



BRIEF



A monkey sits on the lap of a woman, in Bikaner, Sunday.

Lock down

Jammu: The residents of a village in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda locked down a government primary school after a teacher was found in an inebriated condition during working hours. A video of the incident that happened in Chanti village on Saturday surfaced on social media, prompting authorities to initiate an inquiry against the accused.

FIR

Chandrapur: Police have registered a case of molestation against the MLA from Chimur Assembly constituency in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra on the complaint of a woman who also accused him of beating her husband, an officer said on Sunday.

Weather

High 36 Low 19

PM SLAMS RAHUL

'Questions raised in London on India's democracy'

Dharwad (K'taka), Mar 12 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday targeted Rahul Gandhi for his remarks on democracy in the country at an international forum and said no power in the world can harm India's democratic traditions.

Without naming Gandhi and referring to the Congress leader's remarks made in London -- that structures of Indian democracy are under "brutal attack", Modi termed it an insult to 12th century reformer



Basaveshwara, the people of Karnataka, India's great traditions and its citizens.

The PM's statement is being seen with political significance, as Basaveshwara is highly revered in Karnataka, especially by the dominant Lingayat community who form the major vote base of the ruling BJP. Modi

PM discredited the country....

Gandhi has hit back, alleging that it is the Prime Minister who discredited the country's achievements since Independence. "I remember him saying there was a lost decade... there is unlimited corruption in India. I remember him saying this abroad... You have not heard his speech where he said nothing has been done in India since Independence, insulting every Indian parent, grandparent?" he said.

was on his sixth visit this year to Karnataka, where Assembly elections are due by May.

"I have come to the land of Bhagwan Basaveshwar and I'm feeling blessed. Among the contributions of Basaveshwara, most important is the establishment of Anubhava Mantapa, this democratic system is researched across the world, and there are several such things because of which we say India is not just the largest democracy, it is also the mother of democracy," he said.

Second leg of Budget session from today

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The second leg of the Budget session will commence on Monday with the government asserting that its priority is to pass the Finance Bill and the Opposition planning to raise issues like the action of central agencies against the BJP's political rivals and allegations against the Adani group.

The opposition parties will meet on Monday morning to evolve their strategy in both Houses of Parliament after protests by them on the Hindenburg-Adani issue overshadowed most of the first half of the Budget session.

Modi holds mega roadshow in JD-S bastion Mandya

Mandya (K'taka), Mar 12 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday threw flower petals back at the crowd, at several places as he was given a rousing welcome during a massive road show in this district headquarters city.

Modi enthusiastically waved at a large number of cheering crowd, who had lined up on both sides of the route, as the ruling BJP appeared focused on winning a good number of seats in Old Mysuru region, where it is traditionally weak. Assembly elections are due in May in Karnataka. The Prime Minister picked up the shower petals which got piled up on the bonnet of



his car and was seen hurling them back at the crowd. He also got down from his car and greeted folk artists who staged a performance in his welcome. Modi is in the district to dedicate the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway to the nation. The project involves 6-laning of the Bengaluru-Nidaghatta-Mysuru section of NH-275.

SATISH KAUSHIK DEATH

Farmhouse owner's estranged wife alleges foul play

Police to question her New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Delhi Police on Sunday said it will question the estranged wife of the owner of the farmhouse, where actor-filmmaker Satish Kaushik attended a party a day before his death, following her allegation that her husband "was planning to get rid" of him.

In a complaint addressed to the Delhi Police commissioner, the woman alleged that her husband

had borrowed Rs 15 crore from Kaushik and did not wish to return it.

The Delhi Police issued a statement saying an inquiry has been initiated into the allegations of foul play levelled by the woman. "An inspector-level officer from the South West district has been asked to probe the matter. The woman will be called for questioning and her statement will be recorded," it said. This comes a day after police denied any foul play in the actor's death.

Centre opposes validation of same sex marriages in SC

Cites personal laws, societal values New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Centre has opposed in the Supreme Court a batch of pleas seeking legal validation of same-sex marriage, saying it would cause a complete havoc with the delicate balance of personal laws and in accepted societal values.

In an affidavit before the Supreme Court which is scheduled to hear the matter on Monday, the govern-

ment submitted that despite the decriminalisation of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, the petitioners cannot claim a fundamental right for same-sex marriage to be recognised under the laws of the country. At the same time it submitted that though the Centre limits its recognition to heterosexual relationships, there may be other forms of marriages or unions or personal understandings of relationships between individuals in a society and these "are not unlawful". It said western decisions sans any basis in

Indian constitutional law jurisprudence cannot be imported in this context, while asserting that granting recognition to human relations is a legislative function and can never be a subject of judicial adjudication.

"Marriage, as an institution in law, has many statutory and other consequences under various legislative enactments. Therefore, any formal recognition of such human relationship cannot be regarded as just a privacy issue between two adults," it said.

Tribal bodies hold mega rally for 'Sarna' code

Threaten to boycott the 2024 LS polls if demand was not met Ranchi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Thousands of tribals from Jharkhand and other parts of the country held a mega rally here on Sunday to press for their demand to include 'Sarna' as a separate religion for indigenous people in the next census. Donning their traditional attire, men and women, belonging to various tribal communities, held placards and banners and raised slogans for implementation of



the 'Sarna' code, threatening to boycott the 2024 Lok Sabha polls if the demand was not met before the general elections. A separate 'Sarna' code in the census is the key to a distinct identity for tribals as without it, they are classified as Hindus or Muslims or Christians.



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Habitual offender held for flaunting weapon on social media

Blood donation camp organised at CHC Patan

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Durg Police is continuously monitoring social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. On Sunday, two ruffians were rounded up who uploaded their photos with rifles on Instagram.

They had borrowed the licensed rifle of their acquaintance and relative for clicking pics with the weapon. One of them is a habitual offender and absconding accused of Vaishali Nagar Police Station. It was a joint action of Anti Crime and Cyber Unit and Police Station Vaishali Nagar.

SP Dr Abhishek Pallava informed that they are tracing the people who have uploaded their pics with weapons on social

media platforms. Police are maintaining vigil on the social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

Under the supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Sanjay Dhruv; City Superintendent of Police (Bhilai Nagar) Nikhil Rakhecha and Deputy Superintendent of Police (Crime) Prabhat Kumar, a joint team led by Inspector Santosh Mishra (I/c ACCU) and Inspector Trinath Tripathi (SHO Vaishali Nagar) was entrusted the task of tracing



such people.

The team found two persons who uploaded photographs with rifles on Instagram. They were identified as Alok Singh alias Aloo a resident of

Camp 01 and Rahul Sonkar a resident of Camp 01. When called and questioned, Alok disclosed that about 07-08 years ago, he had borrowed the licensed

weapon of a retired army man (his acquaintance) and had taken a few pics with the weapon during a birthday party.

Rahul Sonkar revealed that he had clicked his pics with the weapon of his uncle, who works as a private security guard. The accused had uploaded the pics on social media.

Alok Singh was wanted in an offence registered at Vaishali Nagar Police Station under section 354,294,323,341 of IPC. Police were in search of

this absconding accused. The accused has been arrested by the joint team.

Alok Singh (21) son of Bablu Singh a resident of Camp-01 is a habitual offender of Vaishali Nagar area. About 07 cases of assault, gambling, etc are already registered in Chhawani and Vaishali Nagar against him. Further action is being taken against him by Vaishali Nagar Police Station.

ASI Shomit Mishra, Constable Rinku Soni, Constable Bhavesh Patel, Constable D Prakash, Constable Rakesh Anna, Constable Nitin Singh from ACCU and ASI Suresh Pandey and Constable Dinesh Jaiswal from Vaishali Nagar Police Station played a vital role in arresting the accused.



Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Eleven people donated blood in the blood donation camp organised at Community Health Center (CHC) Patan. The camp was successfully conducted by the team of District Blood Bank, District Hospital Durg and Blood Storage Unit CHC Patan. The camp was organised under the

aegis of Chhattisgarh Manva Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj. Yugal Kishore of the Samaj expressed gratitude to all the blood donors and Dr Praveen Agarwal Nodal Officer, Dr Ashish Sharma BMO Patan, Dr Veena Sahu, Shweta Bhardwaj MLT, Maheshwari Dhruv and the team of District Blood Bank and Health Department.

BoB slashes home loan interest rates by 40bps to 8.50%

Reduces MSME loan interest rates to 8.40%

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Bank of Baroda (BoB), one of India's leading public sector banks, announced the reduction in its home loan interest rates by 40 basis points (bps) to 8.50% p.a. Further, the Bank has also reduced its MSME loan interest rates starting at 8.40% p.a. Both offers are with effect from March 5, 2023 and are valid for a limited period till 31st March 2023.

This is one of the lowest and most competitive interest rates in the industry. In addition to reducing its interest rates, the Bank is also offering 100% waiver on processing charges on home loans and 50% processing charges waiver on MSME loans.

The new home loan rate

beginning at 8.50% p.a. is available for borrowers applying for fresh home loans, balance transfers as well as for home improvement loans. The rate is linked to a borrower's credit score.

Ajay K Khurana, Executive Director, Bank of Baroda said, "The Bank is pleased to drop its home loan interest rates and introduce a very special limited period offer of 8.50%. The offer will make home purchases more affordable for home buyers in the current scenario where interest rates have risen considerably.

The reduction in interest rates for the MSME sector will further support aspiring entrepreneurs and finance their growth ambitions." Bank of Baroda has also simplified the process of apply-

ing for a Home Loan.

Customers can digitally apply for and get approval for a home loan within 30-minutes by logging in to the bob World mobile banking app or visiting the Bank's website. Applicants can also apply for a loan by visiting any of Bank of Baroda's branches across India.

Key features of Bank of Baroda Home Loans include Interest rates starting at 8.50% p.a. for a limited period; Zero processing charges; Takeover of home loans with minimum documentation; Flexible tenure up to 360 months; No Pre-payment/Part-payment charges; Avail Digital Home Loans with quick approval in just a few steps in just 30-minutes; and Door step service at major centres.

Civic body initiates to tackle water woes in summer



Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: With the summer season round the corner, the local civic body has initiated to tackle the possible water woes in the dry season. The officials are conducting inspections to collect data of out of order pumps, groundwater level and status of tap water supply.

A large number of hand

pumps and power pumps are out of order in several localities of Bhilai. Water pressure in taps has also reduced significantly in some places as people have started using tullu pumps to fetch more water to meet the increasing needs.

In view of the summer season, Bhilai Municipal Corporation has launched its preparations to tackle the problems of drinking

water. Recently, Bhilai Municipal Corporation Commissioner Rohit Vyas chaired a meeting of the concerned officers and gave instructions to the engineers to inspect the prone areas, localities and low pressure areas.

Data would be collected in the inspection and efforts will be made to ensure sufficient water supply in summer.

It needs to be mentioned here that Mayor Neeraj Pal has given instructions to maintain a smooth system of the drinking water supply. Accordingly, the officers of all the zones of Bhilai Municipal Corporation inspected their respective areas and saw the arrangements for drinking water.

Public representatives were also present during

inspections. Officers visited various wards with the public representatives. Along with natural sources, hand pump, power pump and water tanks, the tap water pressure was also checked.

During the inspection, the teams found that some people were using tullu pumps. Such people were advised not to use the motor pumps.

BMC's campaign against stray cattle continues

BMC to allot homes under PMAY via lottery on March 17

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Bhilai Municipal Corporation is conducting a Roka Chheka campaign within its limits to catch the stray cattle. Efforts are being made to ensure that no one is troubled by stray cattle in the BMC limits. The team of Bhilai Municipal Corporation is conducting a date-wise campaign to catch stray cattle in all the zones.

Under the campaign, 78 stray animals have been caught and sent to Gauthan within a week. Commissioner Rohit Vyas has given instructions to run a special campaign to catch stray cattle. Under the Roka Chheka campaign, teams to catch stray cattle are moving around the city with various re-



sources to catch stray cattle.

Cattle are being transported to the Gauthan in the Cow Catcher vehicle. The team of Bhilai Municipal Corporation mainly targeted the cattle roaming along the roads of all the market areas and inner areas of the city. The stray cattle in Power House Market, Service Road and GE Road have been causing troubles for the common people and commuters.

The corporation's team is catching the animals to provide relief to the commuters and common people. In the special campaign going on since last week, the corporation is working by making a route chart to catch stray cattle from all the wards of the area.

A campaign to catch stray animals is also being run in the market areas. It needs to be mentioned here that Collector Pushpendra Meena has given instruc-

tions to run a special campaign to catch stray cattle. BMC is also working in compliance with the Collector's instructions.

The BMC team uses two cow catchers, ropes and other necessary resources so that they don't get hurt while catching cattle. Additional Commissioner Ashok Dwivedi has appealed to the animal owners not to let stray cattle in the open and support the campaign.

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Bhilai Municipal Corporation is going to allot houses to the eligible beneficiaries of PMAY through lottery system on March 17. People living in rented houses will also get houses under this scheme. The long wait is over as the time has arrived when the eligible people will get their own pucca house.

The family residing in rented houses in the limits of Bhilai Municipal Corporation will also be able to get their own accommodation. Those who had submitted applications of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana under Mor Makaan Mor Aas scheme and have deposited the amount of contribution after coming in the category of eligible beneficiaries, will get a



chance in the lottery for allotment of houses.

To participate in the lottery, the amount of the first installment will have to be compulsorily deposited. Only after depositing the first installment, they will be able to participate in the house allotment process to be held on March 17. It needs to be mentioned here that the government has provided great convenience to deposit the amount of contribution.

According to which only

10% of the amount has to be deposited as the first installment to participate in the lottery and the remaining amount can be deposited in easy installments. Earlier, a higher amount was to be deposited as the first installment, but now the government has reduced it and given great relief to the people.

On the instructions of Mayor Neeraj Pal and Commissioner Rohit Vyas, all the processes are being

conducted at a fast pace under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. House allotment will be done through a lottery in the main office of Bhilai Corporation from 10:00 am on Friday, March 17, 2023.

For this lottery, information is also being given to the eligible beneficiaries by the department. For more information people can contact Vidyadhar Dewangan, Officer-in-Charge of the Housing and Planning Branch in the BMC office.

It needs to be mentioned here that under Mor Makaan Mor Aas component, 1120 houses are available in Amrapali Phase 2 in Khamaria, 896 units near Milestone School in Green Valley Khamaria and 1875 units near Krishna Engineering College in Khamaria.

Supela Flyover likely to be completed by March 31

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: The commuters on National Highway between Bhilai to Raipur are likely to get relief from the traffic congestion in the coming couple of months. The construction agency is likely to complete the works of Supela Flyover by March 31 while the Power House Flyover will be ready by May 31.

The Transport Nagar Flyover is likely to be completed by July 15. The District Collector is himself looking into the progress of these flyovers and is going to conduct weekly inspections. SDM will monitor the progress in flyover construction every day.

Collector Pushpendra Kumar Meena has asked the



SDM to monitor the progress of flyover construction every day to speed up the construction works. Recently he inspected all the four under construction flyovers of NH. He asked about the date of open-

ing of all the four flyovers and asked to share the day-to-day plan for the same.

Now the SDM will see whether the work is being done as per the plan every day or not. The SDM will visit the

spot and inspect. They will see how many labourers the agency had to deploy to complete the work expeditiously and how many labourers are working on the spot.

They will also monitor the assigned work as per the schedule every day. Collectors will also monitor the flyovers being built in NH once a week. SDM Mukesh Raote and Jageshwar Kaushal and Traffic DSP Satish Thakur were also present along with NH officials during the inspection.

The Collector instructed the officials to take special care of public facilities in the construction of the flyover. He asked to make good parking arrangements. He also



saw parking space in all the flyovers. Along with this, he asked the officials to plant different types of plants.

He said that keeping different types of plants in each span will make the flyover

look very beautiful with the greenery. Along with this, the lighting will also be done. He asked to pay special attention to these issues.

The Collector also inspected the safety related details

in all the four flyovers. He instructed to ensure proper lighting arrangements; sign boards at all places, etc. No such point should be missed which creates the possibility of an accident, he said.

NH officials said that some technical errors had occurred during the construction of the road, which have been rectified. Load test and stress test are to be done after which the flyovers will be opened. The Collector said that during the load test and stress test, keep in mind that traffic related inconvenience should not be caused to the citizens.

He instructed them to complete the work within the stipulated time so that there is no hindrance in the traffic.

OBITUARY

Raghubir Handa



Bhilai: Industrialist Raghubir Handa left for heavenly abode at the age of 74 years on Saturday. Funeral procession was taken out from his residence situated at 104, Sundar Nagar, Bhilai and last rites of the mortal remains were performed at Ramnagar Muktidham. He was the elder brother of Sudhir Handa.

It is necessary for women to be financially stable, says CM

State govt is implementing new employment-oriented schemes

CM inaugurates 'Legal Awareness Training Camp cum Workshop'

Launches the mobile app 'Chhattisgarh State Commission for Women' designed for online complaints



Sita Ashoka which has medicinal importance. On this occasion, the Chief Minister launched the souvenir of the Women's Commission and the mobile app "Chhattisgarh State Women's Commission" made for online complaints. On this occasion, the Chief Minister administered an oath to all the people to make women empowered and safe. While addressing, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel stated that the efficiency of those performing duties related to women will be enhanced further by this workshop. Goals can also be met more quickly with better coordination and cooperation. The master trainers who attend this workshop will be effective in the prevention of crimes against women. The workshop focuses on highly sensitive topics such as human trafficking, cybercrime, and workplace sexual harassment. Baghel went on to say that poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance are the root causes of today's crimes. The government is work-

ing economically and educationally to prevent human trafficking; as a result of police officers' increased awareness, there has been a significant decrease in human trafficking; however, this is insufficient; human trafficking should not occur at all. Cyber crime is also on the rise; there are innocent people in Chhattisgarh who must be made aware; our government is also working in this direction. Economic independence is critical for women, so we implemented small-scale projects at the grassroots level. Meanwhile, Chief Minister also stated that women must be financially capable. Our government is putting new plans in place to address this. During the Corona period, MNREGA projects were launched alongside rice distribution to provide relief to the people. The group has developed an action plan to help people become financially capable. Today, women in Gauthans are becoming financially self-sufficient by producing vermicompost, Gobarpaint, and green vegeta-

bles. Similarly, RIPA is being established to provide rural youth with employment opportunities. This will encourage both new and traditional works. Legal knowledge is required for society to progress and keep up with the times.

The Chief Minister stated that the Constitution has empowered us, the government's welfare schemes are for us, and it is necessary for everyone to understand their rights and responsibilities; thus, the State Women's Commission operates Mukhyamantri Mahtari Nyay Rath. Mukhyamantri Mahtari Nyay Rath provides people with justice as well as information about the rules on the spot. Modern techniques are also used in the operation of the Women's Commission to expedite case resolution. Aside from short films, divisional level training is also provided by subject experts to raise awareness. Minister of Women and Child Development, Anila Bhediya, stated that it is crucial for women and girls to be aware of their rights in the modern era. The Commission organises public awareness campaigns for them. Mahtari Rath is being organised across the state to provide women with immediate justice. Women's self-esteem has risen in recent years. Women should be aware of their surroundings and make others aware of their surroundings. To control crime, everyone must work together. Legal education is

critical for changing the state's status and direction for women. Women are currently contributing in all areas of livelihood and are on their way of becoming self-sufficient. Chairperson of the State Women's Commission, Dr. Kiranmayi Nayak, spoke about the Commission's tenure, saying that during her tenure, the commission got justice for harassed women by holding hearings in all districts of the state. The commission completed all tasks successfully with the administration's assistance.

