UBN JV2223WLOB00604), Rain Coat TN-1868 (UBN JV2223WLOB00605) and Safety Belt TN-1869 (UBN JV2223WLOB00606).

Details regarding Quantity, Tender cost, Earnest Money, Schedule date of tender opening for aforesaid tenders are available on our website at www.energy.rajarshan.gov.in/jdvvn and also at <http://sppp.rajarshan.gov.in>, Raj.Samwad/C/22/17107 SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (MM&C)

नियमित दस्तावेजों के लिए दोपां ज्ञान 1800 180 6045

DIPR/C/4677

All India Institute of Medical Sciences

Madurai (Tamil Nadu)

Under PMSSY Division, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India

JIPMER, Puducherry - Mentor Institute

No.JIP/Admin-I/Rect.1(30)AIIMS-MDU/2019/Vol-II Dated: 01.04.2023

All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Madurai, an Autonomous Institute of National Importance is one of the new AIIMS and an apex

Healthcare Institute established by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).

JIPMER, Puducherry has been designated as the

IN BRIEF



Date for mandatory fitness testing for vehicles extended

The government has extended the date of mandatory fitness testing through a registered Automated Testing Station (ATS) for heavy goods and passenger motor vehicles by 18 months to October 1, 2024. Earlier, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) had said that fitness testing for heavy goods vehicles and heavy passenger motor vehicles through an ATS will be mandatory from April 1, 2023. However, for medium goods vehicles, medium passenger motor vehicles and light motor vehicles (transport), the MoRTH said the requirement will be made compulsory from June 1, 2024. PTI

NIA seizes cash, car in Haryana arms recovery case

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has seized over ₹7.80 lakh in cash and a vehicle as "proceeds of terrorism" in a case related to the recovery of arms and explosives, smuggled from Pakistan by the proscribed Babbar Khalsa International, in Haryana last year, an official said on Friday. The cash and the Innova vehicle were seized on Thursday under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), a spokesperson of the NIA said. On May 5 last year, police had intercepted the vehicle at the Bastara Toll Plaza in Haryana and recovered three IEDs, a pistol with two magazines, 31 rounds of ammunition, and ₹1.30 lakh in cash. PTI

LS Speaker Om Birla receives delegation from Israel

Stating that terrorism is a threat to both India and Israel, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday urged for a common strategy and deeper cooperation between the two countries to combat the menace of terrorism. Mr. Birla made these remarks while welcoming an Israeli parliamentary delegation to India led by Amir Ohana, Speaker of the Knesset (Parliament) of Israel. The delegation is in India at the joint invitation of Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar and the Lok Sabha Speaker. The visit, which began on Friday, will continue till April 4. The Lok Sabha Speaker said that in the changing global dynamics, relations between India and Israel have become very important.

AAP releases second list of 60 candidates for Karnataka

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday released a second list of 60 candidates for the Karnataka Assembly elections. After releasing the candidate list, AAP Karnataka chief Prithvi Reddy said: "All our candidates represent various sections of society. We have selected the candidates after conducting a survey. They are professionals and people from various other backgrounds..." "In the second list, we have given tickets to 11 women, 14 farmers, 18 lawyers, six doctors, 23 engineers, and a retired BMTC bus conductor," he added. On March 20, the party released the first list of 80 candidates.

SC to examine Kerala CJM court's verdict on dacoity

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has agreed to examine how a Chief Judicial Magistrate court in the State of Kerala "exceeded its jurisdiction" to try and convict a man for dacoity.

The offence of dacoity under Section 394 of the Indian Penal Code is punished with life imprisonment or sentence up to 10 years and fine.

Under Section 29 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, a Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) "may pass any sentence authorised by law except a sentence of death or of imprisonment for life or of imprisonment for a term exceeding seven years".

A Bench led by Justice Krishna Murari has issued notice to the State of Kerala on the appeal filed by the accused-petitioner Rathesh, represented by advocates Tomy Chacko and Ankolekar Gurudatta.

The Bench listed the case for detailed hearing in July.

The court granted Mr. Rathesh exemption from surrendering until further orders.

Highest proportional increase of COVID cases in India: WHO

XBB.1.16, the new Omicron variant, is responsible for the spike, says the global health body in its report for the period from February 27 to March 26; no rise in hospitalisations or deaths noted

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The highest proportional increase of new COVID-19 cases was observed in India, in the South-East Asia Region, according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) latest data for February 27 to March 26, 2023.

Globally, however, nearly 3.6 million new cases and over 25,000 deaths were reported in the same period, a decrease of 27% and 39%, respectively, compared to the previous 28 days.

"Despite this overall downward trend, it is important to note that several countries have recently reported significant increase in cases. As of March 26, over 761 million confirmed cases and over 6.8 million deaths have been reported globally," the WHO stated.

In the South-East Asia region, India (18,130 new cases; 1.3 new cases per 1,00,000; +437%) is followed by Indonesia (8,405 new cases; 3.1 new cases per 1,00,000; +39%), and



The WHO said the South-East Asia Region reported over 27,000 new cases, a 152% increase as compared to previous 28-day period. PTI

Thailand (597 new cases, as per the data). BA.2.75, CH.1.1, XBB, XBF and XBB.1.16.

XBB.1.16 was added to this list on March 22.

New variant

XBB.1.16, the new Omicron variant, is responsible for the spike in India. As per the WHO, this variant is a recombinant of BA.2.10.1 and BA.2.75, and has three additional mutations in the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein (E180V, F486P and K478R) compared to its parent lineage XBB.

"The F486P mutation is shared with XBB.1.5. Mutations at position 478 of the

SARS-CoV-2 spike protein have been associated with decreased antibody neutralisation, increased transmissibility, and pathogenicity," it said.

The WHO added that as of March 27, 712 XBB.1.16 sequences have been reported from 21 countries. However, so far, reports do not indicate a rise in hospitalisations, ICU admissions, or deaths due to XBB.1.16.

Globally, XBB.1.5 accounts for 45.1% of cases in epidemiological week 10 (March 6 to March 12, 2023) compared to 35.6% in week 6 (February 6 to February 12, 2023).

However, the WHO cautioned that the current trends describing the circulation of variants should be interpreted with due consideration of the limitations of the COVID-19 surveillance systems.

"These include differences in sequencing capacity and sampling strategies between countries, changes in sampling strategies over time, and delays in uploading sequence data," it said.

Ram Navami clash: over 300 booked in Mumbai

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI/KOLKATA

The Mumbai Police, on Friday, registered a case against nearly 300 persons and so far, over two dozen people have been arrested in connection with a clash between two groups during a Ram Navami procession at Malvani, in suburban Malad (West) on March 30.

The police are likely to arrest more persons as they are trying to identify those involved in the clash with the help of the available video footage of the area.

According to the police, the incident took place when the procession was going on and some people objected to the loud music.

State Minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha said that the procession was taken out after permission from the police, and such an incident was unfortunate.

Prohibitory orders were imposed in southern parts of Howrah town on Friday after violence erupted over Ram Navami celebrations. As many as 36 persons were taken in custody in connection with the violence.

Toll in stepwell roof collapse rises to 36; police file FIR against two temple trustees

Shubhamoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

The death toll in the Indore temple stepwell roof collapse incident rose to 36 on Friday. The police have filed a first information report (FIR) against two temple trustees even as residents accused the Indore Municipal Corporation of failing to check illegal encroachment by the temple management.

Devotees were standing on a platform on top of the ancient *bawdi* or stepwell at the Beleswar Mahadev Jhulelal temple, when it collapsed on Thursday during a *havan* ritual.

Rescue operations continued till Friday afternoon when the 36th body was fished out.

According to Neeraj Medha, the Juni Indore police station's officer-in-charge, the FIR was registered against Sevaram Galani, president of the Be-



Site of tragedy: A police officer takes pictures during a rescue and recovery operation in Indore on Friday. REUTERS

leshwar Mahadev Jhulelal Temple Trust, and its secretary Murli Kumar Sabani, under Indian Penal Code Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder).

A magisterial probe has also been ordered and further police action will depend on the findings of the probe, Indore Police Commissioner Makrand Deuskar said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief

Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday morning visited the private hospital where 16 people were admitted, before heading to the site of the tragedy.

Mr. Chouhan told presspersons that he had directed the administration to find out if there were any more such wells or borewells over which any construction has been carried out, covering them in a similarly dangerous way.