In addition to this, Inspector General of Police, Dr. Sanjay Shukla, spoke on the subject of prevention of human trafficking in legal workshop cum training. Forensic expert Dr. Sunanda Dhenge on the topic of women crime and precautions for evidence, AGP Shamim Rahman, on the subject of Family Court and sexual harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal). Cyber expert Monali Guha spoke on the topic of a presentation on cybercrime. On this occasion, the Chief Minister felicitated all the Collectors and Superintendents of Police of the districts on behalf of the Women's Commission for their cooperation in solving the cases. On this occasion, Parliamentary Secretary Vikas Upadhyay, Mayor of Raipur Municipal Corporation Aijaz Dhebar, State Women's Commission member Neeta Vishwakarma, Archana Upadhyay, Anita Raote, Balo Baghel were present.



Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel greeted the Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan at Raj Bhavan today by presenting him with flower bouquet. Matters related to the interest of the state were discussed in the meeting. Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain, Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister Subrat Sahoo were also present on the occasion.

Governor urged to sign upon reservation bill: CM

• Says recruitment into various posts pending for long

Raipur, Mar 12: The Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel after attending a programme in capital city and speaking to media persons later, informed that during his meeting with the Governor at Rajbhavan he has urged to sign upon the Reservation Bill, as it is pending with the Rajbhavan for long time. CM informed him that due to this the recruitment into various posts in the state is pending for long time and on which the youths are fac-

ing lots of problems. Taking decision in the interest of people of Chhattisgarh is everybody's responsibility and therefore the Governor has been asked to sign upon the bill.

It is worthwhile to mention here that earlier the Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan had visited Delhi and met the President and PM and held talks in state's interest. Later CM Bhupesh Baghel also had been to Delhi on Friday and met Prime Minister and held detailed talks on hosts of issue. It is notable here that the new reservation bill passed in the state's

Vidhan Sabha on 2 Dec 2022 is with provision of 32% reservation for ST, 13% for SCs and 27% for OBCs and 4% for EWS and after which it is pending with the Governor for final approval. It was sent to the then Governor of Chhattisgarh Anusuiya Uikey and on which she refused to sign and after this the state government approached High Court as well on the rights of the Governor and which was later withdrawn. Since then it has taken political twist and turn and lots of political statements have come from either side, leading to all sorts of speculations.

Mahila Congress workers bang plates to protest price rise



Raipur, Mar 12: Mahila Congress workers today registered protest in Raipur against price rise. Banging plates Mahila Congress workers came out to gherao MP Sunil Soni's house on the issue of inflation. On being stopped by the police enroute MP's house they shouted slogans against the central government. Inflation has spoiled the budget of the house and rising price of gas cylinders made people upset, Mahila Congress leaders said. During the protest, Congress leader Shakun Dahria alleged that the central government was turning deaf ear to grievances of women. As soon as the festival ap-

proached, the price of gas cylinder was increased by Rs 50, she said, adding that prices of other kitchen items have also increased a lot.

According to Mahila Congress leaders running a middle class household is becoming increasingly difficult. Considering the difficulties of the people they are gheraoing the residence of MPs and registering their protest with the Central Government, they said. While BJP came to power in 2014 on the issue of inflation, no steps have been taken yet to control inflation, they said and added that even the BJP leaders stopped talking on this issue.

Congress to take out march to Raj Bhavan on Adani issue

Raipur, Mar 12: Congress in Chhattisgarh will take out a march to Raj Bhavan here on March 13 in protest against central government's policy in favour of Adani Group. Party office bearers from block to state level will take part in the march.

Congress alleged that country was suffering loss due to centre's crony capitalism policy in favour of Adani group. BJP's Modi government at the centre was selling several key infrastructures to Adani group, besides compelling public sector institutions such

Modi govt patronised Adani group's irregularities: Congress

Congress has charged the Modi Government at the centre with patronising Adani group's irregularities. Pradesh Congress Committee President Mohan Markam said that Adani Group succeeded in committing irregularities by taking advantage of Modi Government's policy, risking branches of country's most

trusted financial institutions like LIC and SBI. He said that despite repeated demands raised by the opposition parties in parliament the Modi Government was reluctant to initiate probe into alleged irregularities of Adani Group. He asked why Prime Minister Modi and central government were scared of probe against Adani group.

as SBI and LIC to invest in Adani group, it alleged. According to Congress investments by

SBI and LIC in Adani Group put deposits worth crores of Indians belonging to the poor

Jangid along with senior leaders of the party will be present at the programme.

77 jawans posted on Naxal front in Bastar get out of turn promotion

Raipur, Mar 12: On the occasion of Holi, DGP Ashok Juneja has given the gift of promotion to 77 jawans posted in different districts of Bastar division. Maximum 21 jawans posted in Bijapur and 2 women constables Reshma Kashyap, Sunaina Thakur belonging to Danteshwari Fighter have been promoted.

This is the first time that such a large number of jawans have got out-of-turn promotions. The jawans to be promoted include DRG, CAF jawans. On the initiative of Chief Minister Bhupesh

Baghel, operations are being conducted continuously against Naxalites in Chhattisgarh. Role of women in DRG, CAF force is also being encouraged by the Chief Minister. Two women constables have been promoted for the first time.

All those jawans posted in the police stations of Sukma, Dantewada, Narayanpur and Bastar districts have played an important role by being involved in the encounter. They have also killed many dreaded hardcore Naxalites during the encounter.

Hospital to be named after Mata Rajmohani Devi

• Those affiliated to Ambikapur Medical College



The decision to pass the proposal was taken unanimously by Health Minister TS Singhdeo, Food Minister Amarjit Bhagat, Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Renuka Singh, MLA Lundra Dr

Pritam Ram, MLA Prem Nagar Khelsai Singh and Mayor Dr Ajay Tirky at district level committee meeting held at Collectorate Conference Hall on Saturday. Earlier Sarguja

Collector and Member Convener District Level Committee proposed to name the newly constructed hospital affiliated to Rajmata Devendra Kumari Singhdeo Government Medical College, Ambikapur as Mata Rajmohini Devi Memorial Hospital, Ambikapur in accordance with the announcement of Chief Minister. After necessary discussions and deliberations by the members of the district level committee, the proposal was unanimously passed.

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MBUY will be launched for the rehabilitation of children: CM

Moving out of child care institutions

New rehabilitation scheme has been made while making the age of boys and girls moving out of child observation homes from 18 yrs-21 yrs

Ch'garh govt will provide assistance in the fields of education, skill development, employment, and housing

Raipur, Mar 12: Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, while making a big provision for the rehabilitation of children moving out of child-care institutions of the state in this year's budget, has announced the launch of Mukhyamantri Bal Uday Yojana (MBUY) for them. This scheme will help children moving out of child-care homes by showing them the right path in their future and helping them to become self-reliant. For this, a provision of Rs. 1 cr has been made in the budget. Additionally, the age for boys and girls moving out of child observation homes has been increased from 18 years to 20 years.

Under the scheme, the State Government will help

in rehabilitating and restoring boys and girls more than 18 years of age who move out of child-care institutions. Earlier, children moving out of rehabilitation centers had to face many problems related to accommodation, employment, and joining the mainstream society. In these conditions, children are often tempted to involve themselves in crime. Keeping this in mind, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has undertaken a thoughtful initiative. Under the instructions of Chief Minister Mr. Baghel and the leadership of the Minister of Women and Child Development Department Anila Bhediya, a detailed action plan is being made

for the rehabilitation and restoration of boys and girls moving out of child homes.

Provision has been made in the rehabilitation scheme to ensure financial aid to boys and girls for their higher education, job security, and other facilities including accommodation. Chief Minister Baghel has said that arrangement for commercial skill development for the youth should also be made, so that they can become self-reliant by being self-employed. Chief Minister Baghel has also given instructions for the provision of community group accommodation for boys and girls moving out of child-care homes in the scheme.

Five arrested for the murder of a young man in Nawagarh

Bemetara, Mar 12: The police have arrested all the five accused in the murder of a youth at Nawagarh bus stand on Thursday. According to the police, due to old enmity, the accused had fatally attacked two youths. Bhagau Yadav died in this attack while another youth Sadanand Yadav has been sent to Ambedkar Hospital Raipur for treatment in critical condition. The knife used in the incident has been seized from the main accused Pramod Sinha and the accused have been arrested.

Accused Pramod Sinha S/o Late Sarju Sinha (21), R/o Ward No. 7 Nawagarh, Gopal Yadav's, S/o Late Mahila Yadav (23), R/o ward no. 10 Nawagarh, Gopi Yadav's S/o Late Mahila Yadav (23), R/o ward no. 10 Nawagarh, Raju Yadav's S/o Late Vinod Yadav alias Banbur



Yadav (23) R/o ward no. 6 newcomers and 1 minor child are included. On March 10, complainant Arjun Yadav S/o Kangla Ram Yadav, (51) R/o resident of ward no. 3 Budhadev Para, Nawagarh filed a report that on March 9, at around 10:45 pm, his son Satanand Yadav did not reach his house and on calling he was informed that he was in the government hospital Nawagarh with a serious injury. After getting the information, when he reached Government Hospital Nawagarh, he

found that Satanand Yadav was undergoing treatment in the ward.

He was bleeding profusely from a sharp-edged weapon injury behind his left waist. When asked about the incident, his son narrated the entire story to him and informed that both he and Bhagau Yadav were attacked by sharp weapon and in this Bhagau died when brought to Nawagarh hospital for treatment. Satanand Yadav has been referred to Bemetara District Hospital for proper treatment.

Based upon the report a case under sections 147, 148, 149, 294, 302, 307 was filed in police station Nawagarh.

Keeping in view the seriousness of the matter, senior officers were informed by the station in-charge Nawagarh regarding the said incident and as per their instructions Addl. SP and SDOP reached the spot and after inspecting the spot, station in-charge Nawagarh and police station staff were directed to take immediate action against the accused. On the direction and guidance of senior officers, the police station in-charge Nawagarh Ajay Kumar Sinha, ASI Tularam Deshmukh and Mohan Sahu, head constables Rajeev Sharma, constables Rahul Dubey, Amit Yadav, Jitendra Dhankar, Bhupendra, Firoz Sahu and other police station staff played an important role.

CM to launch 'Mukhyamantri Vriksh Sampada Yojana' on March 21

On the occasion of the Int'l Day of Forest

State Govt's ambitious scheme to encourage commercial tree plantation in Ch'garh

Programs will be organized in every district

N Chief Secretary has given instructions to ensure timely preparations

of the implementation of 'Vriksh Sampada Yojana' to encourage commercial tree-plantation in Chhattisgarh by the Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the preparations for its execution are in full swing. The Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain has written and sent letters in this regard to all collectors and divisional forest officers giving instructions to ensure required preparations for the inauguration of 'Mukhyamantri Vriksh Sampada Yojana' in their districts. Local public representatives, departmental officers and employees, and a large number of common people will attend the program.

It is noteworthy that under the 'Mukhyamantri Vriksh Sampada Yojana', willing land owners of all categories, governmental, semi-governmental, and autonomous institutions of the Government, private educational institu-

tions, Panchayats, and land contract holders will be eligible to benefit from this scheme. Under this scheme, 100 percent of financial aid will be provided to the beneficiaries for tree-plantation on 5 acres of private land, whereas 50 percent financial assistance will be given to beneficiaries for tree-plantation on more than 5 acres of land.

Through this scheme, a goal of planting 15 crore saplings in 1 lakh 80 thousand acres of land in 5 years has been set at the rate of 36 thousand acres of land every year. The Government will decide the minimum price for the purchase of selected plant species every year, so that farmers can get a definite income. The production of wood outside the forest regions will encourage wood-related industries. Besides, farmers will earn extra income through carbon credit.

Union Bank of India organises health-camp



For its staff and customers

Raipur, Mar 12: The Union Bank of India, regional office Raipur under the aegis of Ram Krishna Care Hospital organised health check-up camp and blood donation camp at its Samta Colony branch here on Saturday. This was organised under the Bank's Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR).

It was informed that in this camp, the Blood Pressure, blood sugar, ECG and other tests of the Bank's staff and its customers was organised. In this camp, the Sub-Area Head of Union Bank of India Saurabh Chafekar also donated blood and he also apprised the persons present about the benefits of blood donation to self and the society.

SECRMC celebrates Int'l Women's Day

At Railway Cultural Building BMY Charoda

Raipur, Mar 12: South East Central Railway Mazdoor Congress (SECRMC) as per the initiative taken by Divisional Coordinator D Vijay Kumar celebrated International Women's Day on March 11 to honour the female staff working in SECR Raipur Division. Divisional Railway Manager Sanjiv Kumar, Raipur Division president of SECRWVO Mrs. Megha S. Kumar, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer Uday Kumar Bharti and other people participated in this event. Dr. Lijo Daniel from Sparsh Hospital and Dr. Swati Rai from B M Shah Hospital explained the gynecological problems faced by the women staff. It was explained how to stay clean in personal life and how to stay healthy in daily life. Dr. Priyanka Eye Specialist in Railways in her speech explained how to take care of the eye related diseases. Miss Ruheena Tufail Khan ADPO RAIPUR in her speech explained how to solve the problem faced by women at work place. Women from Electric Loco Shed



SECRMC DC D Vijay Kumar and other invitees present in the programme. (inset) SECRWVO Raipur Division president Mrs. Megha S. Kumar addressing the gathering.

C & W, PPyard Engineer Department, Signal Department Durg and many other departments actively participated in this event. The highlight of the event was National Karate Coach Alisha Farin gave a demo on self defense for all women. Mrs. Megha S. Kumar, President of SECRWVO as the chief guest in this program said that it is important for women to be economically strong in the society. Divisional Railway Manager Sanjeev Kumar said that women in railways are fulfilling their responsibilities well, the role of

women in the society is important. Appreciating the organization, he also announced to award 10000 to the South East Central Railway Mazdoor Congress.

Vijay Kumar, DC of Mazdoor Congress, in his motion of thanks, thanked all the officers and doctors for giving their valuable time to participate in the Women's Day program. B D Prasad, Bhimrao, Shesh Babu, Anu Chacko, Balwant Sharma thanked the whole team for the successful conduct of programme.

DEO conducts surprise inspection of highway Schools

Issues show cause notice



Cabin Pegdapalli, Head Master Mohan Lal Mandvi appeared late, the cleanliness of the premises was not found properly while doing inspection of residential children and they were found with shabby and dirty clothes. The condition of cleanliness and POTA Cabin school was not found

to be satisfactory; the District Education Officer reprimanded the Principal and POTA cabin Superintendent and gave strict instructions to fix the system in fifteen days.

In High School Pegdapalli, minimum attendance ratio was found. In-charge Principal

Suryanarayan Koram has been directed for correction in the education system. During the inspection of Kanya Primary Ashram School - Pegdapalli, the posted teacher were found to be present and the residential arrangement, the educational level of the children was found to be fine. DEO directed not to stop one-month's salary for March 23' that of Tinge Samaiya Pradhan Pathak, teacher of Secondary School Gilgichha, Krishna Kumari Pupal and Anita Anganpalli's on charges of remaining absent. For which the Block Education Officer, Bhopalpatnam has been directed by the District Education Officer, District Bijapur, not to withdraw the salaries of the teachers of the primary school for the month of March 2023.

Bank of Maharashtra organizes Rajbhasha Sammelan

Trivandrum, Mar 12: The Annual Conference of Official Language Officers of Bank of Maharashtra was organized under the guidance of MD & CEO of the Bank A.S. Rajeev on Feb 24 and 25 at Thiruvananthapuram.

A.B. Vijayakumar, Executive Director of the Bank virtually inaugurated the conference from Pune. During the program, Asheesh Pandey, Executive Director also addressed the participants virtually from Pune. K. Rajesh Kumar, General Manager (HRM & Rajbhasha), Arun V., Zonal Manager, Ernakulum Zone and Official Language Officers and Liaison Officers of all the zones were present on this occasion. The program was compered by Dr. Rajendra Shrivastava, Deputy General Manager (Rajbhasha).

In his address, A.B. Vijayakumar opined that Hindi and regional languages are powerful mediums to convey our ideas even to remote areas. Hindi and regional languages are the best options for better customer service. He expressed satisfaction that Bank of Maharashtra has excelled and



Bank of Maharashtra organizes Rajbhasha Sammelan at Thiruvananthapuram. K. Rajesh Kumar, General Manager (HRM & Rajbhasha); Arun V., Zonal Manager, Ernakulum Zone; Dr. Rajendra Srivastava, DGM (Rajbhasha) and Official Language Officers of the bank are seen in the photo.

has been No. 1 on many business parameters. AB Vijayakumar, Executive Director launched "Mahakosh Mobile App" on this occasion. Through this app, English to Hindi translation will be available on mobile for the employees of the Bank. Latest issue of Bank's E-Magazine "Mahabank Samvad Sarita" was also released in the program.

Asheesh Pandey, Executive Director stated that language connects our customers with us hence it should be our endeavor

to connect language to business. It will increase our customer base and will also help in business growth. Executive Director, Asheesh Pandey launched "WhatsApp Banking Multiple Language Facility" on this occasion, which will facilitate our customers to avail WhatsApp Banking facility in different languages like Marathi, Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu etc. along with Hindi and English. K. Rajesh Kumar, General Manager (HRM & Rajbhasha) said that it is our

endeavor to learn something new through training in this conference as well as better review of official language work can be done and strategy for use of official language can be prepared. K. Rajesh Kumar released "Annual issue" of Bank's E-Magazine "Mahabank Samvad Sarita" on this occasion.

Sessions on various topics were conducted during the conference. Vote of thanks was proposed by Arun V., Zonal Manager, Ernakulum Zone.

Three of Urban Naxalite network nabbed with explosive materials

Konta, Mar 12: Sunil Sharma Superintendent of Police District Sukma, Kiran Chavan Additional Superintendent of Police Naxal Ops Sukma, Gaurav Mandal Additional Superintendent of Police Konta under the supervision of SDOP Konta Rohit Shukla directed to check any naxalite urban suppliers in the region and informed that there was a significant success in 2023 when the presence of Naxal supplier remained towards village Belpochha of Konta area of Police Station.



It was based upon the information, Inspector Shivanand Singh from

Thana Konta, station in-charge Konta, left for information site along with Hamrah District Force and during the campaign, some suspicious persons in the forest of village Belpochha. Seeing the police party coming towards them, the left the motorcycle on the spot and ran away hiding in the jungle. But when they were trying to escape, they were surrounded on all four sides by the police and were nabbed by the police party. On asking the reason for running away from the suspects, they did not give satisfactory answers and on asking their names, they disclosed their names as,



Semal Deepak, S/o Late Semal Ramesh, R/o Konta, Thana Konta, District Sukma; Nara Bhaskar, S/o Nara Raghu, R/o Konta, Thana Konta, District Sukma; Telam Mutta, S/o Telam Raja, R/o Banda,

Thana Konta, District Sukma. After searching all three motorcycle bearing no's CG-26 J-0754, they found 2 no's mobile phone, LI-ION Battery Model BL-5 13.32 WH 7.7V 1800mAh Made in China BAOFENG

company total 20 no's, Electronic detonator 45 no's, Gelatin rod 43 no's, Kordex Wire a bundle of about 49 feet of electrical wire; a red colored Naxalite banner, in which the Konta Area Committee, B.C.P. Maoism written on it was recovered. When the accused were asked to produce necessary documents in support of their materials, they refused to present. So on not presenting any necessary documents, the recovered materials and suspects were brought to the police station and interrogated closely and they informed that the three urban Naxalite associates were working and in con-

stant contact with Konta Area Committee chief Naxalite Vetti Bhima, Hitesh Hunga Kosi and others. Staying there, not only giving information related to police to Naxalites, but also accepted the work of transporting various types of materials for Naxalites through the forest. On charges of being found working against the law, a crime number 09/2023 under section 34 of IPC was filed (b) V.P. Registering the case under Act 23 (1) 38, 39 Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, taking advance legal action, presented before the Special Court on 09.03.2023 and were sent to jail.

Bring results by establishing coordination, says Baij

- To take up govt schemes at ground level
- Action plan approved for 2023-24

Central Chronicle News

Bijapur, Mar 12: Member of Parliament of Bastar Parliamentary Constituency Deepak Baij, during his one-day stay in Bijapur, District Development Coordinator and Monitoring Committee "Disha" Member of Parliament Road Safety Presided over the meeting of Education Committee, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Atrocities Prevention Act 1989, District Level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee.

At the same time, necessary guidelines were given



in the meeting of the Governing Council of the District Mineral Institute, under which, according to the goal of prioritizing the works of MNREGA, to create empowerment giving priority to person-oriented works.

At the same time, under the National Livelihood Mission, it was talked about connecting the self-help groups with employment and providing loans and to speed up road con-

struction works under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana Public Works Department.

Instructions were also given for proper implementation of the Chief Minister's nutrition campaign under the Women and Child Development Department, to reduce malnutrition, to complete the construction work of the approved new building Anganwadi within the time limit, to ensure recruit-

ment to the vacant posts of Anganwadi workers and assistants with transparency, to prepare for ready-to-eat. During the review of the Member Road Safety Committee, the number of dead in road accidents and road accidents in the years 2021-22 and 2023 were evaluated and necessary initiatives to prevent road accidents were discussed.

Regional MLA and Vice President of Bastar Development Authority Vikram Shah Mandavi, Collector Rajendra Kumar Katara, District Panchayat President Shankar Kudiyaam, Vice President Kamlesh Karam, District Panchayat and Bastar Development Authority member Nina Rawatia Udde, Farmers Welfare Board member Basant Rao Tati and others were present.

Cong govt not serious on liquor ban: JCC (J)

Central Chronicle News

Kawardha, Mar 12: Janata Congress Chhattisgarh-Jogi (JCC-J) here in District Kabirdham held a press conference and made serious allegations on the Bhupesh government of Chhattisgarh on the issue of liquor ban.

The office bearers of the party namely state president of Ajit Jogi student organization, Pandariya youth leader Ravi Chandravanshi, said that the Congress government, which had promised to ban liquor in 2018, is today making liquor in our district in the name of Bhoramdev Ethanol Plant undeclared and the work is going on in 100 acres of land at the cost of water for 30 years at an annual income of Rs 5.27 crores only.

It is clear from the information given to KJ Bio Fuel the company with which the MOU has been



signed that in the coming day's alcohol will be made instead of ethanol, the party alleged. Chandravanshi further said that while signing an MOU with the company by Bhupesh Baghel in 2020, it was said that this would provide employment to our local people, but in the past, 115 people were re-

quired to work in the plant, but here too local people were checked off during the recruitment drive.

While District President Sunil Kesarwani said that if a new sugar factory opens in our district instead of making alcohol in ethanol plant, it will be condemned. Further giv-

ing the outline of the program, it was informed that under the leadership of State President of Janata Congress Chhattisgarh Amit Jogi there will lead the workers in the siege of the collectorate on 13/03/2023, and a memorandum will be handed over demanding its cancellation of the project.

Holi celebrated with fervour



Central Chronicle News

Kharora, Mar 12: Holi was celebrated here in the region with great enthusiasm and people had made back-breaking preparations, and the festival saw equal participation from children and adult's alike.

Everywhere in the streets and squares, groups of youths and mastans were seen enjoying and swinging in fun and the fes-

tival was celebrated till late night at various places.

The gaiety of colors and enthusiasm was visible from the morning itself and rainbow shade of colors had painted the entire village-town in pink. Don't feel bad Holi Hai's echo kept echoing all around and people also chose to celebrate it with loud music in may places of the district.

Age old songs like Rang Barse Bheeg Chunar Wali

Rang Barse added to the festival which followed with Holika Dahan in almost all squares of the city. At the end devotees offered colors to the deities in the temples and the festival ended by offering colors on Dhulendi.

Meanwhile Holi trade continued well in all major sectors and people ended the festival on a note of music colors and sweet-meats and savories.

Case registered under Railway Act against stone pelting

In 20826 Vande Bharat Express between Sarona to Raipur

Central Chronicle News

Raipur/Bilaspur, Mar 12: On 10.03.2023, at about 17.50 hrs, Deputy Inspector R K Rathore who was deployed for the escort of train number 20826 Nagpur - Bilaspur Vande Bharat Express was informed on mobile that at km 833/25 between Sarona and Raipur some unknown child who was wearing black colored pants and black coloured T-shirts with something written on the front have pelted stones on train number 20826 Nagpur - Bilaspur

Vande Bharat Express, which had hit the panes of coach number C-13.

On the basis of information head constable P K Gaurah posted on duty at km no 834/07 behind AIIMS hospital and ASI D K Verma along with Head Constable J L Kaushal posted at the same point for the detection of theft were sent to the place of incident by the Inspector M K Mukherjee.

Mukherjee along with SI K B Gupta also rushed to the spot. After arriving at the scene information regarding the incident was

taken from the children playing cricket near the spot. On the basis of information, appearance, and dress, a delinquent boy was stopped near Rajiv Nagar incident site, who voluntarily surrendered on questioning. The body admitted of pelting stones to break glass in the above train just for fun.

After the delinquent boy confessed his mistake, was taken into custody and brought to Railway Protection Force Post Raipur along with his parents. The statement of the delinquent child, was

recorded in front of his parents.

Finding the delinquent child guilty of Section 153 of the Railway Act, crime number 1567/2023 dated 10.03.2023 Section 153 Railway Act was registered after taking him into custody.

Due to sunset and being an delinquent child, the child was kept in the custody of his parents after the consent was taken in written from the parents. The investigating inspector of the case M K Mukherjee is further investigating the case.

Body found in building of old Paper Mill

Dongargarh, Mar 12: On finding body of a youth in damaged building of an old Paper Mill, it created sensation in the area. The police reached the site and after 'panchnama', the body was sent for post-mortem.

As per information in this regard, the body is that of Rupesh Nandeshwar, S/o Narayan Nandeshwar and he was R/o Budhwaripara. The police is checking as to whether the person died probably due to excess consumption of liquor or it was a murder.

Entrepreneurship awareness camp held

Manendragarh- Chirmiri-Bharatpur- (MCB), Mar 12: The General Manager District Trade and Industry Centre (DTIC) of MCB informed that one-day entrepreneurship awareness camp was organised at community building of Janpad Panchayat Khadgawa and in this the officers from DTIC gave information and guidance about PM Rojgar Srijan Karyakram; Mukyamantri Yuwa Swarojgar Yojana; PM Sukhsma Khadhya Unnayan Yojana and state's industrial policy 2019-24.

CEO Janpad Panchayat, Chartered Accountant Arihant Jain and DPI PMFME Sabir Khan motivated the persons presented about establishing of small units as part of entrepreneurship. In this a total of 92 individuals registered their presence and obtained information related to opening of small-scale industries and schemes of the Industry department.

Verma demands water from Madian reservoir



● For drying ponds of villages

Central Chronicle News

Dongargarh, Mar 12: BJP farmer leader of the region and head of Makkatola, Hemlal Verma, has applied to the Sub-Divisional Officer, Water Resources Sub-Division, Dongargarh, to release water from the Madian reservoir to fill the drainage ponds of the villages due to low water level in the water bodies.

In the memorandum given to the officer, it was told that every year water is given from the Madian reservoir for drainage ponds in about 14 villages of the area, the fee of which is deposited in the Water Resources Department by the Gram Panchayats.

As per information, due to the drying up of the ponds, the water level of the village's hand pump and bore is also decreasing, due to which there is a possibility of problem of drinking water along with discharge

in the villages, therefore, it is necessary to fill water in the ponds as soon as possible, so that along with discharge, the problem of drinking of cattle can also be removed.

Villagers of Makkatola, Hirapur, village Lal Bahadur Nagar, Khubatola, Barampur, Govindpur, Motipur, Thakurtola, Sendri, Ramatola, Narsingpur, Manikpur, Dhandongari and Jhandatalav have demanded to release water from the reservoir.

SECR Bilaspur Division organizes seminar and felicitation ceremony

- On International Women's Day
- 23 women employees honoured

Central Chronicle News

Bilaspur, Mar 12: Various programs were organized in the division on the occasion of International Women's Day as part of the best initiative towards women empowerment.

A seminar was organized for the women workers of the division in the divisional personnel meeting room. About 40 women workers of the division participated in it with enthusiasm. In the seminar importance of women in the society, women empowerment and awareness and topics related to women's participation in the were discussed.



On this occasion, Assistant Divisional Medical Officer Dr. P Mamta elaborated on various aspects related to women's health. At the same time, while informing about the various problems faced by women, she also gave information about avoiding and solving these problems.

After this, a felicitation ceremony was organized to honour the women em-

ployees of the division. On this occasion, Additional Divisional Railway Manager Shyam Sundar gave citation to 23 women employees of the division who performed excellent work in their respective fields.

Additional Divisional Railway Manager said that gender equality is a better effort towards women empowerment. He mentioned that increase

in the respect of women is possible only when the woman is educated. Mother is the first teacher of her child, so all mothers should teach respect to women to their children. On this occasion, Assistant Personnel Officer Snehashish Ghosh, office bearers of all the three unions, besides a large number of women railway workers were present.

One day workshop on personality development organized

- In Govt Nehru College

Central Chronicle News

Dongargarh, Mar 12: A one-day workshop on personality development was organized for the college students and staff at the local Government Nehru College, Dongargarh, under the guidance of Dr. Pradeep Kumar Jambulkar, Principal of the college, in collaboration with Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashram, Raipur. Swami Prapatyanand Maharaj,

head of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashram Raipur and editor of Vivek Jyoti Monthly, Head of the Department of Statistical Studies of Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University Raipur and former Vice Chancellor Bastar University and former Vice Chancellor Mats University Raipur Prof. SK Singh and Dr. Vineet Kumar Sahu were the main speakers in the workshop.

Principal of the College, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Jambulkar thanked the guests and the college family including

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashram Raipur for organizing the program and all the guests were honored by presenting mementos and certificates on behalf of the college family. The program was conducted by Neelam Chaturvedani and vote of thanks by Gopalkrishna Yadav. Books related to Swami Vivekananda were presented to the college staff and students by Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashram Raipur. More than 350 students of the college were benefited from the said camp.

CM announces opening of 11 new colleges

- Wave of happiness among youth due to approval of college

Central Chronicle News

Bilaspur, Mar 12: The budget 2023 of Chhattisgarh was presented by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and through the budget, the Chief Minister has given gifts to all sections including farmers, Anganwadi workers, and youth.

Giving a big gift of better education to the youth, the CM has announced to open 11 new colleges, including Bilaspur district. With the opening of a new

college at Akaltari in Bilha block, the atmosphere of the area has become pleasant and there is a lot of enthusiasm among the students of Akaltari.

Opening of college in their own area will save their time and energy and the students called it a beneficial step taken in the interest of the students.

The youths of the region have expressed happiness and opined that going to Bilaspur city to study was cumbersome and they had to face financial difficulties and the opening of the college in Akaltari itself will greatly benefit the rural youth.

Sweet shops and restaurants inspected

In view of festive season

Central Chronicle News

Mahasamund, Mar 12: As per the instructions of Collector Nileshkumar Kshirsagar, food safety officer Jyoti Bhanu, Shankhnad Bhoi and the team of mobile food laboratory posted in the district, are inspecting sweet shops and restaurants keeping in view the food safety standards.

In the last one month, 184 food samples were collected by the food safety officers of the district and tested through the state-run food testing laboratory vehicle for the preven-

tion and adulteration of food items. Out of which 11 sub-standard, 19 misprints were found to be sub standard.

Food businessmen selling sub-standard, counterfeit food items were cautioned not to sell sub-standard, counterfeit food items in future, otherwise strict action will be taken under the Food Safety and Standards 2006 Regulation 2011. Keeping in view the festive season of Holi, samples have been collected by the security officer from various food establishments of Mahasamund district and sent to the State

Food Testing Laboratory, Raipur for testing.

Advance action will be taken under Food Safety and Standards 2006 Regulation 2011 as soon as the test report of food items is received. From January 2022 till now, 160 legal and 97 surveillance samples have been collected by the Food Safety Officers. Out of which 14 samples have been found to be sub-standard, counterfeit. 06 sub-standard cases have been presented in the court of Additional Collector and 01 case in the court of judicial magistrate for trial.

BRIEF



Bollywood actor Sanya Malhotra during a bike ride event organised to commemorate International Women's Day, at Rajiv Chowk in New Delhi, Sunday.

Suicide

Hapur: An Uttar Pradesh Police constable posted at police lines allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself with his service weapon here in the early hours of Saturday, officials said.

Seized

Jammu: Army troops guarding the Line of Control (LoC) recovered small arms and narcotics from Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, officials said. Two pistols, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and heroin was among the recoveries made, they said.

NIA search

Seoni: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) and local police have detained two persons for questioning after carrying out searches in Seoni in Madhya Pradesh, during which some objectionable material and electronic devices were allegedly seized, a police official said on Sunday.

Tribute

Mumbai: Paying homage to Satish Kaushik, megastar Amitabh Bachchan remembered the late actor-director as "a delightful company" and "a most accomplished artist".

Hideout

Srinagar: A militant hideout was unearthed and arms and ammunition recovered in Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Sunday. A search was conducted by police in Shalnar Hangnikoot area of Handwara in the north Kashmir district on Saturday, a police official said.

Mishap

Bulshana: Six persons were killed after the tyre of their car burst on Sunday morning on the Samruddhi Expressway in Maharashtra's Buldhana district, a police official said.

Woman walking along Gomti to raise awareness

● **On river conservation**
Shahjahanpur (UP), Mar 12 (PTD):

With an aim to start a movement for the conservation of the Gomti river, a woman in her early 30s is on a journey to walk along the 690-kilometre stretch of the water body.

Shipra Pathak, who calls herself a water and nature conservationist, started her journey earlier this month from the Gomat Taal at Madhotanda in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh, from where the river originates.

"I have reached Shahjahanpur after covering around 60 kilometres. We had to halt the journey for a few days due to the Holi festivities, but the journey has resumed again from today," Pathak told PTI on Sunday.

Slinging two bags on her shoulder — one carrying a thin carpet and a quilt and another containing two

sets of clothes, her mobile phone and charger — and holding a cloth-covered wooden stick, Pathak is walking along the banks of the river. She wears a brick red dress, a pair of shoes and carries a dupatta. With her hair tied loosely behind, she sports a "tilak" on her forehead and walks with smaller steps, carefully placing her feet on the unpaved, rugged river bank.

"Villagers who think about the betterment of rivers and nature join me in the walk. They often guide me along the river bank," Pathak said.

Besides bringing together people who are concerned about the state of the river, she wants to encourage them to take action.

"People who live along the river are concerned about the health of the river. But they often do not know what to do. I wish to encourage them to take some action, whether it is cleaning the river banks

or clearing the river bed. A sense of belonging that develops while walking along the river bank will surely bring them closer to the river and motivate them to do more for it," Pathak said.

A tributary of the Ganga, Gomti is one of the most essential perennial rivers of Uttar Pradesh. Stretching over 690 kilometres, the river meets the Ganga at Saidpur in Ghazipur district.

On its way, it supplies water to several important towns and cities, including the state capital Lucknow. Despite its importance, the Gomti has been affected largely by the indifference towards it.

Experts fear that unchecked encroachment and extensive farming are turning Gomti into a seasonal (intermittent) river.

"The river bed can hardly be noticed at certain stretches because most of it has been encroached and turned into farmland," said Venkatesh

Dutta, Professor, Department of Environmental Science at the Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University. Dutta carried out an extensive study on the Gomti in 2011 and says the condition of the river has gone from bad to worse in the last decade.

Pathak, a native of Budaun district, echoed similar sentiments.

"As humans, we must realise that we cannot survive without the environment, rivers, water... All our scriptures and religious texts highlight that. We must take measures to protect and conserve these natural resources," she said.

Born to a local politician and a homemaker, Pathak completed her master's degree from the Rohilkhand University, before she "heard the call of my heart and decided to do something for rivers".

"I have already completed the 52-km circumambulation of the Mansarovar

lake and a 3,600-km walk along the Narmada river in Madhya Pradesh. I have started a movement to protect rivers and wish to do the same for the Gomti," she said.

As part of her campaign, Pathak has also pledged to plant one crore saplings on river banks. "Trees are the best friend of rivers. In the last couple of years, with the help of volunteers and locals, we have planted more than 10 lakh saplings on river banks and aim to take this number to one crore," she said.

Pathak has not set herself a deadline to complete her journey.

"I walk along the banks during the day and spend the night at a temple or an ashram. The locals are kind enough to offer me food and a place to rest. I keep pace with the people who walk with me and do not want to hurry this journey but to live and immerse myself in it," she said.

Frequency of landslides increasing in HP

Shimla, Mar 12 (PTI):

Himachal Pradesh has witnessed a six-time increase in major landslides in the past two years with 117 occurring in 2022 as compared to 16 in 2020, according to data compiled by the disaster management department.

There are 17,120 landslide prone sites in the state out of which 675 are near critical infrastructure and habitations. The maximum of such sites are in Chamba (133) followed by Mandi (110), Kangra (102), Lahaul and Spiti (91), Una (63), Kullu (55), Shimla (50), Solan (44), Bilaspur (37), Sirmour (21) and Kinnaur (15).

High intensity rainfall coupled with cutting of hill slopes or rocks at the foothills are the main reason behind the significant number of landslides, experts say.

Extensive cutting of hill slopes for construction

and widening of roads, blasting for tunnels, hydro projects and mining are cited as reasons behind the increase in landslides, geological expert Prof Virender Singh Dhar said.

Though the time span of rains has been reduced, their intensity has increased. High temperatures coupled with heavy rains lead to landslides due to loosening of the strata in places which have undergone cutting downstream on the foothills, said Scientist (Climate Change) Suresh Attre.