The European Union and South Korea have vehemently criticised the IRA on the grounds that it made electric vehicles imported into the U.S. from their regions uncompetitive.

Australia, Mr. Farrell said, "hadn't been critical of the IRA" because it stood to gain from it. One of the clauses of the Act required

Australia seeks diversified market for lithium export

Jacob Koshy
CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

Australia would rather have a diversified market for its lithium exports – and this includes India – than they all be cornered by the U.S., Don Farrell, Australia's Minister for Trade and Tourism said in a media interaction. Lithium is a critical metal necessary to make batteries for electric vehicles.

Mr. Farrell was speaking in the context of the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), passed in August 2022, that grants subsidies to electric vehicles produced in the U.S.

The European Union and South Korea have vehemently criticised the IRA on the grounds that it made electric vehicles imported into the U.S. from their regions uncompetitive.

Australia, Mr. Farrell said, "hadn't been critical of the IRA" because it stood to gain from it. One of the clauses of the Act required

The country is the world's biggest exporter of the metal, with most of it going to China

other source was China, Australia was looking to diversify away from a single market and this opened opportunities for India.

"We give you the opportunity of investing in our country. India is building an electric vehicles industry and Australia would like to be part of it," he said.

Access to critical minerals is increasingly an area of cooperation between the two countries. Australia's Minister for Resources, Madeleine King, and India's Minister for Mines, Pralhad Joshi signed an agreement earlier this month to invest \$3 million each to investigate the prospects of Indian investments into two lithium- and three cobalt-prospecting projects in Australia.

Australia is the world's biggest exporter of lithium with most of it going to China, which dominates the lithium-ion battery production market.

Mr. Farrell said just as the U.S. and Europe were looking to Australia (for minerals) because the only

FAITH

Hurdles we must cross

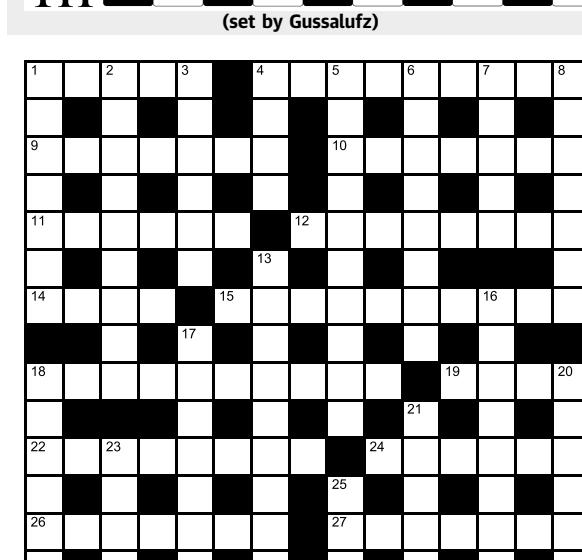
In life, we must surmount hurdles to reach a goal. And we must aspire for lofty things in life, and not be swayed by the attractions of wealth, popularity or fame. But while we may have laudable ideals, it is not easy to keep to the right path. We invariably come across hurdles, said Malayaman in a discourse. The trick to get ahead is to first identify the hurdles and then take steps to cross them.

Saint Vallalar said a rock may be a stepping stone that leads to a higher level. But it could also be an obstacle, so that instead of climbing higher, we actually end up getting stuck where we are. Or worse, we could fall down further. Thiruvalluvar says that if a man does good every day, then those acts of goodness and charity become stones that block future births. Vallalar identified the stones that block our path. He wanted to seek the feet of God. He prayed for the company of those who were single-minded in their desire to worship at God's feet. This was what people had to do – keep the company of virtuous people.

But there were also things we should not do, said Vallalar. He said a person should avoid the company of those who spoke sweet words to him, but who spoke ill of him behind his back. So, the company of good people will be a stepping stone in life, while the company of vile people will be a hurdle in life. The practice of speaking behind a person's back is a quality to be despised. Thiruvalluvar says that instead of resorting to such behaviour, it would be better if a person died. Then he might get the eternal joy spoken of in didactic literature. Thiruvalluvar says those words which do not hurt anyone or cause harm to anyone are what constitute truth.

TH CROSSWORD

13828

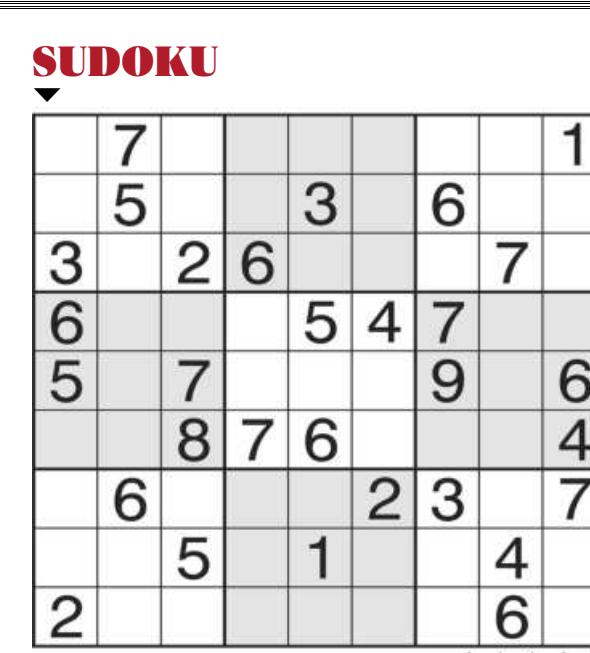


Across

- Catch reptile with hollowed reed (5)
- Lacking openings after restructuring, reduce engaging new potential interns for starters (9)
- Smooth surfaces, since I'm setting (7)
- Once again, let's deliver (7)
- Genuine query, say, about cancelling unknowns (6)
- One beginning action sequence in The Matrix getting discussed? (8)

CM YK

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle
GANDHI AGNOSTIC
O E Y R S R A
G O W E S T B A C T R I A N
O M T N L P A
C O M E S T O T H E B O I L
Q R H U R I I
C E N T I M E T R E D I G S
U C G I S E
T O B E P R O S C U T E S
T U A E M U U
H A R D N U T T O G R A C K
R M G I R K N
O N E P I E C E F I E S T A
A S N A E I V
T O E N A I L S U S A N C E

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



AN-ND-NE

TALLINN

Russia might put strategic nuclear weapons in Belarus, says leader



Russian strategic nuclear weapons might be deployed in Belarus along with part of Russia's tactical nuclear arsenal, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said on Friday. The strategic nuclear weapons such as missile-borne warheads would pose an even greater threat, if Moscow moves them to its ally's territory. AP

DAMASCUS

Israel conducts air strike in Syria, details about casualties unclear



Israel carried out an air strike near the Syrian capital early Friday, Syrian state media reported, the second attack near Damascus in the last two days. Citing a military source, the state media reported that Israel fired "sprays of missiles" just after midnight. There were no details about casualties. REUTERS

KARACHI

At least 11 killed in Pakistan Ramzan donation stampede



At least 11 people were killed in a crowd crush in Pakistan's southern city of Karachi on Friday as a Ramzan alms donation sparked a stampede of over 600 people in the inflation-hit nation, police said. The stampede happened when women with children flocked to a factory distributing alms, a police officer said. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Members of Hindu community in Pakistan slam forced conversions



Several members of Pakistan's minority Hindu community held a protest march in Islamabad to draw attention to the menace of forced conversions of Hindu girls. "Girls, some as young as 12 and 13 are abducted in broad daylight, forced to convert to Islam and then married off to older Muslim men," protesters said. PTI

U.K. to join trans-Pacific partnership trade treaty

We are at our heart an open and free trading nation, and this deal to join CPTPP demonstrates the real economic benefits of our post-Brexit freedoms, says British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

Sriram Lakshman

LONDON

The U.K. on Friday acceded to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak describing the outcome as an example of "post-Brexit freedoms". The agreement will now need to be ratified by Westminster and each of the CPTPP countries.

"We are at our heart an open and free trading nation, and this deal demonstrates the real economic benefits of our post-Brexit freedoms," Mr. Sunak said about the U.K.'s move to join the 11-member Asia-Pacific trading bloc, which, without the U.K., accounts for some 13% of global GDP. Talks had been on-going for 21 months.

The British government said the deal would mean that more than 99% of British exports – including for



Rishi Sunak speaking at the House of Commons, in London. AFP

key markets such as cheese, cars, chocolate, machinery, gin and whisky – would have zero tariffs. It also claimed that the deal would add £1.8 billion (\$2.2 billion) annually to the U.K. economy in the long run. This, however, translates to a modest boost of 0.08% to GDP.