Out of the 117 major landslides witnessed in 2022, a maximum number of 21 were reported in Kullu followed by 20 in Mandi, 18 in Lahaul and Spiti, 15 in Shimla and 14 in Lahaul and Spiti, nine in Sirmour, eight in Bilaspur, five in Kangra, three each in Kinnaur and Solan, one in Una while no landslide occurred in Hamirpur.

15 ENNG rebels surrender with arms in Arunachal

Itanagar, Mar 12 (PTD):

A total 15 militants of the Eastern Naga National Government (ENNG) along with the outfit chief Tosham Mossang surrendered before Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday.

The rebels surrendered with arms and ammunition during a homecoming ceremony organised at police headquarters here, officials said.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, state Home Minister Bamang Felix along with Assam Rifles officers, state senior civil and police officers were present at the function.

The other rebels who surrendered include self-styled colonel Chopsai Pangsang and Wangjen Pangtha, self styled major Daniel Sankey, captain Maithangla Tikhak, lieutenants Monpi Mamai and



A total 15 militants of the Eastern Naga National Government (ENNG) along with the outfit chief Tosham Mossang surrendered before Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday.

Samhon Songthwa, sergeants Wangwa Hatum and Hemraj Pradhan, the SIT SP Rohit Rajbir Singh said.

The others were self-styled captains Netra Kumar Rai, Limpha Khimsing, Khunglun Mossang and Bainong Mungrey and self-styled second lieutenant Lungphang Jugli, he said.

Nine Chinese-made MQ series weapons, two AK-47 rifles, one Chinese-made

pistol, 19 magazines, 415 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition, five rounds of 9 mm pistol, four Chinese grenades, one under barrel launcher with fins and six walker talkie were deposited during the ceremony, Singh said.

Termining the event as "historic", Khandu lauded the combined offensive and negotiating efforts of Assam Rifles and state police in convincing the cadres to shun violence

and join the national mainstream.

"Gun culture is not a solution to the problem. Today's surrender is a positive move by the outfit to restore peace in the state. I am optimistic that other groups will follow suit in the days to come," he said.

Assuring the surrendered rebels of government support for their rehabilitation, Khandu said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision is to restore peace in the Northeast. As a result many rebel groups of the region have already started peace talks with the respective state governments and many have already joined the mainstream.

Speaking to reporters, Felix said that ENNG has now become "almost non-existent" after the surrender of its chief along with 14 others.

WOMEN'S RALLY



Women bikers of the Border Security Force (BSF), Delhi Police and other organisations take part in a rally to commemorate International Women's Day, at Rajiv Chowk in New Delhi, Sunday.

'Tyre burst human negligence, not act of God'

● **HC rejects insurance firm's plea against compensation**

Mumbai, Mar 12 (PTD):

A tyre burst is not an act of God but human negligence, the Bombay High Court remarked while rejecting an insurance company's plea against compensation to the family of a man killed in a car accident. A single bench of Justice S G Dige in its February 17 order dismissed the appeal filed by New India Assurance Company Limited against a 2016 ruling of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal directing it to pay Rs 1.25 crore to victim Makarand Patwardhan's family.

On October 25, 2010, Patwardhan (38) was trav-

elling from Pune to Mumbai with two colleagues.

The colleague who owned the car was speeding in a rash and negligent manner when the rear wheel burst and the car fell into a deep ditch, killing Patwardhan on the spot. The tribunal in its order had noted the victim was the sole bread-earner of his family.

The insurance company in its appeal said the compensation amount was exorbitant and excessive and that the tyre burst was an act of God and not negligence on the part of the driver. The HC, however, refused to accept this contention and said the dictionary meaning of "act of God" was "an instance of uncontrollable natural forces in operation."

Repair work on Chirag Delhi flyover to cause traffic snarls

● **In south Delhi**

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTD):

Traffic will be affected on certain routes in south Delhi as one of the carriageways of the Chirag Delhi flyover on Outer Ring Road will remain closed for 25 days from Sunday due to repair work being carried out by the public works department, officials said.

With the opening of the Ashram flyover on March 6, there was some relief for commuters, but it seems to be short-lived as the Chirag Delhi flyover is being shut and they will have to brace themselves for traffic snarls again. The repair work of the Chirag Delhi flyover began from Sunday and the work on each carriageway will take 25 days. One car-



Workers repair the Chirag Delhi flyover on the outer ring road, in New Delhi, Sunday.

riageway will be closed for traffic while the other will remain operational, the Delhi Traffic Police said. According to an advisory issued by the traffic police, the repair work of the carriageway from Nehru Place to the IIT flyover will be taken up first and the work on the other carriageway from the IIT flyover to Nehru Place

Ex-Bengal CM Siddhartha Ray's house to get heritage tag

Kolkata, Mar 12 (PTD):

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has decided to include former West Bengal chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray's south-Kolkata residence on its list of heritage buildings, councillor Sandip Ranjan Bakshi said on Saturday.

Built in 1900, Ray's residence, a two-storey red brick structure, is considered to be a landmark in Hazra area.

"This is the house where Ray hosted personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Pandit Ravi Shankar. It is a part of history. We have, therefore, decided to protect this building by enlisting it as one of the city's

heritage sites," Bakshi, who represents the area in the city civic body, told PTI.

He said an announcement in this regard will be made early next week.

Once enlisted, the maintenance of the building will be taken care of by the KMC Heritage Conservation Committee, said Bakshi, who is also the KMC mayor-in-council.

When contacted Ayan Ray, the former Bengal CM's grandnephew, who is also a co-owner of the property, said he will accordingly reply to the KMC if a notice is served in this connection.

Ayan operates a home-stay in the building with his sisters.

DANCE COMPETITION



Inmates of Berhampur Circle Jail during a performance, part of a national online dance competition, at Berhampur in Odisha's Ganjam district.

Punjab village receives 'Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman'

● **For waste management**

Chandigarh, Mar 12 (PTD):

Peroshah village in Punjab's Gurdaspur district, with a population of over 1,000, has earned national-level recognition for properly managing solid and liquid waste.

Harjinder Kaur, the sarpanch of the village, which has been declared a model ODF (open defecation free) Plus, received Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman 2023 by President Droupadi Murmu on March 4 for a commendable work in the sanitation sector.

The event was organised by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in Delhi to honour



President Droupadi Murmu presents the Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman 2023 for waste management to Peroshah village in Punjab's Gurdaspur district. Harjinder Kaur, the sarpanch of the village, received the award.

the women achievers who have contributed towards

the cause. Kaur said that it was a proud moment to receive the award in presence of Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. Recently, Peroshah village was declared a model ODF Plus village for fulfilling the criteria stipulated in the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G, Phase II) guidelines.

Under the mission's guidelines, the ODF plus title is given to a village that sustains its ODF status, ensuring visual cleanliness and proper solid and liquid waste management.

Punjab's Water Supply and Sanitation Minister Bram Shanker Jimpa congratulated the residents of Peroshah village for achiev-

ing this feat.

"Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's dream is that every village in Punjab should be a model village," he said, adding that the sanitation department is working diligently to ensure cleanliness and water supply to every village in Punjab. "At the Delhi event, President Murmu said that people should take inspiration from Peroshah village," Kaur said. A solid waste management and water treatment plant has also been set up in the village. A Peroshah resident Sukhraj Singh said that the village manages its solid waste here and generates several kilograms of compost through effective management of biodegradable waste.

UK records spike in Indians crossing over illegally in small boats

London, Mar 12 (PTI):

Britain has recorded a spike in Indians crossing over illegally into the country across the English Channel last year, when a total of 683 largely Indian men were reported to have landed on its shores via small boats.

This figure, according to the latest UK Home Office "Irregular Migration to the UK" statistics for the year ending December 2022, shows a progressive rise from the 67 Indian nationals recorded to have crossed over in small boats in 2021, 64 in 2020 and none in 2019 and 2018.

The UK has a returns agreement with India under the Migration and Mobility Partnership (MMP), something which

was referred to by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in Parliament last week.

"We have returns agreements with India, Pakistan, Serbia, Nigeria and crucially now with Albania, where we are returning hundreds of people," Sunak told the Commons during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs). "Our position is clear: if you arrive here illegally you will not be able to claim asylum here, you will not be able to access the modern slavery system and you will not be able to make spurious human rights claims. That is the right thing to do," said the British Indian leader. It came during the week in which he struck a new enhanced agreement

with neighbouring France to crack down on small boats illegal migration via the route used by people smugglers, from the French port of Calais to the English port of Dover.

Under the agreement, the UK will deploy funds towards a new migrant detention centre on the French border and additional officers, drones and surveillance technology to clamp down on criminals facilitating unsafe small boat journeys.

According to the Home Office data on irregular migration, there were also over 400 Indian nationals who fell under the category of "inadequately documented air arrivals" into the UK in 2022. The majority of the "irregular arrivals" from India on

small boats were made up of men between the ages of 25 and 40, out of a total of 45,755 in 2022 largely dominated by nationals from Albania and Afghanistan, followed by Iran, Iraq and Syria. Other South Asian nationalities recorded on the list include Pakistanis, Sri Lankans and Bangladeshis.

It is believed that traffickers charge thousands of pounds to transport people illegally on small and often unsafe boats in the hope of claiming asylum in the UK. Several deaths have occurred over the years as a result of such journeys but the number of migrants undertaking these treacherous journeys has continued to spike manifold.

FLOODS IN PERU



A flooded neighborhood is seen in Lambayeque, Peru. Cyclone Yaku is present in the South Pacific off the coasts of Peru and Ecuador, where it has affected some provinces in both countries. The unusual event has caused rainfall, which has led to flooding and the overflowing of rivers.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang

Chinese FM Qin Gang elevated to State Councillor rank

Beijing, Mar 12 (PTI):

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang has been elevated to the rank of State Councillor, which will put him in line for his likely appointment for the post of China's Special Representative for India-China boundary talks, a high-level mechanism to discuss the boundary issue and improvement of ties between the two countries. The National People's Congress (NPC), the Chinese Parliament, which is holding its annual session on Sunday endorsed Qin's appointment as Foreign Minister and elevated him to the status of State Councillor, a high-ranking position within the State Council or the central cabinet, the executive organ of the Chinese government.

Qin, 56, was appointed as the Foreign Minister in December succeeding

Wang Yi who was elected to the Political Bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), a key policy body of the party in the once-in-a-five-year congress of the party in October last year.

Qin's elevation to the rank of State Councillor will put him in line for his appointment as the Special Representative (SR) of the India-China boundary mechanism formed in 2003.

Over the years, it also emerged as a key avenue to discuss the state of relations between the two neighbours beset with a host of problems besides the boundary dispute and steps to improve the ties.

Qin, who was the former ambassador of China to the US and a close confidant of President Xi Jinping, visited New Delhi early this month to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting during which he

held talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Relations between China and India have virtually frozen ever since the eastern Ladakh military standoff between the two countries in May 2020.

The two countries have held 17 rounds of high-level military commanders' talks to resolve the standoff.

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

The NPC also appointed a whole set of new cabinet ministers as part of a once-in-ten-year change of Chinese administration.

Li Shangfu, a member of the Central Military Commission (CMC) - the high command of the Chinese military, has been appointed as the Minister of national defence, succeeding Wei Fenghe.

Pakistani forces kill five TTP militants in Waziristan



Waziristan, Mar 12: Weapons, ammunition and a large quantity of equipment were also recovered from the killed terrorists, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

In a separate statement on Friday, Punjab Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) said 12 alleged militants were arrested linked to the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and al-Qaeda.

The statement said that the militants were arrested due to three separate special operations from three cities of the province, including Lahore. Meanwhile, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the army was determined to eliminate the threat of terrorism from the coun-

try. The statement also said that during the last three months, security forces had killed more than 150 terrorists in several special operations.

Security forces conducted 6,921 operations nationwide in the last three months, arresting at least 1,007 terrorists.

Only in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, around 1,960 operations have been conducted, of which 1,516 were area-domination operations, 301 were based on intelligence, and 143 were area-sanitization operations.

The statement read that only in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa were 89 militants killed, and 540 were detained due to security forces operations.

However, the TTP, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and other militant groups have intensified their attacks, particularly in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces.

Experts: India poised for deep technology and transformational opportunities

Washington, Mar 12 (PTI):

India, which is now moving fast up the value chain from low-cost software services to manufacturing, offers tremendous opportunity in the areas of deep technology and technology driven transformation, according to eminent experts. "I am very convinced about the opportunity in India, and I saw this when I was in the Obama administration," said Arun Kumar, former Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets and Director General of the US and Foreign Commercial Service (USFCS) in the Obama Administration.

Currently, a Managing Partner with Celesta Capital, Kumar says this is driven by some good fundamentals, availability of international-standard talent, digital has become ubiquitous, making ground for tremendous amount of innovation; ad-

vance manufacturing, which makes India competitive in manufacturing and finally advancement of India-US relationship under the Modi-Biden leadership. "Overall, it's a very upbeat story on India," Kumar said during a recently concluded TechSurge conference in the Silicon Valley presented by Celesta Capital at the Computer History Museum in Silicon Valley.

A video of the conference was made available by the Celesta Capital.

He observed that India is emerging as a key economic and strategic partner for the US.

The US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), which was advanced recently by meetings between the two countries' National Security Advisors laid out commitments to building a robust innovation ecosystem between the two countries covering collaboration in artificial in-

telligence, high performance computing, defence and space technologies, semiconductors and next generation telecommunications. "Normally speaking, or at least until five or six years ago, we were used to India not doing very well. India is having lot of trouble and so on, and the rest of the world is doing much better. It's the other way around now," said World Bank Chief Economist Indermit Gill noting that India has made significant progress since 2014 in ease of doing business, a metric that the Bank had championed though it discontinued it in 2020. "If India does well in attracting investment, this could be India's time," Gill said. Stanford University Emeritus Professor Arogyaswami Paulraj, said the priorities of deep tech in India will be driven by semiconductors and energy, decarbonisation - green hydrogen and electric vehicles.

6 killed, 29 injured in bus accident in Nepal

Kathmandu, Mar 12 (PTI):

At least six people, including two women and a child, were killed and 29 others injured on Sunday when a bus they were travelling in crashed into a hillside in Nepal's Sindhuli district, police said.

The bus carrying 34 passengers from Okhaldhunga to Kathmandu met with the accident in Phikkal Rural Municipality-4 along the Mid-Hill Highway.

Three men, two women and a child died on the spot, police said.

According to the preliminary investigation, the accident occurred when the bus crashed into the hillside after the driver lost control of the vehicle, said Deputy Superintendent of Police Chiranjeevi Dahal.

The injured passengers have been shifted to Khurkot Hospital.

Five of the seriously injured passengers will be airlifted to Kathmandu for treatment, said Superintendent of Police Raj Kumar Silwal.

The bus driver is on the run, police said.

Four astronauts fly SpaceX back home, end 5-month mission

Cape Canaveral, Mar 12 (AP):

Four space station astronauts returned to Earth late on Saturday after a quick SpaceX flight home. Their capsule splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico just off the Florida coast near Tampa. The US-Russian-Japanese crew spent five months at the International Space Station, arriving last October.

Besides dodging space junk, the astronauts had to deal with a pair of leaking Russian capsules docked to the orbiting outpost and the urgent delivery of a replacement craft for the station's other crew members.



From left to right, Roscosmos cosmonaut Anna Kikina, NASA astronaut Josh Cassada and Nicole Mann, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) astronaut Koichi Wakata smile inside the SpaceX Dragon Endeavour spacecraft onboard a recovery ship shortly after having landed in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Tampa, Fla., following a five-month mission on the International Space Station.

Led by NASA's Nicole Mann, the first Native

American woman to fly in space, the astronauts

checked out of the station early Saturday

morning. Less than 19 hours later, their Dragon capsule was bobbing in the sea as they awaited pickup.

Earlier in the week, high wind and waves in the splashdown zones kept them at the station a few extra days. Their replacements arrived more than a week ago. "That was one heck of a ride," Mann radioed moments after splashdown. "We're happy to be home." Mann, a member of Northern California's Wailacki of the Round Valley Indian Tribes, said she couldn't wait to feel the wind on her face, smell fresh grass and enjoy some delicious Earth food.

Japanese astronaut

Koichi Wakata craved sushi, while Russian cosmonaut Anna Kikina yearned to drink hot tea "from real cup, not from plastic bag."

NASA astronaut Josh Cassada's to-do list included getting a rescue dog for his family. "Please don't tell our two cats," he joked before departing the space station.

Remaining behind at the space station are three Americans, three Russians and one from the United Arab Emirates.

Wakata, Japan's space-flight champion, now has logged more than 500 days in space over five missions dating back to NASA's shuttle era.

PROTEST AGAINST THE RUSSIAN



People carry a giant Ukrainian and Lithuanian flags to protest against the Russian invasion of Ukraine during a celebration of Lithuania's independence in Vilnius, Lithuania. Lithuania celebrated the 33rd anniversary of its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union.

Experts SVB collapse to impact Indian startups

Washington, Mar 12 (PTI):

The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, the largest vendor in the startup ecosystem, is likely to adversely impact the Indian startup scenario as well as it has injected a lot of uncertainty in the sector overnight, industry experts say.

"Hopefully the matter will get resolved, but I think it is a big hit for Indian startups," Ashu Garg, a prominent Silicon Valley-based venture capitalist and early-stage investor for over two decades, told PTI in an interview.

California-based Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), the 16th largest bank in the United States, was closed on Friday by the California

Department of Financial Protection and Innovation which later appointed the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as its receiver.

The FDIC, in a statement, said as of December 31, 2022, the Silicon Valley Bank had approximately USD 209.0 billion in total assets and about USD 175.4 billion in total deposits. At the time of closing, the amount of deposits in excess of the insurance limits was undetermined. The number of uninsured deposits will be determined once the FDIC obtains additional information from the bank and customers.

"The reality is that the Silicon Valley Bank has been a real supporter of the Indian startup scene

and has provided banking services. Most Indian startups that do business in the US use this bank because it is one of the few institutes willing to work with the Indian banks. A lot of the banking institutes do not want to work with overseas customers," Garg, an alumnus of IIT Delhi, said.

"So, SVB has been able to work with the Indian companies that do not have US employees. So if they (are gone), it will be very problematic for the Indian (companies)," he said in response to a question.

Over the past several years, SVB has been one of the most preferred choices of banking for startups and tech industry in the Silicon Valley,

mainly because of its understanding of the industry and flexibility in many aspects suiting the startup ecosystem.

Given that every third startup in the Silicon Valley is founded by Indian-Americans, experts feel a significantly large number of these founders would be impacted as early as next week in terms of even making basic payments and giving paychecks to their employees.

Similarly, a large number of Indian startups which do not have even an employee or an office in the US had opened up their accounts in the Silicon Valley Bank as it let them do so without much regulatory questions and with a customer-friendly approach.



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India's Looming Water Crisis: Urgent Action Needed

India is once again facing an impending water crisis due to the unprecedented heatwave conditions in February that have hit several parts of the country, with temperatures touching nearly 40 degrees Celsius. This is a precursor to the severe water crisis expected in summer 2023. It is imperative that urgent action be taken to ensure the supply of drinking water not only for humans and domestic animals but also for wild animals. Discharging water to drying rivers and other bodies of water will help prevent wild animals from encroaching into human habitats in search of water, thereby reducing the risk of harming people. The management of groundwater resources is crucial to the sustainability of India's agriculture and drinking water security. Unfortunately, India's yearly water crisis has not been adequately addressed, and groundwater resources continue to dry up or greatly deplete. While governments at the Centre and the states promise secure water management systems, little has been done, and the crisis continues to worsen. Groundwater resources are essential for people's livelihood, food security, and sustainable development, and it is high time to implement a structured scientific approach to manage them. Monitoring water level and quality, assessing resources, analyzing hazards, and developing management strategies are essential components of such an approach. The latest Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India report for 2022 reveals a dismal picture of groundwater availability in the country. Total annual groundwater recharge in the country is 437.6 bcm, of which 60.08% is extracted. Categorization of assessment units reveals that only 67% are safe, 12% are in a semi-critical position, 4% are critical, 14% are over-exploited, and 2% are saline. Recharge-worthy areas in the safe category are 66%, while the over-exploited category is 17%. This data clearly shows that India is not working enough to recharge its groundwater resources. India urgently needs an action plan to ensure the supply of drinking water to people and livestock, as well as releasing water from reservoirs into rivers for wild animals. Rainfall is the main source of replenishable groundwater resources, and it contributes nearly 61% of the total annual recharge. With over 75% of the country receiving rainfall mainly during the South-West monsoon season, it is essential to make the most of this opportunity to recharge groundwater resources. It is high time that the Indian government takes urgent action to address the looming water crisis. Water is fundamental to life, livelihood, food security, and sustainable development, and the current situation demands immediate attention. Failure to act now will have dire consequences for the country's future.

Monitoring H3N2 is imperative

Vijaykumar H K, Raichur

Experts in India have suggested that increased monitoring and precautionary measures are needed to combat the H3N2 virus in the country. India has already confirmed its first two influenza-related deaths. According to data released by the ministry on Friday, 600 cases of H3N2 were reported in the country between January and March. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, H3N2 is a non-human influenza virus that normally circulates in pigs and has infected humans (CDC). Symptoms are similar to seasonal flu viruses and can include fever, respiratory symptoms like coughing and running nose, and possibly other symptoms like body ache, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea. As fears grew, some wondered if this was another Covid. Hospitalization has not been very common, with only about 10% of cases reported to be hospitalised. Lockdowns and the extensive use of masks for extended periods of time aids in the control of more virulent versions of the virus, but also prevents good exposure to regular seasonal respiratory viruses according to experts. H3N2 outbreaks can "in fact cause death" and are more severe than the common flu. The occurrence is two to three times higher than usual for this time of year. This virus is classified as an influenza subtype. Though the Covid pandemic appears to be over, a wave of respiratory illnesses among adults continues, with a significant number infected with influenza viruses such as H3N2, adenovirus, and H1N1. According to the most recent data available on the Integrated Health Information Platform, states reported a total of around 4000 laboratory confirmed cases of various subtypes of influenza. Therefore The Union Health Ministry has to monitor the seasonal influenza situation in various states/UTs in real time via the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme network. Flu surveillance is an essential component of public health, saying that disease monitoring is critical to addressing the situation.

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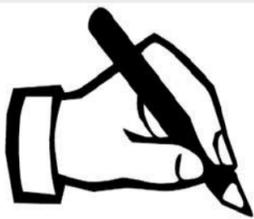
MARSHAL ARTS DEMONSTRATION



Women commandos wing take part in a live demonstration of Marshal arts during the 54th CISF Raising Day Parade-2023, at CISF National Industrial Security Academy in Hakimpet, Sunday, March 12.

Saving Lives and Livelihoods During COVID-19 Pandemic

VINOD K PAUL



India's COVID-19 vaccination program prevented 34 lakh deaths in 2021, and delivered a net positive economic impact of US\$ 15.42 billion (Rs 1,09,325) [Stanford University - IFC working paper 2023]

In January 2021, India started rolling-out a historic COVID-19 vaccination drive. Since then, over 220 crore vaccine doses have been administered. India hit the astonishing figure of 200 crore doses in 18 months making the effort truly unparalleled both in scale and speed. We also created a record of administering 2.51 crore doses on a single day, and of administering more than 1.0 crore doses on nine other days! What is even more remarkable is that the entire COVID-19 vaccination program was powered by two made-in-India vaccines. Over 97% of the vaccines were provided free through the public health system. Real-life data analysed by ICMR showed effectiveness of one and two dose vaccination to be 99.0% and 99.4% in preventing mortality due to COVID-19 disease, respectively.

A study published in the prestigious Lancet Infectious Diseases in September 2022 estimated the impact of first year of COVID-19 vaccination worldwide. The paper showed that many as 34 lakh (range 27.5 - 48.8 lakh) deaths were averted in India by the vaccination program in 2021 alone. Now a working paper released by the Stanford University and the Institute of Competitiveness (titled 'Healing the Economy: Estimating economic impact of vaccination & related measures'), while highlighting and using the above mortality reduction figure, has gone

further to provide an estimate of income-generating potential of the vaccination program. The report estimates that the life-saving vaccination campaign yielded a positive economic impact by preventing the loss of US\$ 18.3 billion (? 1,29,000 crore). According to the paper, a net benefit of US\$ 15.42 billion (?1,09,325 crore) accrued to the nation after taking into consideration the cost of the vaccination campaign.

A related aspect has an important bearing at this point. The government procured the India-made COVID-19 vaccines for under US\$ 3 per dose. The market price of the globally popular mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna), though varied, was typically about US\$ 20 per dose. At such a price, the staggering cost of US\$ 40 billion (? 3,00,000 crore) for two billion doses would have meant an enormous economic stress for the country. In any case, there were simply not enough spare vaccine doses in 2021 in the global market to meet India's humongous need from any external source, and we would have been left high and dry if we did not have our own production. Thanks to atmanirbharta, the country sailed through the crisis with head held high by developing and delivering affordable and effective made-in-India vaccines. We not only protected our own people, but also shared our produce with over 100 countries through Vaccine Maitri initiative.

According to the Stanford paper,

India set an example for emerging economies aiming to expand vaccination coverage across the length and breadth of the country. With a strategic and prioritised vaccination drive and efficient coordination among the stakeholders, India proved that expanding vaccination coverage was not an insurmountable goal despite a range of challenges. Further, the role of India's frontline health workers, especially the ASHAs, in the vaccination drive is a testimony of their importance in the healthcare system especially at the local level. The report notes that the ASHA workers served as the point of contact between the authorities and the masses. They richly deserve the Global Health Leaders Award bestowed by the World Health Organization at the 2022 world health assembly.

The vaccination drive however, was only one important part of India's globally recognized pandemic management and response strategy. The paper elaborates the three cornerstones of India's strategy - containment, relief package, and vaccine administration. It observes that these three measures working in conjunction were critical in saving lives and ensuring uninterrupted economic activity by containing the spread of the COVID-19, sustaining livelihoods, and developing immunity against the virus. India's pandemic management and response was bolstered further by acclaimed IT tools such as CoWIN, Aarogya Setu and eSanjeevani. The Stanford report notes that robust measures at the ground level, like contact tracing, mass testing, home quarantine, distribution of essential medical equipment, revamping healthcare infrastructure, and constant coordination among multiple stakeholders at the centre, state, and district levels, helped contain the spread of the virus and prepare a massive hospital infrastructure for care. It highlights that, as against the top-down approach, a bottom-up approach was critical in containing the virus.

The Economic Survey (2020-21) had shown that India was able to save more than 1 lakh lives due to the lockdown in 2020. It pointed out that because of this measure, the country took around 175 days to reach the peak from its first 100 cases, while many countries reached

their first peak in less than 50 days (including Russia, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, etc.). As per the Stanford report, the lockdown and subsequent containment measures helped flatten the curve and struck a balance between saving lives and sustained economic activity. The calibrated approach used by India in formulating a comprehensive relief package, as opposed to a front-loaded stimulus package, played a major role in reducing the financial stress on the people and in ushering in a resilient post-pandemic trajectory.

With a comprehensive package that encompassed people belonging to old age, women, farmers, and the working class, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) amounting to Rs 68,820 crore (US\$ 9.7 billion) ensured that the impact on the livelihoods of the people was moderated to an extent. According to the Stanford report, as a fiscal stimulus, the PMGKY had an economic impact of US\$ 7.57 billion (Rs 53,679 crores). Under the PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan, 40 lakh beneficiaries were provided employment which resulted in an overall economic impact of US\$ 4.81 billion (Rs 34,095 crore). The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY) involved distribution of free food grains to approximately 80 crores people which ensured that no one slept hungry. It made a huge economic impact of US\$ 26.24 billion (Rs 1,86,026 crore) as per the Stanford study. The pandemic had devastating effects on the global economy. Institutions such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund estimated losses of trillions of dollars to the global economy. For India, a country heading into higher orbits of its development and economic robustness, such a setback could have been catastrophic. Yet, India continues to be the fastest growing major economy even after the pandemic. Indeed, India has emerged stronger in the post-pandemic world under the leadership of the Prime Minister having been successful in protecting lives and livelihoods, and in preserving the energy and dynamism of nation's economy.

(Vinod K Paul is Member (Health), NITI Aayog. Views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Importance of school playgrounds

I am writing to express my views on the importance of school playgrounds. It is widely accepted that school playgrounds keep children fit and healthy. However, the benefits of playgrounds go beyond physical health. Children learn important skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and decision-making while playing. Playground activities also contribute to the development of emotional and cognitive faculties and social skills, which are essential for their overall growth. Playing on the playground helps children develop muscle strength, motor skills, and eye-hand coordination, among other things. Additionally, creativity and talent are nurtured through playing. When a student steps onto the playground and showcases his/her skills, it enhances self-esteem, thought process, and immune system. Playing on the playground also teaches important life lessons that cannot be taught in the classroom. As one thinker said, playgrounds teach students that they are 'not alone' in life, and every individual needs to be taken along life's path.

Manoj Kumar, Raipur

Sino-Indian relations

Ongoing aggressive posture of China towards the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean is a concern for its neighbours. It is heartening to see that friendly nations are joining hands to thwart China's designs in the region. The recent standoff between India and China has become a much-needed trigger for friendly countries to support and seek India's cooperation on common interests. One such international forum that has emerged as a crucial player in this regard is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). Comprising the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, the Quad has been initiated to keep China on its toes. The recent meet of the Quad at New Delhi has reaffirmed the group's commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is indeed a welcome development. I believe that it is high time for the international community to come together to address China's aggressive posture in the region. The Quad has shown that when friendly nations unite, they can make a significant impact on the global stage. I hope that more nations will come forward to join hands with India and the Quad in their efforts to safeguard the interests of the Indo-Pacific region.

Satish Dhawan, Korba

Xi tightens grip: What it means for the world

China's parliament, the National People's Congress, has "unanimously elected" Xi Jinping as the country's president for a historic third term. With this victory, Xi has become China's longest-serving leader since Mao Zedong, setting the stage for a lifelong rule. Xi was also re-elected as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, ensuring his continuation as the head of the People's Liberation Army.

The outcome was inevitable, with no other candidates in the race. Xi has further consolidated his grip on China, at a time when relations with the West and the US are strained over issues like Taiwan and the Ukraine war, and tensions with India continue over the Ladakh standoff. The country's military budget has increased by 7.2%, indicating no let-

up in China's muscle-flexing.

However, balancing military augmentation with economic revival will be a significant challenge for the Chinese President. India needs to be cautious of Xi's absolute power; with the latest report from the US intelligence community stating that China will continue its efforts to achieve its vision of becoming a "major power" globally by undermining US influence.

Xi has set a goal for China to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049, the centenary year of the people's republic. With Xi more firmly in control, China may make provocative moves in retaliation for the growing closeness between India and the US. New Delhi must stay well-prepared, both militarily and diplomatically, for any eventualities.

The safety net of digital financial literacy

India's exponential growth in digital payments highlights the user-friendly and cost-effective nature of payment platforms. However, awareness of digital fraud is critical to building a robust ecosystem. The Reserve Bank of India's "Har Payment Digital" mission aims to popularize digital payments across the country. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das noted that the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) has become the most popular payment mode in India, accounting for 75% of digital payments. The volume of UPI transactions has increased from Rs 0.45 crore in January 2017 to Rs 804 crore in January 2023, while the value of UPI transactions has increased from just Rs 1,700 crore to Rs 12.98 lakh crore during this period.

The government's incentive scheme for the promotion of RuPAY debit cards and BHIM-UPI transactions has also been instrumental in popularizing digital payment. However, the digital divide remains a significant obstacle to achieving full financial inclusion. About 45,000 villages in the country still do not have access to

4G internet connectivity, and over 8,000 villages in the Northeast region lack access to 3G or 4G connectivity. Bridging this divide is crucial for expanding digital transactions in remote villages along international borders. The rise in digital fraud is also a concern. While digital payments are safe and secure, fraudsters take advantage of the lack of digital financial literacy to steal digital identities and dupe users into sharing their vital credentials.

This underscores the need to prioritize digital financial literacy to strengthen the safety net against digital financial fraud. The RBI's campaign theme for Digital Payment Awareness Week, "Digital Payment Apnao, Auron ko bhi Sikhao" (Adopt digital payments and also teach others), can have a sub-theme of imparting digital financial literacy. The government's push for improving digital connectivity and promoting digital transactions has brought a digital revolution to the country, and prioritizing digital financial literacy can further enhance the safety net of digital payments.

BRIEF

Bank of Maharashtra

New Delhi: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Sunday announced a reduction in the interest rate on home loans to 8.4 per cent from the existing 8.6 per cent. The new rate is effective from March 13, 2023, BoM said in a statement. The home loan at 8.4 per cent makes it one of the lowest in the banking sector. Besides, it said, the bank has also a special rate of interest (ROI) for defence personnel, including paramilitary forces, benefiting salaried and pensioner categories for home loans.

Arzoo

New Delhi: Consumer durables marketplace Arzoo has partnered with electronic manufacturing firms like Dixon and Amber Group among others to offer smart range of home appliances. Arzoo is foraying into the consumer durables category offering next generation products that will come with new-age technology, superior quality and designs, said a company statement. Arzoo has partnered with prominent players in electronic manufacturing like Dixon, Amber Group and others to introduce an expansive line up of innovative products such as smart electronics and home appliances to customers across tier 1, 2, and 3 cities.

Simpliwork

New Delhi: Managed flexible workspace provider Simpliwork Offices is planning to invest Rs 750 crore next fiscal to expand its portfolio and raise up to Rs 2,800 crore in equity and debt for future growth. Founded in 2018, Bengaluru-based Simpliwork Offices currently has an office portfolio of around 4.2 million square feet, roughly 50,000 desks, across major 8 cities. Salarpura Sattva, one of the leading real estate firms in the country, with a large presence in the office market, has a 50 per cent stake in Simpliwork Offices.

Godrej

Panaji: Godrej Locks and Architectural Fittings is looking at clocking Rs 1,100 crore turnover this fiscal, a 24 per cent year-on-year growth, a senior company official has said. Talking to reporters in Panaji on Saturday, Shyam Motwani, Business Head, Godrej Locks and Architectural Fittings and Systems, said the unprecedented success for the company was due to a huge demand for digital locks and spurt in residential real estate.

ELCOT

Chennai: State-owned Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT) has been notified as the nodal agency to address issues relating to telecom infrastructure in the state, and to develop a single electronic application process, required for submission of online applications by infrastructure providers for grant of Right of Way (RoW) permissions.

Hybrid energy project likely to start by 2024: JSL MD

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The 300 MW hybrid project in partnership with ReNew is expected to commence operation in the next 18 months, Jindal Stainless Managing Director Abhyuday Jindal said.

In December 2022, Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL) partnered with ReNew to develop the proposed 300 MW hybrid energy project.

When asked about the timeline of the project, Jindal told PTI, "We (JSL and ReNew) are on track on the pact. That project is 300 MW. Land acquisition has already been completed for the project". The project will start in the next one and a half years' time, he said. On the company's hy-



Jindal Stainless Managing Director Abhyuday Jindal

drogen project, the MD said it is expected to start in July this year. In August 2022, the country's largest stainless steel player partnered with Hygenco India Private Limited to set up a green hydrogen plant. "These green initiatives are part of

our mission to switch from a thermal energy-intensive manufacturing setup to renewable energy alternatives," he said. The company will continue to take proactive steps to reduce carbon emissions of its present and planned capacities, Jindal said. JSL is also in process of investing Rs 120 crore to set up a 21 MW rooftop solar capacity at its Jajpur unit and another 6 MW in the Hisar facility, he added. The energy generated from the solar, wind and hydrogen units will be used in various processes of stainless steel-making plants, he said. In FY22, JSL reduced its carbon emissions by 1.4 lakh tonnes and aims to become carbon neutral by 2050, Jindal said.

India, Aus to expedite comprehensive free trade agreement

New Delhi Mar 12 (PTI):

India and Australia have agreed to conclude the negotiations for a comprehensive free trade agreement "as soon as possible" as there is huge potential to enhance bilateral commerce in the next five years, according to a joint statement issued on Sunday.

The statement was released after the meeting of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Australia's Minister for Trade and Tourism Don Farrell here on March 11. Both countries have already implemented an economic cooperation and trade agreement (ECTA) in December 2022 and are now negotiating to widen the scope of that pact into a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA). "Ministers look forward to concluding CECA as soon as possible," the statement said.

Oil giant Saudi Aramco makes a historic USD 161B profit in 2022

Dubai, Mar 12 (AP):

Oil giant Saudi Aramco reported on Sunday earning USD 161 billion last year, claiming the highest-ever recorded annual profit by a publicly listed company and drawing immediate criticism from activists.

The monster profit by the firm, known formally as the Saudi Arabian Oil Co., came off the back of energy prices rising after Russia launched its war on Ukraine in February 2022, with sanctions limiting the sale of Moscow's oil and natural gas in Western markets.

Aramco also hopes to increase its production to take advantage of market demand as China reenters the global market after lifting its coronavirus restrictions. That could raise the billions needed to pay for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plans to develop



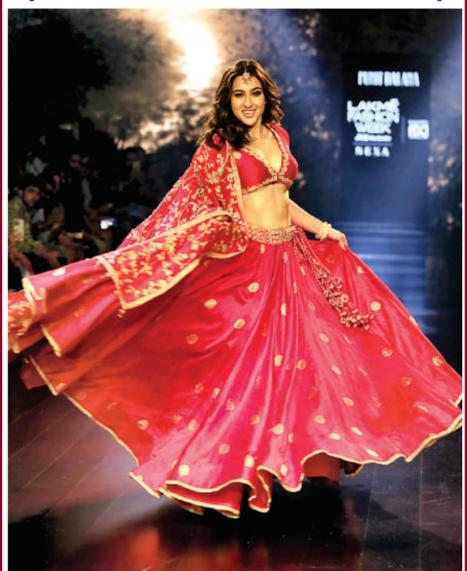
op futuristic cityscapes to pivot Saudi Arabia away from oil.