The government said the deal was a "gateway" to the Indo-Pacific region which would account for a majority (54%) of global

economic growth in the future. The U.K. is currently also negotiating a "free trade" deal with India. It will also, as a CPTPP member, get a veto on whether China joins the treaty. Beijing had applied to become a member of the bloc in September 2021. The U.S., in the Donald Trump presidency, had withdrawn from the CPTPP's precursor, the TPP.

Downing Street highlighted some of the benefits of the CPTPP – such as a cut in whisky and car tariffs for British goods going to Malaysia. Services – which are a key U.K. export – accounted for 43% of exports to CPTPP countries last year, Downing Street said. Once Britain becomes a member of the bloc, U.K. firms will not need to establish a local office or be resident to provide services and will be able to operate on a par with firms in host countries, the government said.

Questioned by Times Radio on whether the impact of joining CPTPP would make up for the economic loss of leaving the EU, the U.K.'s international trade secretary Kemi Badenoch, suggested it was time to move the debate on from Brexit.

"We've left the EU so we need to look at what to do in order to grow that U.K. economy and not keep talking about a vote from seven years ago," she said.

"We will continuously work to strengthen the dialogue with this great ally", Mr. Cohen added.

The top U.S. diplomat emphasised the importance of refraining from unilateral actions that exacerbate tensions," Mr. Patel said.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

In the highest level contact since the exchange, Mr. Blinken called Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and "reaffirmed the importance of the enduring U.S.-

strike, responded that he would not bow to foreign pressure but took a more conciliatory tone when he participated in a democracy summit called by Mr. Biden.

<p

IN BRIEF



'Ola Electric sold more than 27,000 scooters in March'

Ola Electric on Friday said it sold more than 27,000 units of EV scooters in March this year, the highest in seven consecutive months. During FY23, the company sold more than 2 lakh scooters, consolidating a market share of more than 30% in the EV two-wheeler space. "While last year has been successful in making EV's mainstream, the next couple of years will take the EV revolution to humanity scale," said founder and CEO Bhavish Aggarwal.

Two U.S. PE funds sell ₹134-cr. stake in Shriram Properties, exit

Two U.S.-based real estate private equity (PE) firms Walton Street Capital and Starwood Capital have exited Shriram Properties Ltd. (SPL) by selling 14.27% stake through a bulk deal on the NSE for ₹134 crore. "We see the current deal as a very good outcome for long term value creation, and welcome our new investors, given the current market situation," CMD M. Murali said. SPL ended the day at ₹60.34 on the BSE, gaining more than 9% over Wednesday's closing price.

DIPAM meets revised targets for 2022-23 receipts

The Centre on Friday received as much as ₹1,632 crore in dividends from five public-sector companies, taking its total disinvestment and dividend receipts tally for 2022-23 to over ₹94,280 crore. "With dividend receipts adding up to ₹58,988.34 crore and disinvestment transaction yielding ₹35,293.52 crore, we have now surpassed the 2022-23 Revised Estimates of ₹93,000 crore for receipts from these two heads," an official from DIPAM told *The Hindu*.

Listed non-govt. firms saw lower capital formation in FY22

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Corporations were cautious about their capacity expansion and capital investment plans due to uncertainties in demand conditions in the aftermath of the pandemic, elevated input costs, global supply bottlenecks and other factors, and this resulted in lower fixed capital formation during 2021-22, according to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The RBI data was based on the audited annual accounts of 6,973 non-government, non-financial (NGNF) public limited

companies during 2021-22. During this period, at the aggregate level, public limited NGNF companies preferred short-term borrowings over long-term financing, which improved their leverage; the debt-to-equity ratio moderated to 36.7% during 2021-22 from 41.3% in the previous year.

Operating profits of NGNF public limited companies increased by 29.0% in 2021-22 over and above a rise of 15.6% in the previous year. Interest coverage ratio increased to 4.1% during 2021-22 (from 3.0% in the previous year) on the back of lower interest expenses and higher gross profits, the RBI said.

FTP mints setting up e-com export hubs

Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

The government's new Foreign Trade Policy extends all export benefits to e-commerce overseas shipments, which it targets to grow to \$200-300 billion annually by 2030, and plans to create hubs for such exports with designated zones for warehousing.

For starters, the value limit for exports undertaken through courier services is being doubled to ₹10 lakh per consignment from ₹5 lakh, and IT systems would be deployed over the next six months by the Departments of Commerce, Post and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).



"We will also formulate a policy for e-commerce export hubs that will be designed to help e-commerce aggregators undertake everything from stocking to customs clearances and processing of returned orders," Director General of Foreign Trade Santosh Kumar Sarangi said. The hubs would also include a processing facility for last mile activities like labelling, testing and repackaging, as per the policy.

Coal India crosses FY23 output target of 700 mt

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Ltd. (CIL) said on Friday it has crossed the annual coal production target of 700 million tonne (mt) in 2022-23.

As of Thursday, March 30, the company produced 700.4 mt of coal, up 13% over 619.8 mt in the year-earlier period, the miner said in a statement.

"CIL has breached its challenging production target of 700 mt one day ahead of FY23 closure. CIL is likely to end FY23 with 703.6 mt output going by the current rate of production," it added.

FTP expands export promotion scheme to include PM MITRA

The Hindu Bureau

COIMBATORE

The new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) has added the Prime Minister Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel Parks (PM MITRA) scheme as an additional scheme eligible for benefits as Common Service Providers (CSP) under the Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme (EPCG).

Director General of Foreign Trade Santosh Kumar Sarangi said on Friday that between 2015 and 2020, the government introduced a special Advance Authorisation Scheme for export of articles of apparel and clothing accessories. Under the scheme, it allowed duty-free import of input fabric,

The old export scheme will continue to include apparel sector with self declaration added

including inter-lining for shipping articles of apparel and clothing accessories. Under the new FTP, this scheme will continue to cover the apparel and clothing sector in order to facilitate the prompt execution of export orders. Exporters will now also be allowed to self-declare.

Four more towns of export excellence are added to the list of 39 towns. These are Faridabad for apparel, Moradabad for handicrafts, Mirzapur for handmade carpets and da-

ri, and Varanasi for handloom and handicrafts. The aim is to give a thrust to cluster-based economic development. These towns get global recognition and brand credibility; financial assistance for marketing under the Market Access Initiative Scheme; visit to capacity building and technological services; and common service provider facility under EPCG scheme that helps increase competitiveness of entire cluster by enabling common use of capital goods for exports.

Naren Goenka, chairman Apparel Export Promotion Council, said the special Advance Authorisation Scheme's extension for apparel will enable more exporters to use it.

Core output rose 6% in Feb.

Production, however, fell 7.8% sequentially from January's level, with growth for the first month of 2023 revised upwards to 8.9%; fertiliser production led the expansion in output with a 22.2% surge

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Output across India's eight core sectors rose at a three-month-low pace of 6% in February, as growth eased from January's revised estimate of 8.9%, which was the highest up-tick in seven months.

Fertiliser production continued to lead growth with a 22.2% surge, while coal, steel and electricity production eased from double-digit growth in January to rise by a 7%-8.5% range during February. Cement production grew 7.3%, compared with January's 4.6% expansion.

Core slows

Combined output growth for the eight sectors that account for 40% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) slowed to a three-month low

- All eight sectors saw production contract month-on-month from January 2023
- Coal, steel and electricity output growth eased from January's double-digit pace to a 7%-8.5% range
- Cement output grew 7.3%, compared with January's 4.6% expansion

Crude oil output shrank 4.9%, the ninth successive contraction and the sharpest drop in as many months. Natural Gas and refinery products' growth moderated from about 5% in January to just over 3%.

IIP, which clocked a 5.2% uptick in January, is likely to see growth ease to about 4.5% in February, according to Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis. The sharp growth in fertiliser output, he reasoned, was partly driven by firms rebuilding inventories, and bolstered further by a low base effect in the year-earlier period when the segment had logged negative growth.

Core sectors' growth would likely moderate further in March due to unseasonal rainfall that would have dampened coal and electricity output, cautioned ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar.

The overall Index of Core Industries, which constitutes about 40% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), dropped 7.8% sequentially in February, with all eight sectors recording lower numbers.

increased to \$12.7 billion from \$11.5 billion a year earlier.