However, those plans come despite growing international concerns over the burning of fossil fuels accelerating climate change. Meanwhile, higher energy prices already have strained relations between Riyadh and Washington, as well as driven up inflation worldwide. "Given that we anticipate oil and gas will remain essential for the foreseeable future, the

risks of underinvestment in our industry are real including contributing to higher energy prices," Saudi Aramco CEO and President Amin H. Nasser said in a statement.

Profits rose 46.5 per cent when compared to the company's 2021 results of USD 110 billion. It earned USD 49 billion in 2020 when the world faced the worst of the coronavirus pandemic lockdown, travel disruptions and oil prices briefly going negative.

LAKME FASHION WEEK



Bollywood actor Sara Ali Khan walks the ramp showcasing a creation by designer Punit Balana during 'FDCI X Lakme Fashion Week', in Mumbai.

Inflation expected to come down over the year: Ashima Goyal

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Inflation is expected to come down over the year, RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Ashima Goyal said on Sunday, asserting that the government's supply-side action coordinated with a flexible inflation-targeting regime has kept the rate of price rise lower than that in other countries.

Goyal said that India has successfully dealt with 'pluri-shocks' over the past three years, showing considerable resilience.

"Inflation rates are expected to come down over the year. Government supply-side action coordinated with a flexible inflation targeting regime has kept Indian inflation rates lower than other countries and our own past averages even in this period of



RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Ashima Goyal

major adverse external supply shocks," she told PTI in a telephonic interview. She was asked whether high inflation become the norm in India.

"Since nominal policy rates rise with inflation to maintain an expected real positive rate under inflation targeting this pre-

vents demand over-heating and anchors inflation expectations," she noted.

Goyal said policy rates had been cut steeply during the pandemic, so they had to be raised fast after recovery was established.

"But policy rates must not rise too much at present because of slowing external demand. Domestic demand must be allowed to compensate," she emphasised.

According to Goyal, as long as the expected future real policy rate does not rise much above unity, RBI is not over-tightening.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has raised its benchmark repo rate by 250 basis points since May last year with expectations of another 25 basis points hike to 6.75 per cent in April before hitting pause until year-end.

Govt to infuse more capital in public sector general insurers next year

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The government may have to infuse more capital in the three public sector general insurance companies to improve their financial health, a senior government official said.

The government last year provided Rs 5,000 crore capital to three insurers - National Insurance Company Limited, Oriental Insurance Company Limited and United India Insurance Company.

Based on the performance in the FY23, the finance ministry would take a call as to how much capital they would require to meet regulatory requirements, the official said. They are not in good financial health and fund would

be infused in these entities to augment their solvency margin, the official added.

The solvency margin is the extra capital the companies must hold over and above the claim amounts they are likely to incur. It acts as a financial backup in extreme situations, enabling the company to settle all claims.

As per the regulator IRDAI's mandate, the minimum solvency ratio insurance companies must maintain is 1.5 to lower risks. In terms of solvency margin, the required value is 150 per cent.

The Budget 2023-24 has not provided for the capital infusion for insurance companies but the funds can be sought through supplementary demand, the official said.

Welspun India and Walt Disney to collaborate for kids' market: CEO

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Home textiles major Welspun India is seeking to tap opportunities in the kids segment through its licensing pact with The Walt Disney Company, according to Welspun's CEO and Joint Managing Director Dipali Goenka.

The company, which had signed a brand licensing agreement with Walt Disney in January for the Europe and the UK market this year, also sees an increase of shelf space of licensed brands as compared to its private labels. "If there's a recession, or a slowdown, people will not compromise on their kids' demands...The kids' opportunity is huge. Whether there's a slow-



Welspun's CEO and Joint Managing Director Dipali Goenka

down or there's a peak, that demand never tapers off," Goenka told PTI.

The licence agreement had given Welspun the rights to design, develop, manufacture and distribute a complete range of home textiles products leveraging on Disney's franchises and characters across Disney, Pixar,

Marvel and Lucas brands. Welspun India President & Global Head Keyur Parekh said the licensing pact with Walt Disney marks the foray of Welspun into the new segment of kids.

"Disney resonates so well, in terms of this category (kids) and the segment. It allows us to create a wagon for growth into absolutely a new space. So, this actually helps us to bring incremental revenues and to address the whole new segment," he added.

Further, Parekh said, "The current licence that we have with Disney is for three years. It encompasses all the EU countries, the UK and the South African market."

Eight of top 10 firms lose Rs 1.03 lakh cr in market valuation

RIL, ICICI hit hard

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Eight of the top 10 valued firms faced a combined erosion of Rs 1,03,732.39 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank taking the biggest hit amid an overall weak trend in equities. During the holiday-shortened week, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 673.84 points or 1.12 per cent amid concerns over the quantum of the next interest rate hike by the US Federal Reserve. Barring Bharti Airtel and ITC, eight firms suffered erosion from their market capitalisation (mcap). The market valuation of Reliance Industries plummeted by Rs 41,878.37 crore to Rs 15,71,724.26 crore, the most among the top 10 firms.

Lamborghini eyes Tier I, Tier II cities for biz growth in India

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Having established a presence across top cities in India, Italian automaker Automobili Lamborghini is now eyeing customers in smaller centres to generate additional volumes, according to a top company official.

The super sports car maker is bullish on the country's economic growth, a rise of first-generation entrepreneurs and large-scale road infrastructure development to fuel future business growth. In an interaction with PTI, Lamborghini India Head Sharad Agarwal said a few years ago the demand was largely concentrated in bigger cities and metros but now



it is well spread out. "We launched a programme and reached out to possible customers in 100 cities. Today we have 50 cities in India where you can find a Lamborghini owner and these Tier I and Tier II cities now contribute to more than 25 per cent of the business. So these cities are becoming very important for us," he

noted. Lamborghini began its India operations in 2007. Last year it sold 92 units in India, a growth of 33 per cent over 69 units in 2021. The Italian brand sells three models - premium SUV Urus and two super sports cars Huracan Tecnica and Aventador in the country, with prices starting upwards of Rs 3 crore.

Govt Report: 95% Rural population have access to Potable Water

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

A government survey has revealed that 95 per cent of people in rural areas and 97.2 per cent in cities are having access to improved sources of drinking (potable) water during 2020-2021.

According to the report based on the Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS) of the National Sample Survey (NSS) 78th round, about 56.3 per cent of the persons in the rural areas and about 76.3 per cent of the persons in the urban areas used improved source of drinking water located in the household premises, which was suf-



ficiently available throughout the year.

The primary objective of the MIS was to collect data for generation of some important national indicators of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The survey was initially planned to be conducted

during January-December 2020, but due to Covid-19 pandemic, the data collection was continued up to August 15, 2021 for ensuring completeness of survey operation in terms of its coverage.

For the central sample, the survey was spread over 14,266 first stage units (8,469 in rural areas and 5,797 in urban areas) covering 2,76,409 sample households, including 1,64,529 in rural areas and 1,11,880 in urban areas.

The report based on the MIS released in March stated that about 78.7 per cent of the house-

holds in the rural areas and about 97.1 per cent in the urban areas reported that majority of household members had access to latrine.

Among those who had reported access to latrine, about 97.5 per cent in rural areas had access to improved latrine while about 99 per cent in the urban areas had access to improved latrine, it found. About 77.4 per cent of the persons in the rural areas and about 92.7 per cent in the urban areas had access to hand washing facility with water and soap/detergent within the premises, it stated.

PepsiCo bottler predicts significant growth in Indian soft drink market

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Indian soft drink market is expected to see "significant growth" as consumption is anticipated to increase steadily, which will deliver sustainable and healthy volume growth across all product categories, said Varun Beverages Ltd (VBL), PepsiCo's largest franchisee bottler.

This would be driven by factors such as shifting population demographics, the rising spending power of young consumers, accelerated urbanisation, and growing rural consumption.

The company is in the process of further expanding its capacities to meet the higher demand expecta-

tions, said VBL in its latest annual report.

Its distribution model and on-the-ground end-to-end infrastructure facilities continue to be the key growth drivers and VBL remains committed to extending it to newer areas and under-penetrated regions to further boost its market presence," it added.

While from an operational standpoint, VBL continues to focus on new product categories and evolving customer preferences.

Launch of new products such as energy drink 'Sting' performed well across various geographical regions and recent launches in the value-added dairy segment have received positive consumer response. "Overall, VBL is confi-

dent in its ability to deliver strong and sustained growth moving forward, owing to the exceptional performance during the year, normalisation of the environment, and the expanded capacities to meet the high demand expectations," it said.

VBL is PepsiCo's second largest franchisee (outside the US), possessing rights to manufacture, distribute and sell carbonated soft drinks, fruit juice-based drinks, packaged drinking water, sports drinks and energy drinks spanning across 6 countries. In India, VBL has a presence in 27 states and 7 Union Territories and accounts for 90 per cent of PepsiCo India's beverage sales volume in the country.

I might get into trouble for saying this, says Priyanka about pay parity

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming spy-action thriller series 'Citadel', has shared that for the first time in her 22 years' career, she got equal pay with 'Citadel'.

Recently at the inauguration of the South by Southwest Film Festival, the actress spoke with Amazon Studios head Jennifer Salke and shared her version with a bit of scepticism. "I might get into trouble for (saying this), depends on who's watching," she said, quoted by The Hollywood Reporter. "I've been working in the entertainment industry for now 22 years, and I have done about almost 70-plus features and two TV shows."

She continued: "But when I did Citadel, it was the first time in my career

that I had pay parity. I'm laughing about this, but it's kind of nuts, I put in the same amount of investment and work, but I get paid much less. But the ease in which Amazon Studios said, 'That's what you deserve, you are co-leads, that's just fair,' and I was like, 'You're right, it's fair.'" 'Citadel' is Prime Video's upcoming big-budget, globe-trotting spy thriller produced by the

Russo Brothers and showrunner David Weil, and stars Richard Madden along with Priyanka.

"And I wonder: Did that happen because there are very few female decision-makers in Hollywood? Would that have been a different conversation if a woman didn't make that decision? Those are not conversations that happened very easily," the actress concluded.

Actress Parul Gulati goes home with Rs 1 cr cheque from 'Shark Tank India 2'



Actress Parul Gulati got a cheque worth a whopping Rs 1 crore by entrepreneur Amit Jain on the show 'Shark Tank India' season 2.

Parul, who is the owner of a hair extension brand called Nish Hair, appeared on 'Shark Tank India 2' during the finale and went home with the cheque.

She took to Instagram, where she said that she made it with her business. Parul shared a picture holding the cheque and wrote: "I have had this cheque for a while now & how I wanted to share my joy with you all. I MADE IT with my

business. Who could have ever thought my business will one day be valued at 50 Crore." She called Amit Jain her hero. "Also @amitjain_cardekho you are truly my hero, not just because you gave me the best deal but also because you and your team, you have been so supportive & have been guiding me through my tough times."

Parul concluded by saying: "I don't know how many of you remember when I was facing troubles with my payment gateway it was his team @megha_alley who lent me theirs till I got one of my own."



&TV shows to continue with love and hatred



This week on &TV's Doosri Maa, viewers will witness Krishna's hatred for his father Ashok. And new love stories will bloom in Happu Ki Ultan Paltan and Bhabiji Ghar Par Hai. About &TV's Doosri Maa track Krishna shares, "Yashoda (Neha Joshi) slaps Krishna (Aayudh Bhanushali) in anger as he tells her that Ashok (Mohit Dagga) is a coward, which is why he ran away from them. Ashok meets Mandal Baba and approaches him for diksa. Meanwhile, Kamini (Priety Sahay) devises a plan and gets Aastha (Aadvika Sharma) injured to get Yashoda and Krishna back. The family takes her to the hospital when Kamini calls and informs them about her injury to Yashoda, leaving her shocked."

About &TV's Happu Ki Ultan Paltan track Daroga Happu Singh shares, "After the Master complains to Happu that the kids are physically inactive, Happu (Yogesh Tripathi) decides to get a badminton coach for them. He hires Janardan (Hartaj Singh), a badminton coach, who came to file a report at his police station. When Janardan comes to train the kids, gets attracted to Rajesh (Kamna Pathak), and motivates her to play badminton. Happu and Katori Amma (Himani Shivpuri) also agree for her to take badminton lessons. Meanwhile, Manohar (Nitin Jhadav) talks about a wife being clouded by a sportsman, leaving him insecure."

Heroini Awards applaud women from various fields

Radio Nasha has been consistently promoting women empowerment and continues to celebrate women achievers every year through their flagship awards. Every year in March around Women's Day RJ Rohini celebrates and applauds the finest journeys of the most inspiring women in our country to the fore at 'Radio Nasha Heroini Awards'.

In its 5th edition this year, the evergreen heart-throb Raveena Tandon has made it to the illustrious list. RJ Rohini says "As a woman in media I know the challenges faced by women from across industries and decided to present a series of interviews where we talk about the real stuff like when Sonali Bendre Bahl told me about that phase when she lost her hair when was battling cancer, I had goosebumps. I believe



bringing these stories to the forefront will serve as great inspiration to our listeners". These stories are unique and goes beyond just entertainment. Through this initiative, Radio Nasha is building lasting conversations with these amazing Heroinis'.

Raveen Tandon added, "I am honored by this recognition. I believe every woman is a Diva in herself at whatever she chooses to do in her life.

Every woman overcomes her shortcomings and emerges as a Diva, everyday. Radio Nasha is doing a noteworthy job acknowledging the contribution of women in our country. I would like to applaud every woman rising above all the odds and taking a step closer to living the life of her dreams. A determined woman can do everything that she aspires to do so no matter the obstacles, and this honour celebrates every such woman who wants to break out of the shell and conquer the world right from the one who wants to excel in her career to the one who is giving it her all while raising the family"

"Heroini awards are a special Women's Day initiative that strengthens the relationship between female achievers and their viewers and supporters. Kudos to Radio ki Heroini Rohini for bringing all these stalwarts together.

Ram Charan attends pre-Oscars event with wife Upasana

Indian actor Ram Charan attended the South Asian Excellence pre-Oscars event and Priyanka Chopra Jones's party, along with his wife Upasana Konidela.

Priyanka and Ram Charan share a great camaraderie as the two have worked together in the 2013 film 'Zanjeer'.

Ram and his wife spent time with the actors, directors and producers from the west. He wore a Dolce and Gabbana suit paired with glasses. Ram is currently in the US waiting for the Oscar awards to take place on Sunday. His song 'Naatu Naatu' from the film 'RRR' is nominated at the 95th Oscar awards.

'Naatu Naatu' has already won a Golden Globe and a Critics Choice Award this year. At the Oscars, the song is contending against tracks sung by Lady Gaga and Rihanna.

'RRR' stars NTR Jr., Ram Charan, Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt and Shriya Saran and tells the fictional story



of two real-life Indian revolutionaries, Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem and their fight against the British Raj.

Set in the 1920s, the plot explores the undocumented period in their lives when both the revolutionaries chose to go into obscurity before they began the fight for their country.

'Have become an even bigger fan of Akshay Kumar'

Singing sensation Stebin Ben is currently creating waves in North America as he is performing for the Entertainer's Tour with Akshay Kumar and others. Grateful for the experience, an overwhelmed Stebin Ben penned a heartwarming note for Superstar Akshay Kumar.

Posting pictures from the stage with Akshay Kumar for the performance of Entertainer's Tour in Atlanta, North America, Stebin Ben said, "Dear @akshaykumar sir

Sharing the stage with you in Atlanta was the highlight for me!

Your love for music and your energy on stage just cannot be matched and I'm blessed to have exper-



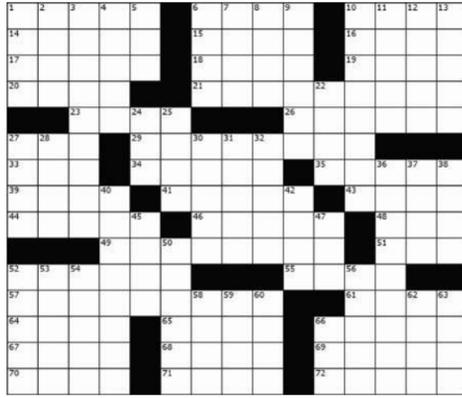
ience this tour with you. Have become an even bigger fan of your hard-

work and fearlessness! Cheers to beginning The Entertainer's journey with a bang!! Dallas be ready!"

While live performances are Stebin Ben's forte, the charming singer has collaborated with a celebrity tour for the first time. Interestingly, Stebin also sang for Akshay Kumar's latest film Selfie. Titled Deewane, the special track from the film features Akshay Kumar, Emraan Hashmi and Jaqueline Fernandez.

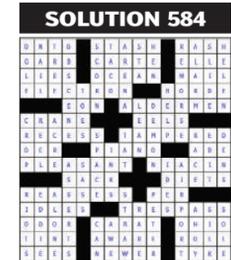
After beginning the year with a bang owing to the success of Tu Mile, Stebin Ben is currently garnering praises for Deewane and busy with his international tour with Akshay Kumar, Mouni Roy, Disha Patani, Sonam Bajwa, Nora Fatehi, Jasleen Royal, and Aparshakti Khurrana.

CROSSWORD 585



- ACROSS**
- Swindle
 - Gent
 - Wise about
 - Synthetic fabric
 - Volcanic emission
 - Red wine
 - On one's toes
 - Tiny particle
 - Send out
 - Ink stain
 - Pierce
 - Actor _____ Newman
 - President, e.g.
 - Get by
 - Ocean beach
 - Mr. Franklin
 - Peruvian range
 - Lugged
 - Sugar source
 - Bath powders
 - Wander
 - Bit of parsley
 - Platter

- DOWN**
- Seafood choice
 - Foyer
 - Shocking revelation (2 wds.)
 - Large artery
 - Explosive (abbr.)
 - Thunder sound
 - Detest
 - English river
 - _____ Anderson of "Baywatch"
 - Phone company employee
 - Wanderer
 - Stale
 - Water mammal
 - Experiment
 - Neighbor of Mex.
 - Pre-Easter period
 - Declines
 - Retain
 - Modify
 - Viola's kin
 - Hollywood award
 - Acceptance of others
 - Fifty-fifty
 - Legal paper
 - Having endless energy
 - Fret
 - Heredity carrier
 - Bard's "before"
 - Skunk feature
 - Dwell
 - Aromatic herb
 - Streamlined
 - Expiate
 - Thought
 - Close
 - Inquires
 - Peaceful
 - Individuals
 - What a cow chews



Kohli dazzles, India dominates Aussies

Ahmedabad, Mar 12 (PTI):

India's batting mainstay Virat Kohli finally ended a near 40-month wait for his 28th Test hundred as his scrappy but brilliantly effective 186 set up a gripping final day of the fourth Test against Australia here on Sunday.

Kohli's epic knock helped India amass 571 in response to Australia's first innings score of 480.

With a lead of 91 runs, India had a go at Australia in the six overs before stumps but visitors managed to keep all wickets intact. With a lead of 88 at close, India will have to go for the jugular on day five on a track where there is finally some turn and bounce on offer but not something that batters can't tackle.

A draw still looks the most likely result but if any team wins the Test from here, it will be India, who would then go on to win the series 3-1 and directly qualify for the World Test Championship final, without having to wait on the fate of Sri Lanka's Test series versus



New Zealand. For the 15,000 odd people present at Motera, it was a Sunday to remember as Kohli guided Nathan Lyon towards mid-wicket to complete his first Test hundred since November 2019. The hundred, his 75th in international cricket, came off 241 balls.

The celebrations were muted as there was still some way to go before India would be in driver's seat and hence he didn't want to lose focus by getting elated. There was a smile of satisfaction and a now familiar kiss on his engagement ring.

It was an innings of different character from Kohli. Having had his troubles dealing with deliveries outside the off-stump, he traded caution in exchange of flair and hardly played those beastly cover drives till he reached his hundred.

There were shades of Sachin Tendulkar's 241 at Sydney in 2004 in this innings of Kohli's, when one compares the sheer discipline of the two knocks.

A supremely fit athlete, Kohli ran 84 singles, 18 doubles and twice he took

three runs, including once when he was batting in his 160s. By sheer volume of running between the wickets, he collected 126 of his 186 runs with 15 hits to the fence.

Wife Anushka Sharma put up an Instagram post which informed that Kohli showed this enormous composure despite being "sick".

It was pity that Shreyas Iyer couldn't turn up for batting due to recurring back pain and Kohli was the ninth and last Indian man to be dismissed after his 364 ball knock that spanned over 8 hours and 36 minutes. No one deserved those 14 runs more than him.

As he dragged his tired body towards the pavilion, rival skipper Steve Smith and bowler Todd Murphy along with other Aussie players came to shake his hands and the crowd near dressing room gave a standing ovation. He did have some significant partnerships but no better than the 162 that he added for the sixth wicket with an ever-improving Axar Patel (79 off 113 balls).

Feels great to get a Test hundred in India: Gill

Ahmedabad, Mar 12 (PTI):

Young Indian opener Shubman Gill, who scored his maiden Test century at home in the ongoing fourth Test, said he was determined not to play a loose shot on the most batting friendly pitch of the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

Gill slammed a patient 128 off 235 balls on day three of the game here on Saturday.

"Honestly, I was thinking I don't know when next I will get a wicket like this. I didn't want to miss the opportunity by playing a bad shot. That's what going through my mind," Gill told his teammate Cheteshwar Pujara in an interview posted on BCCI.TV after the day three's proceedings.

"It feels great to be able to get a Test hundred in India. This is my first one, and to be able to get it in India which is my home ground in the IPL, is amazing."

Going through a dream run in 2023, the 23-year-



old has struck centuries across formats. His maiden Test century had come in the Chittagong Test against Bangladesh in December 2022.

On day three, only the spinners were getting some purchase and Gill said his strategy was to see through them and "balance it out" by being aggressive against the pacers.

"I was blocking myself against the spinners, and I can't be doing the same against the fast bowlers as well. You have to balance it out and that was I

trying to do. "I was still trying to be positive, keep looking for the singles and go for a bad ball."

It was a hard toil for the Indians and especially Gill who after fielding for almost two days batted till the third session on day three. As a result, he developed some cramps while batting.

"I was getting cramps, but that is a good thing because if you are getting cramps, you know you are doing well," Gill said. The duo of Gill and Pujara put together 113 runs for the second wicket.

Shreyas Iyer suffers lower back pain again



■ Could be doubtful for Australia ODIs

The BCCI Medical Team is monitoring him," BCCI said in a medical update.

Iyer's injury came to light after wicketkeeper-batter Kona Bharat came out to bat ahead of him following the dismissal of Ravindra Jadeja (28) in the morning session. Iyer had also missed the first Test in Nagpur due to a back issue before returning for the second game in Delhi. However, the bigger question now is that whether NCA once again gave go-ahead to a player who isn't fully fit.

The Indian team and National Cricket Academy's injury management has once again come under scanner with the recurrence of Shreyas Iyer's back injury.

Pain in his lower back forced Iyer to miss his batting turn on day four of the fourth Test here.

There is a high possibility that Iyer could miss the three-match ODI series against Australia, starting March 17 in Mumbai.

With World Cup being the most important tournament of the year and the player set to lead KKR in the IPL, it would be prudent if he takes rest for some time.

"Shreyas Iyer complained of pain in his lower back following the third day's play". He has gone for scans and

Mathews' 115 helps SL set NZ a stiff target

Christchurch, Mar 12 (AP):

Ageless Angelo Mathews ground out a determined century to steady Sri Lanka, then put it back into a competitive position in a closely-fought match Sunday on the fourth day of the first test against New Zealand.

At 35 and in his 101st test, Mathews produced his 14th century and one of his best. He was at the crease when play began, 20 not out overnight, and was finally out after tea for 115 with Sri Lanka 242 runs in front after trailing by 18 on the first innings.

Sri Lanka eventually was all out for 302, a lead of 284. At stumps, after 17 overs, New Zealand was 28-1, still 256 behind, and the test is set for a thrilling final day. If New Zealand reaches its target, it will be its third-highest successful run chase in tests.

If Sri Lanka wins, it will be only for the third time in New Zealand and it will keep alive its chances of reaching the final of the World Test Championship.

Sri Lanka improved its chances of winning the match and leading the two-match series when it dismissed Devon Conway for 1 in the fifth over. Conway played defensively but with an unusually full follow-



through at a ball from Kasun Rajitha which held up at little. The ball flew back to the bowler who took a two-handed catch above his head. On a day of undu-

lating fortunes when both teams at times felt in charge, Mathews was the most influential figure.

Sri Lanka began the day at 83-3, effectively 65-3 be-

cause of New Zealand's narrow first innings lead. The wicket of night watchman Prabath Jayusuriya was the only one to fall in a slow morning session after which Mathews was 54 and Sri Lanka was 150-4, leading by 132. Mathews had support throughout the day from Dinesh Chandimal who made 42 in a 105-run partnership for the fifth wicket and Dhananjaya de Silva who made an unbeaten 47 batting at No. 7.

New Zealand was a bowler short throughout the fourth day because Neil Wagner has back and hamstring injuries and couldn't bowl. The bowlers had to work hard but were rewarded by pace and bounce on a Hagley Oval pitch which will still be competitive for batters and bowlers on the last day Blair Tuckner took four wickets, Matt Henry three and Tim Southee two as the New Zealand seamers worked hard to make up for Wagner's absence. Daryl Mitchell also bowled 12 overs to play his part.

"I'm a bit sore and tired. We worked hard to bowl them out and we're going to push for the win tomorrow," Tuckner said. "It was an overall great performance by the bowling team."

Cool show to watch: Meg Lanning on Shafali blitz



Mumbai, Mar 12 (PTI):

Shafali Verma's sensational 76 not out off 28 balls in a small run chase for Delhi Capitals took even her inspirational skipper Meg Lanning by surprise.

Lanning admitted that explosive batter Shafali Verma produced a knock against Gujarat Giants on Saturday that no one saw

coming in the Women's Premier League (WPL).

After Marizanne Kapp's 4-0-15-5 blew away the Gujarat Giants, who could manage a mere 105/9 in their 20 overs, Shafali hammered five sixes and 10 fours in the company of Lanning (21 not out) to power Delhi Capitals to a 10-wicket win.

"I did not see that coming from Shafali. I do not think anyone did," said Lanning to the media after the match here at the DY Patil Stadium. "She played to her strengths and got on a roll and when that happens in T20 cricket you just got to be going with it." The Delhi Capitals captain said the pitch assisted the pacers early on.

"The pitch was a new-ball wicket. There was a little bit (of help) there if you got it in the right areas which we felt like we did," Lanning said.

"But Shafali took the wicket out of the equation, she backed herself, played to her strengths, stayed still and hit straight. On these wickets if you do that, you are going to be successful. I loved standing at the other end watching her do her thing," she added.

Brenda rallies to beat Ankita, clinches ITF Women's Open title



Czech Republic Brenda Fruhvirtova plays a shot against India's Ankita Raina during the final match of ITF Women's Open at KSLTA stadium, in Bengaluru, Sunday.

Bengaluru, Mar 12 (PTI):

Top seed Brenda Fruhvirtova of the Czech Republic gave a fine demonstration of fighting skills on way to beating India's Ankita Raina 0-6, 6-4, 6-0 to clinch the ITF Women's Open singles title here on Sunday.

Brenda, world No. 163, did not look sharp in the first set against the fourth seed India in the USD 40,000 event.

She had four double faults and committed several unforced errors as Ankita did not put a foot wrong and converted all three break points.

The second set began in similar fashion with Raina building a 3-0 lead, and a quick end to the match loomed. But a break in the fifth game proved to be the turning point as Brenda soon levelled the score at 3-3 and then converted a break point in the ninth game to take a 5-4 lead. The Czech player served out the game and took the match to the decider. A visibly shaken Ankita was hardly a match for Brenda in the third set, though the Indian had a chance to break serve in the fourth game. But Brenda raised her game just in time to hold serve.

Brenda ended the two-hour-19-minute contest with a crushing forehand. "I didn't feel good in anything in the first set and it was like I was fighting with myself. I had to shut out the opening set because she (Ankita) was playing well at that point. But once I won the second set, things became easier from there," said Brenda.

Swiatek dominates at BNP Paribas Open



Indian Wells, Mar 12 (AP):

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek routed Claire Liu in 65 minutes to win her opening match at the BNP Paribas Open.

Swiatek, the defending champion who took over the No. 1 ranking nearly a year ago, won 6-0, 6-1. She lost just seven points in the first set. "Tactically and tennis-wise, everything was on point," she said. "I had so many matches that were going my way in last couple of weeks that I know what to do." Taylor Fritz, the defending

men's champion, rallied past former NCAA singles champion Ben Shelton, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. Shelton's biggest serve reached 147 mph.

"I expected him to come out serving bombs, playing well," Fritz said. "I was ready for it, I just had to regroup, just find a way and problem solve. He's an incredible player and it was an extremely tough first match to come out and play, so I'm happy to get through it." Andy Murray beat Radu Albot, 6-4, 6-3 in his first straight-set victory of the year to set up a third-round match with Jack Draper. Murray had just 18 unforced errors to 35 for Albot, and never faced a break point on his serve while firing six aces.

"Hopefully I can keep pushing myself up the rankings, keep building that confidence, and maybe get a few more straightforward draws, as well," Murray said. Jannik Sinner defeated Richard Gasquet, 6-3, 7-6 (2). The 21-year-old Sinner fired 20 forehand winners against the 36-year-old veteran. "Obviously it was a tough match today, especially in the beginning I was a little bit tight," Sinner said on court.

Mbappe nets late goal as PSG beat Brest 2-1

Paris, Mar 12 (AP):

Paris Saint-Germain refocused on its last shot at silverware this season in the French league and beat Brest 2-1 with a late Kylian Mbappe goal.

Mbappe beat the offside trap to collect a throughball from Lionel Messi in the 90th minute and rounded goalkeeper Marco Bizot to slot into an empty net.

The France striker was lucky to still be on the pitch after kicking Haris Belkebla, who was on the ground in the 85th.

"We're not saying that we lost because of that, but I'd like to know whether all the players would get the same treatment if they did that," Brest midfielder Pierre Lees-Melou said. "I asked the referee for an explanation. He said that it was tame. So, I'd like to see what's a real kick."

Mbappe initially fouled Belkebla from behind. Belkebla fell to the ground and held onto



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (L) kicks the ball during the French L1 football match between Stade Brestois 29 (Brest) and Paris Saint-Germain FC at Stade Francis-Le Ble in Brest, western France.

Mbappe's leg. In an act of petulance, Mbappe kicked Belkebla in the stomach. The referee showed only yellow cards to Mbappe and Belkebla for that incident.

PSG was knocked out of the Champions League by Bayern Munich on Wednesday

and is left with winning Ligue 1. PSG leads second-placed Marseille by 11 points.

"Of course, there is this disappointment, but we have to go and get this title, and there is unity. And have no doubt about this unity," PSG coach Christophe Galtier said.

'Cong busy digging my grave, while I'm working for poor'

Maddur (KTK), Mar 12:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the Congress and other opposition parties of being busy digging his grave, while he was striving for the development of the country and the welfare of the poor, as he also declared that blessings of the people is his biggest protection shield.

"On his sixth visit this year to Karnataka, where Assembly elections are due by May, he also asserted that the 'double engine' government is a necessity for the fast-paced development of the state.

"Amid the efforts of the double engine government for the development of the country and the progress of its people, what is Congress



Prime Minister Narendra Modi felicitated during a public rally, in Mandya district, Sunday.

and its associates doing? ...Congress is dreaming about digging the kabr (grave) of Modi," said the

PM, who inaugurated the 118 Km long Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway project here in Mandya district.

Addressing a public gathering here, he said, "Congress is busy digging the grave of Modi, while Modi is busy building Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway. Congress is busy digging Modi's grave, while Modi is busy in improving the lives of poor."

"Congress people who are dreaming about digging the grave of Modi, don't know that the blessings of crores of mothers, sisters, daughters, and people is the biggest protection shield for Modi," he added. The Expressway will reduce the travel time between the two cities from around three hours to about 75 minutes, accord-

ing to officials. Prior to 2014, Modi said, "it was a coalition government (at the Centre) running with the support of various types of people."

"It did not leave any stone unturned to destroy poor men and poor families. The money that was there for the development of the poor, thousands of crores of rupees of it was looted by the Congress government," he claimed.

Congress never bothered about pains and sufferings of the poor, he alleged, adding that "In 2014 when you (people) gave me the opportunity to serve you, it paved the way for the formation of a government for the poor in the country, the government which understood the pain and suffering of the poor."

SAREE RUN 2023



Women warm up before taking part in the Women's Day Saree Run 2023 organised to commemorate the International Women's Day, in Chandigarh, Sunday.

Dipping groundwater cause of worry in Bihar dists

Patna, Mar 12 (PTI): The dipping groundwater levels and deterioration in its quality in some Bihar districts over the past two years have become a cause of worry for the state authorities, according to the latest economic survey of the state. An assessment of pre-monsoon groundwater level across the state revealed that districts such as Aurangabad, Saran, Siwan, Gopalganj, West Champaran, Sitamarhi, Sheohar, Khagaria, Saharsa, Supaul, Madhepura, Purnea, Kishanganj, Araria, Katihar has witnessed a decline in groundwater levels in the last two years. When asked Bihar Public Health Engineering Department Minister Lalit Kumar Yadav told PTI, "The matter is being examined by the department. We are planning a fresh study to find out the reasons behind the deterioration in water quality and preventive steps that can be taken to check it.

Tulip garden in Kashmir ready to welcome visitors

From March 19

Srinagar, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Indira Gandhi Tulip Garden, Asia's largest tulip garden, ensconced between Dal Lake and the Zabarwan hills here is in full bloom and ready to welcome tourists form next week. "Preparations like gardening, engineering, fungicide treatment, nutrient spraying and minor repair which we do before the tulip show are going on," Inam-ul-Rehman, in-charge of the tulip garden, told PTI.

The garden, a well-known landmark, will be open to the public from March 19. Besides 1.5 mil-



Tulips bloom inside Asia's largest tulip garden on the foothills of Zabarwan Mountains overlooking Dal Lake, in Srinagar.

lion (15 lakh) tulips of various colours and hues, the garden, also known as Siraj Bagh, will have other spring flowers, such as hyacinths, daffodils, muscari and cyclamens, on display.

"Every year we expand this garden and new varieties are here. This year we have extended the fountain channel... It should set an example of gardening professionalism across the globe,"

Rehman said. He said there will be a rainbow of tulip colours this year, including yellow, red, crimson, purple and white.

"The shadow of the Zabarwan mountains gives a good ambience to this garden. That is why people like this garden," he added. Mushtaq Ahmad Mir, the supervisor of the garden, said preparations for the tulip garden are at their peak as it is expected to open next Sunday. Expecting a heavy footfall of visitors at the garden this season, Mir said, "Work is going on day and night. We have a heavy flow of inquiries from outside Kashmir regarding the opening of the garden."

POLITICAL ANALYSTS VIEW

'Installing opposition-less' govt in Nagaland will be mockery of democracy'

Kohima, Mar 12 (PTI):

As Nagaland heads towards an opposition-less government with almost all parties extending support to the NDPP-BJP alliance, political analysts and commentators in the state have slammed the arrangement, calling it a mockery of democracy. NDPP-BJP had contested the assembly elections on a 40:20 seat sharing formula, and retained power for a second consecutive term with a comfortable majority.

According to political analyst Jonas Yanthan, the parties extending support to the NDPP-BJP combine "do not have any agenda for the

people who trusted their leaders, and are trying to fulfil its own selfish interests". "Who would raise the concerns of the public in the assembly without an opposition member in the assembly?" Yanthan told PTI.

He also said the claim of the parties that they would support the government to facilitate the Naga peace talks is a "political melodrama". Social activist Niketu Iralu said he did not subscribe to the idea of an opposition-less government, which he described as "opinion-less".

H Chishi, a senior journalist and writer, told PTI that the proposition of a opposition-less government is

a "political gimmick to come to power for vested interests". "There has to be a common voice from all sections of people, and not only the 60 MLAs (Nagaland Assembly strength), to facilitate the ongoing peace talks," Chishi said.

"We have had opposition-less governments in the past, but what have they delivered? It is undemocratic and the Union government should intervene," he said.

In 2015 and 2021, opposition-less governments were formed during the term of a government, but this would be the first-ever assembly that is set to be an opposition-less one even before the House has been sworn in.

CISF RAISING DAY



CISF commandos perform live demonstration during the 54th CISF Raising Day Parade-2023, at CISF National Industrial Security Academy in Hakimpet, Sunday.

At select hospitals

Kochi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Kerala government has decided to install air quality monitoring devices in select hospitals of the coastal city, which is reeling under toxic haze from the fire at the Brahmapuram waste treatment plant. State Health Minister Veena George said installing the air quality monitoring devices will help identify the possibility of people getting sick due to the worsening air quality.

"The devices will help identify the possibility of people falling sick and ensure preventive measures to be taken well in advance," George said in a release. Meanwhile, the Ernakulam district admin-

istration and the State Disaster Management Authority has held an online discussion on the fire situation with the New York Fire Safety Department Deputy Chief, George Healy.

During the meet, Haley urged the administration to remain cautious as there are chances that fire may breakout again even after it appears to have been doused, the district administration said in a statement.

The New York Fire safety official said the current method of dousing the fire and smoke is the most effective method, the release said. District Collector N S K Umesh, State Disaster Management Authority member secretary Shekhar Kuriakose and others attended the online

meeting. Haley suggested the use of drones fitted with infrared cameras that can detect smoldering fire underneath the waste heap.

The state government had on Saturday said 90 per cent of the fire at the Brahmapuram Waste Treatment Plant was extinguished and efforts were on to douse the rest.

As many as 23 fire units, 32 excavators/JCBs and

three high pressure pumps are currently being pressed into service for extinguishing the smoke.

The health department has also earmarked a 'smoke casualty' in hospitals while 100 beds in General Hospital, Ernakulam, and 20 beds in Taluk Hospital, Tripunithura have been set aside for patients coming from the affected areas.