Private transfer receipts, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, amounted to \$30.8 billion, an increase of 31.7% from the year earlier.

Services exports reported a growth of 24.5% year-on-year on the back of rising exports of software, business and travel services. Net services receipts increased both sequentially and year-on-year.

Net outgo from the primary income account, mainly reflecting investment income payments,

Govt. raises rates on most small saving schemes, except PPF

Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

The Centre has raised interest rates on most small savings schemes for the April to June quarter, barring the Public Provident Fund (PPF) whose returns have been static at 7.1% for the last three years.

Returns on the Sukanya Samriddhi Account were, however, increased for the first time since April 2020 – to 8% from 7.6% – while the Senior Citizens Savings scheme would now fetch 8.2% instead of 8%.

The Finance Ministry, which notified the new rates, also lifted the rate on National Savings Certificate from 7% to 7.7% and Kisan Vikas Patra from 7.2% to 7.5%. The monthly income scheme will deliver 7.4% (from 7.1%).

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

"As expected, small savings interest rates have been hiked by 10-70 basis points," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA. "This should help garner steady deposits in the coming quarter, in light of the expected rate hike from the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee in April, which would then get transmitted to bank deposit rates."

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

The rate of return on 1-, 2- and 3-year time deposits has been raised by 10 basis points (0.10%) for the next quarter, yielding 6.8%, 6.9% and 7%, respectively, while 5-year time deposits will earn 7.5% (7%). The rate paid on 5-year recurring deposits is being raised from 5.8% to 6.2%.

Harmanpreet's 171 changed Australia as a team and shaped how we wanted to play: Healy

The wicketkeeper-bat offers an insight into how an already dominant side took its game to the next level after being knocked out of a World Cup by one of cricket's greatest innings. She also talks about the WPL, her Aussie teammates and the other cricketers in her family



Everybody wants to beat Australia, which we understand. We are sort of hunted at the top

INTERVIEW

Alyssa Healy

P.K. Ajith Kumar

Alyssa Healy greets you with a bright smile on a pleasant Thursday morning at Trident Hotel on Mumbai's Marine Drive. The hotel is about a 10-minute walk from Brabourne Stadium, where a fortnight earlier she played a stunning knock.

Chasing Royal Challengers Bangalore's modest 138 in the Women's Premier League, she cracked an unbeaten 96 off 47 balls to lead UP Warriorz to a 10-wicket victory. That was only the latest of her big, brutally aggressive innings.

Healy is marvelously destructive and, to add to the bowlers' woes, she bats deep. In last year's World Cup final against England at Christchurch, the Australian wicketkeeper-opener played one of the great ODI innings, smashing 170 off 138 balls.

During an exclusive interview with *The Hindu*, the smiling assassin spoke about being part of an all-conquering Australian team, captaining a franchise in the WPL's maiden season, the rivalry with India, growing up with the great Ellyse Perry and how a knock by Harmanpreet Kaur forced a change in Australia's approach to ODI cricket and even impacted her own career. Excerpts:

What has the experience of the WPL been like?

It has been a great learning experience for me. We have got a coach that is English [Jon Lewis], the captain who is an Australian and we are playing in an Indian league; to have been able to pull them together is great.

Has the WPL lived up to your expectations?



No matter what we tried that day and no matter what we bowled, [Harmanpreet] just found a way to hit it to the boundary

Yes, it has. I thought it would be frenetic, exciting and somewhat chaotic at times. It has lived up to all the hype. I think the support for the WPL has been the best part. The viewership has been great. And every team has got sponsors all over their shirts.

Your husband Mitchell Starc was also in India, with the Australian men's team. And he had a good ODI series, taking eight wickets.

He really did well and the boys did a great job. He loves that white new ball. It looks like he is in good nick and is bowling fast. It's obviously hard to beat India in their home conditions, especially in a World Cup year.

Harmanpreet Kaur's 171 not out (115b) in the 2017 World Cup semifinal changed women's cricket in India forever. How do you look back at that knock and Australia's loss?

That changed the Australian group as a team and reshaped the way we wanted to play ODI cricket, and we have had a fair bit of success, which has been amazing. No matter what we tried that day and no matter what we bowled, she just found a way to hit it to the boundary. I remember us thinking we needed to come up with some different stuff. Everything that we threw at her wasn't good enough. That was a remarkable innings from her and it will stand out for a long time. It was a real turning point for the group and me personally as well.

After that World Cup, there was a dramatic change in your career. You were promoted to open on a permanent basis.

Before that, I was batting in the middle and probably didn't know what my role was. So

from that moment on, we reinvented how we wanted to play One-Day cricket and that included me at the top of the order; I had never really got to grab the opportunity when it came to me earlier. At that time, being 27 and where I was in my career, it gave me the confidence to do better. And I am blessed I have always got excellent opening partners, like Rachael Haynes and Beth Mooney.

How does it feel being part of one of the greatest cricket teams – male or female – of all time? You belong to a golden generation of players like Meg Lanning, Ellyse Perry, Beth Mooney, Ashleigh Gardner, Megan Schutt, Tahlia McGrath...

It's pretty amazing. It's exciting that we have been able to create a culture where players can come in and be the best in the world. Tahlia can come in and perform straightforward and Ash can come in and be an amazing all-rounder. To me that's the most pleasing aspect. And I've got to play alongside Meg and Ellyse, who will probably go down as two of the best players of all time, and that's cool. What we have managed to achieve as a team is the most satisfying part. Yes, I am grateful I was born in this era and got to play for this generation of players. I think the way we have been able to set it up, it's going to be successful for an extended period of time.

You first played with Perry when you were kids and have now won eight World Cups together. How good was little Ellyse? Did you imagine that she would become the cricketer she did?

Yes, I remember her and Meg standing out pretty early. Ellyse was better than half the boys she played against. It was no surprise that she was picked for Australia when she was 16. Her career has lived up to the expectations.

You didn't do badly while playing with the boys, either. You kept wicket to them, didn't you?

Yes, I held my own. I have played with boys all along, and that has helped.

How much help do you get from your uncle, former Australian wicketkeeper Ian Healy?

I don't get as much help from him as probably everybody thinks, but that's okay. I didn't grow up in Queensland. When I started playing for Australia, he played as much of a role as he could. It is great to have someone at the other end of the phone to chat about wicketkeeping. What I really love about him is a 'keeping coach is that he is really simple and old school. And my 'keeping is old school, too.

Which 'keepers have you looked up to?

Uncle Ian obviously, but if you look at my style of keeping, it's more like Brad Haddin. In my opinion, Tim Paine is one of the best glovemen in the world. So I look up to probably the three best glovemen Australia has had.

Australia and India and have been involved in some great contests in women's cricket over the last few years...

I think it is ultra-competitive, isn't it? Everybody wants to beat Australia, which we understand. We are sort of hunted at the top. India are probably the most competitive side in that bracket outside England. You can see how much India want to beat Australia in key moments, and I think that is great for the sport. That competition is going to drive the game forward. Yes, it can get tense in the field at times, but our rivalry is just going to make the game better.

STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Carlos Alcaraz	19	7,420	18
2	Novak Djokovic	35	7,160	15
3	Stefanos Tsitsipas	24	5,770	21
4	Casper Ruud	24	5,560	24
5	Daniil Medvedev	27	4,330	23
6	Felix Auger-Aliassime	22	3,415	27
7	Andrey Rublev	25	3,390	25
8	Holger Rune	19	3,325	26
9	Hubert Hurkacz	26	3,065	22
10	Taylor Fritz	25	2,975	23
11	Jannik Sinner	21	2,925	20
12	Cameron Norrie	27	2,815	23
13	Rafael Nadal	36	2,715	13
14	Frances Tiafoe	25	2,710	23
15	Alexander Zverev	25	2,580	19

Top Indians ▶

Sumit Nagal
Rank 374 ▲ 5 spots

Mukund Sasikumar
Rank 401 ▲ 2 spots

WTA Women's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Iga Swiatek	21	9,975	17
2	Aryna Sabalenka	24	6,740	19
3	Jessica Pegula	29	5,605	17
4	Caroline Garcia	29	4,990	23
5	Ons Jabeur	28	4,976	16
6	Coco Gauff	19	4,401	18
7	Elena Rybakina	23	3,720	22
8	Daria Kasatkina	25	3,375	24
9	Belinda Bencic	26	3,360	21
10	Maria Sakkari	27	3,191	23
11	Veronica Kudermetova	25	2,470	21
12	Petra Kvitova	33	2,377	18
13	Barbora Krejčíková	27	2,324	18
14	Beatriz Haddad Maia	26	2,276	25
15	Liudmila Samsonova	24	2,191	21

Top Indians ▶

Ankita Raina
Rank 226 ▲ 15 spots

Karman Thandi
Rank 272 ▲ 4 spots

English Premier League Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Arsenal	28	22	3	6	66	26	40	69
2	Man. City	27	19	4	4	67	25	42	61
3	Man. United	26	15	5	6	41	35	6	50
4	Tottenham	28	15	4	9	52	40	12	49
5	Newcastle	26	12	11	3	39	19	20	47
6	Liverpool	26	12	6	8	47	29	18	42
7	Brighton	25	12	6	7	46	31	15	42
8	Brentford	27	10	12	5	43	34	9	42
9	Fulham	27	11	6	10	38	37	1	39
10	Chelsea	27	10	8	9	29	28	1	38
11	Aston Villa	27	11	5	11	35	39	-4	38
12	Palace	28	6	9	13	22	38	-16	27
13	Wolves	28	7	6	15	22	41	-19	27
14	Leeds	27	6	8	13	35	44	-9	26
15	Everton	28	6	8	14	22	40	-18	26
16	Nott. Forest	27	6	8	13	22	49	-27	26
17	Leicester	27	7	4	16	38	47	-9	25
18	West Ham	26	6	6	14	24	34	-10	24
19	Bournemouth	27	6	6	15	25	54	-29	24
20	Southampton	28	6	5	17	23	46	-23	23

Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Barcelona	26	22	2	2	49	9	40	68



“

It's a big honour to be compared to Babe Ruth. But it's a small sample size. I want to try and improve each year and hopefully after it's over, it will be somewhat comparable

OHTANI

‘Shotime’ Ohtani – the unicorn on a blockbuster run

The Japanese baseball star is a jaw-dropping outlier: a two-way virtuoso, elite with both bat and ball in a sport that has become increasingly specialised

Srinivasan Ramani

Virtuoso, versatile, unicorn – these are the adjectives that emanate from every baseball analyst and aficionado asked to describe Shohei Ohtani.

The 6'4" Japanese player is indeed in a class of his own – a true all-rounder in a sport that has become specialised like no other in recent years.

Ohtani is the only man to have played as both lead pitcher and everyday batter in the same Major League Baseball (MLB) season in a century. He won the Most Valuable Player (MVP) award for his two-way excellence, batting southpaw and pitching right-handed, in 2021 and finished a close second in 2022.

He topped these achievements with a spectacular performance for Japan in the World Baseball Classic (WBC) last month. He starred in his country's third triumph – the most for any nation in the competition's five editions – and was the tournament's MVP.

Ohtani wasn't just pulling double duty against the United States, baseball's powerhouse cradle, in the WBC final in Miami. He scored a hit, walked once and, in the last (ninth) inning, turned closing pitcher – a specialised role requiring a different mentality to the starting pitcher's.

The US was trailing 2-3 but had three recent MLB MVPs lined up to bat – Mookie Betts (2018), Mike Trout (2019) and Paul Goldschmidt (2022) – following pinch-hitter Jeff McNeal.

Ohtani walked McNeal in a rocky start, but quickly recovered and got Betts and McNeal out in a double play, setting up an encounter with Los Angeles Angels teammate Trout,

“

He's a very meticulous preparer. He prepares for hitting and pitching to the nth degree

MIKE SIOSCIA
Former LA Angels manager

one of the best hitters of this generation, a three-time MVP and also US captain.

It was showtime baseball and a coincidental moment for the ages. The millions of fans – most of whom were watching on TV sets in Japan – could not have wished for anything better. Trout vs. Ohtani in a must-deliver situation: a power-hitter facing a power-pitcher. Their shared history with the underperforming Angels – the team has not advanced to the MLB playoffs in their five years together – made the match-up all the more fascinating.

Ohtani had elected to play for the Angels after an early switch in 2018 from Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB), Japan's premier league, widely considered the best baseball tourney outside the MLB. He had already wowed scouts and observers with his unique two-way play in the NPB, winning multiple titles and awards by the time he was 23.

Finally, Babe Ruth has company
Ohtani promised to become the first two-way operator in the MLB in nearly a century. The last player with respectable pitching and hitting numbers over a single season was the legendary George Herman 'Babe' Ruth in 1919, when he hit 29 home runs in 543 batting appearances, pitched 133 1/3 innings and had a 9-5 winning record with an earned run average (ERA), runs allowed per 9 innings pitched of 2.97.

Ohtani had a tough start in the US, injuries limiting him to a 'designated hitter' role – a batter who does not field. Following the well-known but risky Tommy John surgery to repair his elbow, he worked his way into two-way

form only after the pandemic-hit 2020 season.

In 2021, 'Shotime', as Ohtani was soon to be termed, was fully on.

In a dazzling season, Ohtani hit 46 home runs (third in the league) – most of them humongous blasts off the bat with high exit velocity – and recorded a batting average of 0.257 and an on-base plus slugging average of 0.965 (fifth in the league), with 100 runs batted in (RBIs) and 103 runs scored. As a pitcher, he went 9-2, with a 3.18 ERA.

His two-way excellence helped him achieve an estimated Wins above Replacement player (WAR) rating – a measure of a player's value in terms of how many additional wins he would be worth over a replacement-level or fill-in player – of 9.0, the highest in the league. It was no surprise that he was adjudged the league MVP.

In 2022, he was even more well-rounded. His pitching reached new heights, earning him 15 wins (and 9 losses) in 28 starts, 219 strikeouts, a stupendous 2.33 ERA, and 6.2 WAR just as a pitcher. His batting average increased to 0.273, with 34 home runs, 95 RBIs and 90 runs. Ohtani had again reached elite levels both as batter and pitcher. His 9.6 WAR was second only to New York Yankees power-hitter and MVP Aaron Judge (10.6).

So, when Ohtani faced Trout, it was an elite match-up.

Ohtani started with a slider that found the catcher's mitt just outside the strike zone, for Ball 1. He followed that with a 100mph fastball bang within the strike zone. Trout whiffed – Strike 1. The next pitch was another 100mph fastball but it just missed the strike zone, for Ball 2. The fourth pitch was a repeat of the second – an accurate 100mph fastball, for Strike 2. The fifth pitch was a 102mph heater that kept low and missed the strike zone, for Ball 3.

Asked later about his strategy, Ohtani

revealed that he decided to stick to fast balls after the first lower-velocity slider, as he sensed that Trout seemed to be expecting variety, not straight-up heat. With a full count (3 balls and 2 strikes), however, Ohtani decided to rely on precision and skill in his sixth pitch – a beautiful 87mph slider that swayed away from Trout's bat-swing in a perfect trajectory, delivering Strike 3 and a 3-2 victory for Japan.

Over the course of a fortnight of baseball, Ohtani had a dream run with both bat and ball – 0.435 batting average with a home run and several key hits (including a pivotal ninth-inning hit against Mexico in the semifinals), a 1.86 ERA as pitcher and a vital save as closing pitcher in a nerve-racking final. His MVP selection was a no-brainer.

Winning a battle on two fronts

Being an all-rounder requires an inordinate level of skill and work. Batters need to develop strong levels of anticipation, hand-eye coordination, power and balance and require hours in batting cages to hone these skills. Pitchers need to build arm and shoulder strength and practise for hours and hours before their muscle memory can execute a variety of skills with precision.

Ohtani's rigorous regimen has allowed him to maintain high levels in both facets, with his natural athleticism giving him the added advantage of elite speed when base-running and strength when power-hitting. He manned the outfield capably in Japan but has been spared those duties in the MLB because of the already heavy workload.

Ohtani's elite numbers as both batter and pitcher make him an eye-catching outlier, with barely any precedence in the professional annals of America's favourite pastime. One of the most unique athletes in the world, he is a bona fide unicorn.

GAME THEORY

Measuring a supreme creative force

Mesut Ozil's retirement brings to a close an illustrious career which contained a World Cup triumph, trophies in three countries, and 121 goals and 262 assists for club and country. A look at the midfield maestro's career in numbers:



6 Ozil has been the top assist provider in at least one edition or season of six major competitions: World Cup, Euros, Bundesliga, LaLiga, Premier League, Champions League

10 One of only five players to have created at least 10 chances from open play in three different World Cups (since 1966). Lionel Messi, Diego Maradona, Wolfgang Overath and Thomas Muller the others

23 Goals scored for Germany

81 Assists notched up for Real Madrid (all competitions). His most for a club; includes a streak of topping LaLiga's charts for three straight seasons

98 Goals scored in his club career

222 Assists supplied in his club career

PICTURE THIS



Horse pursuit

A snapshot of the action from the Cheltenham Racing Festival recently held at scenic Prestbury Park in Gloucestershire, England.

The Cheltenham Festival is both historic and lucrative, its roots dating back well over a century and the prize money on

offer second only to the Grand National in the United Kingdom.

A supreme test for chasers and hurdlers, it was described as 'our Olympics' by champion jockey Tony McCoy.

The Festival has expanded over the years: it's now a four-day affair with 28 races.

The Stayers' Hurdle, first run in

1912, is the oldest race. The Gold Cup is the most valuable non-handicap chase in Britain, with a total prize fund of £625,000.

Cheltenham's boisterous atmosphere is famous: the iconic 'Cheltenham roar' has entered pop culture, even being sampled in a dance anthem.

The Festival isn't free from

controversy, however.

There were fears in 2020 that it had increased the spread of COVID-19, with one visitor saying the punters were "packed like sardines". And the number of horse injuries and fatalities is often a subject of investigation by the British Horseracing Authority.

EASY DECISION

Having an Impact Player a luxury, says Super Kings skipper Dhoni



Chennai Super Kings skipper M.S. Dhoni said, "It's a luxury to have (Impact Player). It becomes slightly easy to take the decision because you can use it at any time," Dhoni said. "The influence of an all-rounder has become slightly less because of the rule," added the four-time IPL-winning captain.

NO HURRY

Want Pant to take his recovery slow and easy, says Warner



Delhi Capitals skipper David Warner on Friday said the team wants regular captain Rishabh Pant to take it "slow and easy" as he recovers from the horrific car accident. "He's looking forward to supporting us as much as he can. I am sure he'll try his best to come and see us. But we want him to take it slow and easy," said Warner.

SPECIAL EXPERIENCE

Warner looking forward to captaining Delhi Capitals



David Warner is looking forward to the experience of captaining Delhi Capitals. "We have got a great bunch of men in our team and a great support staff all round," the Australian opener said. "We are looking forward to the game (on Saturday)." Coach Ricky Ponting is delighted the IPL is back in the home-and-away format.

DUGOUT UPDATE

Mumbai Indians names Warrier as replacement for injured Bumrah



Mumbai Indians has signed Tamil Nadu pacer Sandeep Warrier as Jasprit Bumrah's replacement for the Indian Premier League's 2023 edition. Warrier has joined the five-time champion team ahead of its season-opener Royal Challengers Bangalore in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Titans trump Super Kings, begin campaign in style

Gill's sublime innings complements Rashid and Joseph's efforts with the ball; Ruturaj smashes a 50-ball 92 to lay a solid foundation, but the Chennai side fritters away the advantage

IPL-16

N. Sudarshan
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Titans made a winning start to its title defence, beating Chennai Super Kings by five wickets, in the Indian Premier League opener at the Narendra Modi stadium here on Friday.

Set 179 to win, it appeared that the Titans had let the chase drag on for too long. With 34 needed off four overs, Deepak Chahar and debutant Ravidhanshangarh gave away just 11 runs and the latter even dismissed Vijay Shankar, the home side's last specialist batter.

But Rashid Khan smashed Chahar for a massive six over mid-wicket and edged one over short third-man for four in the penultimate over before Rahul Tewatia finished it off with a six and a four off Tushar Deshpande (IPL's first-ever Impact Player).

Trademark shots

For Titans, Shubman Gill (63, 36b, 6x4, 3x6) played the anchor. Much of his batting was workmanlike, but it was not without his trademark shots – a short-arm jab for four, a pick-up hit for six and a terrific inside-out maximum off Ravidhanshangarh.

For the second wicket, he put on 53 off 34 balls with Sai Sudharsan, the



Stars of the night: Ruturaj was all grace and timing as he put the Titans attack to the sword while Rashid took the key wickets of Moeen and Stokes. Gill then took over. VIJAY SONEJI

Impact Player substitute for Kane Williamson, who badly injured his right knee while saving a six.

The 26-year-old's batting stood out for its grace and timing, and was devoid of the frenzied stroke-play that is commonplace in T20s. But for a direct hit Gill missed when he was on 36, it was a chanceless innings.

Gaikwad's magnificent 92 (50b, 4x4, 9x6).

The 26-year-old's batting stood out for its grace and timing, and was devoid of the frenzied stroke-play that is commonplace in T20s. But for a direct hit Gill missed when he was on 36, it was a chanceless innings.

Ruturaj started with two punched fours off Hardik Pandya in the second over and welcomed Josh Little – the first cricketer from Ireland to play in the IPL – with a six over fine-leg. Though Rashid was at his stifling best (4-0-26-2), Titans leaked runs from

the other end. Ruturaj creamed Hardik for consecutive sixes over long-off and smashed Alzarri Joseph for three maximums in the arc between fine-leg and deep backward square-leg. His half-century came off just 23 balls. However, CSK's momentum shifted for the

worse from the 13th over. From 120 for four in 12.3 overs, M.S. Dhoni's men couldn't manage single hit to the fence for 21 balls, with Joseph (4-0-33-2) bowling outstandingly well to concede just 11 from two overs.

With Ruturaj's dismissal eight runs short of a century, there was no end-overs flourish. That ultimately cost CSK the match.



Next assignment

CSK: April 3 vs. LSG
Chennai, 7.30 p.m.

GT: April 4 vs. DC
Delhi, 7.30 p.m.

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Devon Conway b Shami 1 (6b),
Ruturaj Gaikwad c Gill b Joseph 92 (50b, 4x4, 9x6), Moeen Ali c
Saha b Rashid 23 (17b, 4x4, 1x6),
Ben Stokes c Saha b Rashid 7 (6b,
1x4), Ambati Rayudu b Little 12
(12b, 1x6), Shivam Dube c Rashid
b Shami 19 (16b, 1x6), Ravindra
Jadeja c Vijay Shankar b Joseph 1
(2b), M.S. Dhoni (not out) 14 (7b,
1x4, 1x6), Mitchell Santner (not
out) 1 (3b); Extras (b-1, lb-6,
nb-1); 8; Total (for seven wkt. in
20 overs): 178.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-14 (Conway, 2.2 overs), 2-50
(Moeen, 5.5), 3-70 (Stokes, 7.4),
4-121 (Rayudu, 12.5), 5-151
(Ruturaj, 17.1), 6-153 (Jadeja,
17.4), 7-163 (Dube, 18.3).

TITANS BOWLING

Shami 4-0-29-2, Hardik 3-0-28-0,
Little 4-0-41-1, Rashid 4-0-26-2,
Joseph 4-0-33-2, Dayal 1-0-14-0.

GUJARAT TITANS

Widdhiman Saha c Dube b
Hangarhkar 25 (16b, 2x4, 2x6),
Shubman Gill c Ruturaj b
Deshpande 63 (36b, 6x4, 3x6). B.
Sai Sudharsan (**Impact Player in place of Kane Williamson**) c
Dhoni b Hangarhkar 22 (17b,
3x4), Hardik Pandya b Jadeja 8
(11b), Vijay Shankar c Santner b
Hangarhkar 27 (21b, 2x4, 1x6),
Rahul Tewatia (not out) 14 (6b,
1x4, 1x6), Rashid Khan (not out)
10 (3b, 1x4, 1x6); Extras (b-6, w-4,
nb-2); 12; Total (for five wkt. in
19.2 overs): 182.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-37 (Saha, 3.5), 2-90 (Sudharsan,
9.3), 3-111 (Hardik, 12.1), 4-138
(Gill, 14.6), 5-156 (Vijay Shankar,
17.6).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING

Deepak Chahar 4-0-29-0,
Deshpande (**Impact Player in place of Rayudu**) 3.2-0-51-1,
Hangarhkar 4-0-36-3, Santner
4-0-32-0, Jadeja 4-0-28-1.

Toss: Titans; **PoM:** Rashid.
Gujarat Titans won by five
wickets with four balls to spare.

Rebuilt teams PBKS and KKR vie for a winning start

M.R. Praveen Chandran

Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders carry the same predicament and trepidation and it will be a battle of nerves when the two sides square off in their opening IPL match at the I.S. Bindra Stadium here on Saturday.

With both sides going through an overhaul with new captains, new backroom staff and forced changes due to injuries, the similarities are striking. However, both the teams are keen to start the season on a high. Kings have been the perennial underachievers and their record against Knight Riders is not glittering either.

No-holds barred

Last season, Kings played a high-risk, no-holds-barred attacking batting without desired result.

This season, Kings, under coach Trevor Bayliss, will approach the games pragmatically. "We will try to keep things as simple as



Seasoned pro: Dhawan leads Punjab Kings' training session.

R.V. MOORTHY

Issues aplenty for Capitals as they take on Super Giants

P.K. Ajith Kumar

LUCKNOW

How Delhi Capitals will fill the void left by Rishabh Pant's absence has been one of the biggest questions ahead of the 16th season of the IPL. That will be answered – at least partially – on Saturday when Capitals take on Lucknow Super Giants at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Cricket Stadium here.

It could be part-timer Sarfaraz Khan or new recruit Abishek Porel, ac-

cording to coach Ricky Ponting. Capitals also have to deal with the absence of the South African pace duo of Anrich Nortje and Lungi Ngidi, who are on national duty. Capitals will have to depend on Indian seam options, which include Khaleel Ahmed, Chetan Sakariya, Ishant Sharma and Mukesh Kumar, while for spin there are Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel.

When it comes to batting, in skipper David Warner, Prithvi Shaw, the in-

form Mitchell Marsh, Rovman Powell, Rilee Rossouw, Phil Salt and Manish Pandey, Capitals have a problem of plenty.

As for the Lucknow batting, it has to cope with the absence of Quinton de Kock, so there will be more responsibility on the likes of skipper K.L. Rahul, Deepak Hooda, Nicholas Pooran, Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis and Krunal Pandya. For wickets, the host will look to the likes of Mark Wood, Ravi Bishnoi and Avesh Khan.



Gearing up: Super Giants will be keen to begin with a win. PTI

Feeling the energy of the city, says Flower



New entrant: The Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow, makes its debut. PTI

P.K. Ajith Kumar

LUCKNOW

Andy Flower is glad that he could experience the freedom of feeling the spirit of cricket in India for the first time at an IPL.

"This is my first IPL without the restrictions around Covid," the Lucknow Super Giants coach said ahead of his team's first match of the season, against Delhi Capitals. "For us playing on our own ground in front of our own supporters and being in the city and feeling the energy of the city it feels really special."

The former Zimbabwean captain said the team's foreign players, as well as the young Indians, were taken by the excitement and energy of the Lucknow population a few nights ago when they did an open bus tour ride.

Flower welcomes the new rules in the IPL. "I quite enjoy the tweaks to the rules in the game," he said. "One of the great things about our game is the strategic and tactical element to it. And it can be like a game of chess... The teams probably will have two sets of eleven (for batting first and second)."

Today's matches

Mohali, 3.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 30

PBKS 10 | KKR 20

PREVIOUS MEETING

KKR won by six wickets, 2022

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA APP



Lucknow, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 2

LSG 2 | DC 0

PREVIOUS MEETING

LSG won by six runs, 2022

IN BRIEF



Ex-England captain Vaughan cleared of racism charges

Former England cricket captain Michael Vaughan was on Friday cleared of charges that he used racist language when referring to a group of four players of South Asian ethnicity before a match for Yorkshire in 2009. One of the four, Pakistan-born Azeem Rafiq, alleged Vaughan used the term "you lot". A Cricket Discipline Commission report said it was "not satisfied on the balance of probabilities" that Vaughan spoke the words he was alleged to have used.



Young takes New Zealand to ODI series win over Sri Lanka

New Zealand beat Sri Lanka by six wickets in Friday's third ODI in Hamilton, ending the visitors' hopes of direct World Cup qualification. New Zealand won the series 2-0.

The scores: Sri Lanka 157 in 41.3 overs (Pathum Nissanka 57; Matt Henry 3/14) lost to New Zealand 159/4 in 32.5 overs (Will Young 86 n.o., Henry Nicholls 44 n.o.).

SAI to inquire into Bengaluru girls hostel incident

The Sports Authority of India on Friday formed an internal committee to inquire into a disciplinary breach by a student at the SAI Diploma Girls Hostel in Bengaluru. A SAI release stated that on March 28 a trainee at the hostel was allegedly filmed by another student at the common girls' washroom of the institute. "The Committee has been directed to submit its report at the earliest. SAI has also facilitated the alleged victim in helping her lodge a police complaint. Considering the sensitivity of the issue, the matter was reported to the police and on March 29, and the FIR was lodged," the statement read. SAI officials have also suspended the alleged offender and asked her to vacate the hostel after clearance from police.



Rybalkina beats Pegula to reach Miami final

Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina reached the Miami Open women's final beating American World No. 3 Jessica Pegula 7-6(3), 6-4 on Thursday.

Other results: **Quarterfinals:** Women: Petra Kvitova bt Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-4, 3-6, 6-3; Men: Carlos Alcaraz bt Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-2; Daniil Medvedev bt Chris Eubanks 6-3 7-5; Karen Khachanov bt Francisco Cerundolo 6-3 6-2.

Ankita Raina battles past Gao Xinyu, enters semifinals

Ankita Raina fought for three hours and eight minutes to beat Gao Xinyu of China 3-6, 6-3, 7-5 in the quarterfinals of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Jakarta on Friday.

The results: \$25,000 ITF women, Jakarta, Indonesia: **Quarterfinals:** Ankita Raina bt Gao Xinyu (Chn) 3-6, 6-3, 7-5. **Doubles (quarterfinals):** Guo Hanyu (Chn) & Hong Yi Cody Wong (Hkg) bt Rutuja Bhosale & Peangtarn Plipuech (Tha) 6-3, 6-4.

LIVE TELECAST

NBA: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 8 a.m. **Formula One:** Australian GP (Qualifying), F1 TV Pro & F1 TV App, 10.30 a.m. **BWF:** Spain Masters, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 3.30 p.m. **IPL:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 3.30 & 7.30 p.m. **Premier League:** SS Select 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 5, 7.30 & 10 p.m. **LaLiga:** Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 5.30, 7.45, 10 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday) **Serie A:** Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 6.30, 9.30 p.m. & 12.15 a.m. (Sunday) **Bundesliga:** Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 7 & 10 p.m.

Sindhu makes her first semifinals of the season

She gets the better of Denmark's Blichfeldt in straight games to set up a meeting with Min; Japan's Nishimoto proves too good for Srikanth yet again



Shifting gears: Sindhu had sedate start before turning it on against Blichfeldt. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

MADRID MASTERS

Press Trust of India
MADRID

Double Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu cruised into the semifinals even as compatriot K. Srikanth crashed out of the Madrid Spain Masters here on Friday. Sindhu got the better of World No. 19 Mia Blichfeldt of Denmark 21-14, 21-17 to reach her first semifinal of the year.

Srikanth, on the other hand, lost to top seed Japanese shuttler Kenta Nishimoto 18-21, 15-21 in the men's singles quarterfinals of the Super 300 event.

Sindhu, who is seeded second, has been struggling to find her feet since returning from a long injury lay off. The 27-year-old has slipped out of the top 10 in the world rankings and until now hadn't been able to cross the second round in

the last few tournaments in 2023.

After a sedate start to the match, the former World champion completely dominated the second half of play to take first game comfortably.

Bouncing back

Sindhu, trailing for most part of the second game, made an impressive comeback fighting from 6-12 to register a straight game win. Sindhu will clash with the unseeded Yeo Jia Min of Singapore for a place in the final.

Earlier, fifth-seeded Srikanth, a former World No.1, showed flashes of brilliance but the inconsistency, that has plagued him all season, once proved his downfall. It was Srikanth's third loss to the Japanese shuttler.

The results (quarterfinals):
Women: P.V. Sindhu bt Mia Blichfeldt (Den) 21-14, 21-17.
Men: Kenta Nishimoto (Jpn) bt K. Srikanth 21-18, 21-15.

Wimbledon lifts ban on Russian and Belarusian players



Follow the rule: Russian and Belarusian players must comply with 'appropriate conditions' when competing this year. AFP

Associated Press

LONDON

man Ian Hewitt said in a statement.

The players cannot receive funding from the Russian or Belarusian states, including sponsorship from companies operated or controlled by the states.

Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus and Russian players Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev are among the players who can return.

"We also consider alignment between the Grand Slams to be increasingly important in the current tennis environment," the All England Club said.

India has the pace firepower to trouble Australia: Taylor

WTC FINAL

Press Trust of India DUBAI

Former New Zealand skipper Ross Taylor has backed the Indian pace unit to trouble Australian batters in the World Test Championship final scheduled at the Oval in London from June 7-11.

Taylor, himself a World Test Championship winner, feels Indian fast bowlers have the wherewithal to create problems for Australia even though Jasprit Bumrah will be sidelined due to back surgery.

"Any time you play in England, conditions and the weather play a big part," Taylor told the ICC website.

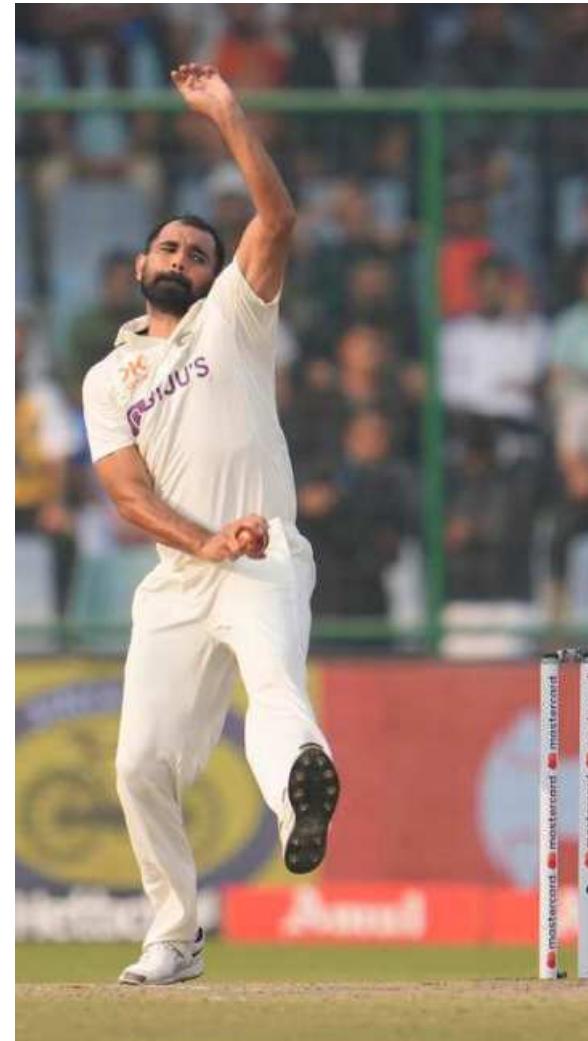
"Any time you think of Australia and India, and also you're playing on a neutral ground, the seamers play a big part," he said.

"I wouldn't rule out this Indian side. They have had a lot of success over there in years past, they have a few of these seamers," he said.

While spin played a key role in the recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy in India, Taylor expects pacers of both the teams to rule the roost in the WTC Final.

Taylor is confident that even without Bumrah, India has enough options in the pace department to make an impact.

"Very tough to replace someone like Bumrah. He has been fantastic in all three formats and is the



Swing factor: Shami will relish bowling with the Dukes ball in English conditions. AP

leader of their bowling attack," he said.

"But I think there's still enough depth in this Indian line-up to trouble the Australian side. (Mohammed) Shami and Co. are fantastic in these conditions.

"When you consider the India attack, (Mohammed) Siraj and [the

others] are also very good with the Dukes ball.

"I think there are still a lot of (India) seamers that are fantastic and enjoy bowling with the Dukes ball. Umesh Yadav also bowls 140-plus.

"They will relish the opportunity to bowl with the Dukes ball and in English conditions," Taylor added.

Alonso fastest; Verstappen third behind Leclerc in practice

AUSTRALIAN GP

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso (1:18.887s) topped the timesheets ahead of Ferrari ace Charles Leclerc in a rain-hit second practice at the Australian Grand Prix on Friday, but Red Bull's World champion Max Verstappen was fastest for the day.

Leclerc, who won in Australia last year, came second nearly half a second adrift. But Verstappen, who came in third, had clocked 1:18.790s which was better than Alonso's second-session best.

Red Bull is attempting to score a third consecutive 1-2 finish for the first time in the team's history in Melbourne after the dominance in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Verstappen's



Topping the chart: Alonso was better than Leclerc in the second practice. AFP

teammate and Jeddah winner Sergio Perez came seventh.

Hamilton 13th

Seven-time World champion Lewis Hamilton was a surprise second in the opening practice but could only manage a disappointing 13th in FP2. "This morning was good, but this afternoon wasn't as good," the Briton said.

His teammate George Russell was fourth ahead of Ferrari's Carlos Sainz, with Alpine's Esteban Ocon sixth. McLaren's Lando Norris, Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg and Pierre Gasly in the other Alpine rounded out the top 10.

Williams' Logan Sargeant, who had an electrical problem during the first practice, failed to complete a lap.

The forecast for Sunday's race is dry.

Sabeera Haris shoots 64 in women's trap

Sports Bureau

63.

National champion Kirti Gupta shot 64 to be in the 27th place after three rounds in women's trap, in the shotgun World Cup in Larnaca, Cyprus, on Friday.

In the men's section, bronze medalist in the last World Cup, Prithviraj Tondaiman, competing in the RPO section, shot 66, following rounds of 21, 24 and 21.

Creditable draw for Vaishali

FIDE WOMEN'S GP

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

R. Vaishali earned a creditable draw against joint top seed Aleksandra Goryachkina in the sixth round of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament here on Friday.

Vaishali gave nothing away to her rival, rated 143 points higher at 2576. Vaishali forced a draw in 35 moves after perpetual checks.

In the day's only decisive game, Kazakhstan's Bibisara Assaubayeva defeated Polina Shuvanova for her fourth victory.

China's Zhu Jiner also reached four points, by playing a game more than Bibisara, after drawing with Georgia's Nana Dzagnidze.

The results (sixth round): Aleksandra Goryachkina (FIDE, 2.5) drew with R. Vaishali (1); Zhu Jiner (Chn, 4) drew with Nana Dzagnidze (Geo, 2); Polina Shuvanova (FIDE, 2.5) lost to Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz, 4); Katerina Lagno (FIDE, 3) drew with Nino Batsashvili (Geo, 1.5); K. Humpy (2.5) and D. Harika (1.5) bye.

India beats Kyrgyzstan

Sports Bureau

The Indian boys beat Kyrgyzstan 2-0 in the match for the minor placings in the Asia-Oceania World Junior under-14 tennis tournament in Kuching, Malaysia, on Friday. In the match for the 13th place, India will play Uzbekistan.

In the semifinals, Japan beat Korea 2-1 and Pakistan beat Hong Kong by the same margin.

The results (play-off, 13-16th place): India bt Kyrgyzstan 2-0 (Rudra Batham bt Ridwan Loianov 6-2, 6-1; Shivtej Shirule bt Roman Kim 6-3, 6-1).

Napoli striker Osimhen injured, misses game against AC Milan

Press Trust of India

Napoli's scoring leader Victor Osimhen has an injured abductor muscle in his left leg and will miss Sunday's game against AC Milan, Napoli said Friday.

His condition will be evaluated next week," Napoli said. The injury raises questions over whether Osimhen will recover in time for the Champions League quarterfinals – also

against Milan – on April 12 and 18.

Osimhen has scored 21 goals in 24 Italian league appearances for Napoli this season, helping the southern club to a massive 19-point lead at the top of the standings.

Giovanni Simeone should replace Osimhen at center forward. The injury comes upon Osimhen's return from national team duty with Nigeria.

Esha and Rhythm gain dual entry for Baku WC

Sports Bureau

NEW DELHI

The NRAI slightly shuffled the team after gauging the performances in the recent World Cup in Bhopal.

The team: Men: Rifle:

Rudranksh Patil, Hriday Hazarika, Shahrukh Manne; Aishwarya Pratap Singh Tomar, Akhil Sheoran, Swapnil Kusale.

Pistol: Sarabjot Singh, Varun Tomar, Shiva Narwal; Anish Bhanwala, Vijayveer Sidhu, Ankur Goel.

Women: Rifle: Ramita Jindal, Tilotama Sen, Nancy Sifit Kaur Samra, Manini Kaushik, Anjum Moudgil.

Pistol: T.S. Divya, Esha Singh, Rhythm Sangwan; Manu Bhaker in sports pistol.

CM YK

AN-ND-NE