Kerala govt to install air quality monitoring devices

Many entrepreneurs in Arunachal showing interest in bamboo products

Itanagar, Feb 12 (PTI):

For Nyapu Doni, selecting a new business after closing her poultry and piggy units, was a risky affair. But her grit and determination paved the way to overcome the risk factor and today she is an established bamboo entrepreneur in Arunachal Pradesh. The bamboo industry in the northeastern state could be a money spinner, if its potential can be exploited, as the state boasts of having 74 species of the grass species, literally known as the 'green gold'.

Doni, who started her 'Arunachal Bamboo' in-

dustry in 2019 after leaving aside her poultry and piggy units, now earns more than 50,000 per month by selling her wide range of bamboo products including, furniture, home utility items and jewellery items. With growing demands for bamboo in the country, many entrepreneurs in Arunachal Pradesh are evincing keen interest to bamboo-based industries for its high-end value products with less investment.

"Bamboo industry is more comfortable and lucrative than other businesses as bamboo products with indigenous touch are a craze among



Furniture and other bamboo-based decor in Arunachal Pradesh.

the people," Doni, who owns a large bamboo plantation, said. She claimed that furniture and home utility items produced in

her unit are in high demand. "Recently my unit has constructed all the furniture and utility items for a restaurant in the

state capital. We have also designed the interiors of the restaurant with traditional designs made of treated bamboo which will last for over 20 years," she added.

Another lady entrepreneur Techina Anna, who owns the Poma Cane and Bamboo Industry near here, revealed that her efforts were to popularize the unique bamboo products of the state in other parts of the country.

"The unique products of my unit are bamboo plates and bowls which are being produced through bamboo coil technique. We are also producing furniture, home utili-

ty items besides jewellery which are available in our showroom at Itanagar," Anna said.

कालड़ा बर्न एवं प्लास्टिक कॉन्स्ट्रिक्ट सजरी सेटर वेजर लाइपोसक्शन द्वारा मोटापे का इलाज



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BRIEF



A monkey sits on the lap of a woman, in Bikaner, Sunday.

Lock down

Jammu: The residents of a village in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda locked down a government primary school after a teacher was found in an inebriated condition during working hours. A video of the incident that happened in Chanti village on Saturday surfaced on social media, prompting authorities to initiate an inquiry against the accused.

FIR

Chandrapur: Police have registered a case of molestation against the MLA from Chimur Assembly constituency in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra on the complaint of a woman who also accused him of beating her husband, an officer said on Sunday.

Weather

High 36 Low 19

PM SLAMS RAHUL

'Questions raised in London on India's democracy'

Dharwad (K'taka), Mar 12 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday targeted Rahul Gandhi for his remarks on democracy in the country at an international forum and said no power in the world can harm India's democratic traditions.

Without naming Gandhi and referring to the Congress leader's remarks made in London -- that structures of Indian democracy are under "brutal attack", Modi termed it an insult to 12th century reformer



Basaveshwara, the people of Karnataka, India's great traditions and its citizens.

The PM's statement is being seen with political significance, as Basaveshwara is highly revered in Karnataka, especially by the dominant Lingayat community who form the major vote base of the ruling BJP. Modi

PM discredited the country....

Gandhi has hit back, alleging that it is the Prime Minister who discredited the country's achievements since Independence. "I remember him saying there was a lost decade... there is unlimited corruption in India. I remember him saying this abroad... You have not heard his speech where he said nothing has been done in India since Independence, insulting every Indian parent, grandparent?" he said.

was on his sixth visit this year to Karnataka, where Assembly elections are due by May.

"I have come to the land of Bhagwan Basaveshwar and I'm feeling blessed. Among the contributions of Basaveshwara, most important is the establishment of Anubhava Mantapa, this democratic system is researched across the world, and there are several such things because of which we say India is not just the largest democracy, it is also the mother of democracy," he said.

Second leg of Budget session from today

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The second leg of the Budget session will commence on Monday with the government asserting that its priority is to pass the Finance Bill and the Opposition planning to raise issues like the action of central agencies against the BJP's political rivals and allegations against the Adani group.

The opposition parties will meet on Monday morning to evolve their strategy in both Houses of Parliament after protests by them on the Hindenburg-Adani issue overshadowed most of the first half of the Budget session.

Modi holds mega roadshow in JD-S bastion Mandya

Mandya (K'taka), Mar 12 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday threw flower petals back at the crowd, at several places as he was given a rousing welcome during a massive road show in this district headquarters city.

Modi enthusiastically waved at a large number of cheering crowd, who had lined up on both sides of the route, as the ruling BJP appeared focused on winning a good number of seats in Old Mysuru region, where it is traditionally weak. Assembly elections are due in May in Karnataka. The Prime Minister picked up the shower petals which got piled up on the bonnet of



his car and was seen hurling them back at the crowd. He also got down from his car and greeted folk artists who staged a performance in his welcome. Modi is in the district to dedicate the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway to the nation. The project involves 6-laning of the Bengaluru-Nidaghatta-Mysuru section of NH-275.

SATISH KAUSHIK DEATH

Farmhouse owner's estranged wife alleges foul play

Police to question her New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Delhi Police on Sunday said it will question the estranged wife of the owner of the farmhouse, where actor-filmmaker Satish Kaushik attended a party a day before his death, following her allegation that her husband "was planning to get rid" of him.

In a complaint addressed to the Delhi Police commissioner, the woman alleged that her husband

had borrowed Rs 15 crore from Kaushik and did not wish to return it.

The Delhi Police issued a statement saying an inquiry has been initiated into the allegations of foul play levelled by the woman. "An inspector-level officer from the South West district has been asked to probe the matter. The woman will be called for questioning and her statement will be recorded," it said. This comes a day after police denied any foul play in the actor's death.

Centre opposes validation of same sex marriages in SC

Cites personal laws, societal values New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Centre has opposed in the Supreme Court a batch of pleas seeking legal validation of same-sex marriage, saying it would cause a complete havoc with the delicate balance of personal laws and in accepted societal values.

In an affidavit before the Supreme Court which is scheduled to hear the matter on Monday, the govern-

ment submitted that despite the decriminalisation of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, the petitioners cannot claim a fundamental right for same-sex marriage to be recognised under the laws of the country. At the same time it submitted that though the Centre limits its recognition to heterosexual relationships, there may be other forms of marriages or unions or personal understandings of relationships between individuals in a society and these "are not unlawful". It said western decisions sans any basis in

Indian constitutional law jurisprudence cannot be imported in this context, while asserting that granting recognition to human relations is a legislative function and can never be a subject of judicial adjudication.

"Marriage, as an institution in law, has many statutory and other consequences under various legislative enactments. Therefore, any formal recognition of such human relationship cannot be regarded as just a privacy issue between two adults," it said.

Tribal bodies hold mega rally for 'Sarna' code

Threaten to boycott the 2024 LS polls if demand was not met Ranchi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Thousands of tribals from Jharkhand and other parts of the country held a mega rally here on Sunday to press for their demand to include 'Sarna' as a separate religion for indigenous people in the next census. Donning their traditional attire, men and women, belonging to various tribal communities, held placards and banners and raised slogans for implementation of



the 'Sarna' code, threatening to boycott the 2024 Lok Sabha polls if the demand was not met before the general elections. A separate 'Sarna' code in the census is the key to a distinct identity for tribals as without it, they are classified as Hindus or Muslims or Christians.



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Habitual offender held for flaunting weapon on social media

Blood donation camp organised at CHC Patan

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Durg Police is continuously monitoring social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. On Sunday, two ruffians were rounded up who uploaded their photos with rifles on Instagram.

They had borrowed the licensed rifle of their acquaintance and relative for clicking pics with the weapon. One of them is a habitual offender and absconding accused of Vaishali Nagar Police Station. It was a joint action of Anti Crime and Cyber Unit and Police Station Vaishali Nagar.

SP Dr Abhishek Pallava informed that they are tracing the people who have uploaded their pics with weapons on social

media platforms. Police are maintaining vigil on the social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

Under the supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Sanjay Dhruv; City Superintendent of Police (Bhilai Nagar) Nikhil Rakhecha and Deputy Superintendent of Police (Crime) Prabhat Kumar, a joint team led by Inspector Santosh Mishra (I/c ACCU) and Inspector Trinath Tripathi (SHO Vaishali Nagar) was entrusted the task of tracing



such people.

The team found two persons who uploaded photographs with rifles on Instagram. They were identified as Alok Singh alias Aloo a resident of

Camp 01 and Rahul Sonkar a resident of Camp 01. When called and questioned, Alok disclosed that about 07-08 years ago, he had borrowed the licensed

weapon of a retired army man (his acquaintance) and had taken a few pics with the weapon during a birthday party.

Rahul Sonkar revealed that he had clicked his pics with the weapon of his uncle, who works as a private security guard. The accused had uploaded the pics on social media.

Alok Singh was wanted in an offence registered at Vaishali Nagar Police Station under section 354,294,323,341 of IPC. Police were in search of

this absconding accused. The accused has been arrested by the joint team.

Alok Singh (21) son of Bablu Singh a resident of Camp-01 is a habitual offender of Vaishali Nagar area. About 07 cases of assault, gambling, etc are already registered in Chhawani and Vaishali Nagar against him. Further action is being taken against him by Vaishali Nagar Police Station.

ASI Shomit Mishra, Constable Rinku Soni, Constable Bhavesh Patel, Constable D Prakash, Constable Rakesh Anna, Constable Nitin Singh from ACCU and ASI Suresh Pandey and Constable Dinesh Jaiswal from Vaishali Nagar Police Station played a vital role in arresting the accused.



Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Eleven people donated blood in the blood donation camp organised at Community Health Center (CHC) Patan. The camp was successfully conducted by the team of District Blood Bank, District Hospital Durg and Blood Storage Unit CHC Patan. The camp was organised under the

aegis of Chhattisgarh Manva Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj. Yugal Kishore of the Samaj expressed gratitude to all the blood donors and Dr Praveen Agarwal Nodal Officer, Dr Ashish Sharma BMO Patan, Dr Veena Sahu, Shweta Bhardwaj MLT, Maheshwari Dhruv and the team of District Blood Bank and Health Department.

BoB slashes home loan interest rates by 40bps to 8.50%

Reduces MSME loan interest rates to 8.40%

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Bank of Baroda (BoB), one of India's leading public sector banks, announced the reduction in its home loan interest rates by 40 basis points (bps) to 8.50% p.a. Further, the Bank has also reduced its MSME loan interest rates starting at 8.40% p.a. Both offers are with effect from March 5, 2023 and are valid for a limited period till 31st March 2023.

This is one of the lowest and most competitive interest rates in the industry. In addition to reducing its interest rates, the Bank is also offering 100% waiver on processing charges on home loans and 50% processing charges waiver on MSME loans.

The new home loan rate

beginning at 8.50% p.a. is available for borrowers applying for fresh home loans, balance transfers as well as for home improvement loans. The rate is linked to a borrower's credit score.

Ajay K Khurana, Executive Director, Bank of Baroda said, "The Bank is pleased to drop its home loan interest rates and introduce a very special limited period offer of 8.50%. The offer will make home purchases more affordable for home buyers in the current scenario where interest rates have risen considerably.

The reduction in interest rates for the MSME sector will further support aspiring entrepreneurs and finance their growth ambitions." Bank of Baroda has also simplified the process of apply-

ing for a Home Loan.

Customers can digitally apply for and get approval for a home loan within 30-minutes by logging in to the bob World mobile banking app or visiting the Bank's website. Applicants can also apply for a loan by visiting any of Bank of Baroda's branches across India.

Key features of Bank of Baroda Home Loans include Interest rates starting at 8.50% p.a. for a limited period; Zero processing charges; Takeover of home loans with minimum documentation; Flexible tenure up to 360 months; No Pre-payment/Part-payment charges; Avail Digital Home Loans with quick approval in just a few steps in just 30-minutes; and Door step service at major centres.

Civic body initiates to tackle water woes in summer



Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: With the summer season round the corner, the local civic body has initiated to tackle the possible water woes in the dry season. The officials are conducting inspections to collect data of out of order pumps, groundwater level and status of tap water supply.

A large number of hand

pumps and power pumps are out of order in several localities of Bhilai. Water pressure in taps has also reduced significantly in some places as people have started using tullu pumps to fetch more water to meet the increasing needs.

In view of the summer season, Bhilai Municipal Corporation has launched its preparations to tackle the problems of drinking



water. Recently, Bhilai Municipal Corporation Commissioner Rohit Vyas chaired a meeting of the concerned officers and gave instructions to the engineers to inspect the prone areas, localities and low pressure areas.

Data would be collected in the inspection and efforts will be made to ensure sufficient water supply in summer.

It needs to be mentioned here that Mayor Neeraj Pal has given instructions to maintain a smooth system of the drinking water supply. Accordingly, the officers of all the zones of Bhilai Municipal Corporation inspected their respective areas and saw the arrangements for drinking water.

Public representatives were also present during

inspections. Officers visited various wards with the public representatives. Along with natural sources, hand pump, power pump and water tanks, the tap water pressure was also checked.

During the inspection, the teams found that some people were using tullu pumps. Such people were advised not to use the motor pumps.

BMC's campaign against stray cattle continues

BMC to allot homes under PMAY via lottery on March 17

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Bhilai Municipal Corporation is conducting a Roka Chheka campaign within its limits to catch the stray cattle. Efforts are being made to ensure that no one is troubled by stray cattle in the BMC limits. The team of Bhilai Municipal Corporation is conducting a date-wise campaign to catch stray cattle in all the zones.

Under the campaign, 78 stray animals have been caught and sent to Gauthan within a week. Commissioner Rohit Vyas has given instructions to run a special campaign to catch stray cattle. Under the Roka Chheka campaign, teams to catch stray cattle are moving around the city with various re-



sources to catch stray cattle.

Cattle are being transported to the Gauthan in the Cow Catcher vehicle. The team of Bhilai Municipal Corporation mainly targeted the cattle roaming along the roads of all the market areas and inner areas of the city. The stray cattle in Power House Market, Service Road and GE Road have been causing troubles for the common people and commuters.

The corporation's team is catching the animals to provide relief to the commuters and common people. In the special campaign going on since last week, the corporation is working by making a route chart to catch stray cattle from all the wards of the area.

A campaign to catch stray animals is also being run in the market areas. It needs to be mentioned here that Collector Pushpendra Meena has given instruc-

tions to run a special campaign to catch stray cattle. BMC is also working in compliance with the Collector's instructions.

The BMC team uses two cow catchers, ropes and other necessary resources so that they don't get hurt while catching cattle. Additional Commissioner Ashok Dwivedi has appealed to the animal owners not to let stray cattle in the open and support the campaign.

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: Bhilai Municipal Corporation is going to allot houses to the eligible beneficiaries of PMAY through lottery system on March 17. People living in rented houses will also get houses under this scheme. The long wait is over as the time has arrived when the eligible people will get their own pucca house.

The family residing in rented houses in the limits of Bhilai Municipal Corporation will also be able to get their own accommodation. Those who had submitted applications of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana under Mor Makaan Mor Aas scheme and have deposited the amount of contribution after coming in the category of eligible beneficiaries, will get a



chance in the lottery for allotment of houses.

To participate in the lottery, the amount of the first installment will have to be compulsorily deposited. Only after depositing the first installment, they will be able to participate in the house allotment process to be held on March 17. It needs to be mentioned here that the government has provided great convenience to deposit the amount of contribution.

According to which only

10% of the amount has to be deposited as the first installment to participate in the lottery and the remaining amount can be deposited in easy installments. Earlier, a higher amount was to be deposited as the first installment, but now the government has reduced it and given great relief to the people.

On the instructions of Mayor Neeraj Pal and Commissioner Rohit Vyas, all the processes are being

conducted at a fast pace under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. House allotment will be done through a lottery in the main office of Bhilai Corporation from 10:00 am on Friday, March 17, 2023.

For this lottery, information is also being given to the eligible beneficiaries by the department. For more information people can contact Vidyadhar Dewangan, Officer-in-Charge of the Housing and Planning Branch in the BMC office.

It needs to be mentioned here that under Mor Makaan Mor Aas component, 1120 houses are available in Amrapali Phase 2 in Khamaria, 896 units near Milestone School in Green Valley Khamaria and 1875 units near Krishna Engineering College in Khamaria.

Supela Flyover likely to be completed by March 31

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 12: The commuters on National Highway between Bhilai to Raipur are likely to get relief from the traffic congestion in the coming couple of months. The construction agency is likely to complete the works of Supela Flyover by March 31 while the Power House Flyover will be ready by May 31.

The Transport Nagar Flyover is likely to be completed by July 15. The District Collector is himself looking into the progress of these flyovers and is going to conduct weekly inspections. SDM will monitor the progress in flyover construction every day.

Collector Pushpendra Kumar Meena has asked the



SDM to monitor the progress of flyover construction every day to speed up the construction works. Recently he inspected all the four under construction flyovers of NH. He asked about the date of open-

ing of all the four flyovers and asked to share the day-to-day plan for the same.

Now the SDM will see whether the work is being done as per the plan every day or not. The SDM will visit the

spot and inspect. They will see how many labourers the agency had to deploy to complete the work expeditiously and how many labourers are working on the spot.

They will also monitor the assigned work as per the schedule every day. Collectors will also monitor the flyovers being built in NH once a week. SDM Mukesh Raote and Jageshwar Kaushal and Traffic DSP Satish Thakur were also present along with NH officials during the inspection.

The Collector instructed the officials to take special care of public facilities in the construction of the flyover. He asked to make good parking arrangements. He also



saw parking space in all the flyovers. Along with this, he asked the officials to plant different types of plants.

He said that keeping different types of plants in each span will make the flyover

look very beautiful with the greenery. Along with this, the lighting will also be done. He asked to pay special attention to these issues.

The Collector also inspected the safety related details

in all the four flyovers. He instructed to ensure proper lighting arrangements; sign boards at all places, etc. No such point should be missed which creates the possibility of an accident, he said.

NH officials said that some technical errors had occurred during the construction of the road, which have been rectified. Load test and stress test are to be done after which the flyovers will be opened. The Collector said that during the load test and stress test, keep in mind that traffic related inconvenience should not be caused to the citizens.

He instructed them to complete the work within the stipulated time so that there is no hindrance in the traffic.

OBITUARY

Raghubir Handa



Bhilai: Industrialist Raghubir Handa left for heavenly abode at the age of 74 years on Saturday. Funeral procession was taken out from his residence situated at 104, Sundar Nagar, Bhilai and last rites of the mortal remains were performed at Ramnagar Muktidham. He was the elder brother of Sudhir Handa.

It is necessary for women to be financially stable, says CM

State govt is implementing new employment-oriented schemes

CM inaugurates 'Legal Awareness Training Camp cum Workshop'

Launches the mobile app 'Chhattisgarh State Commission for Women' designed for online complaints



Sita Ashoka which has medicinal importance. On this occasion, the Chief Minister launched the souvenir of the Women's Commission and the mobile app "Chhattisgarh State Women's Commission" made for online complaints. On this occasion, the Chief Minister administered an oath to all the people to make women empowered and safe. While addressing, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel stated that the efficiency of those performing duties related to women will be enhanced further by this workshop. Goals can also be met more quickly with better coordination and cooperation. The master trainers who attend this workshop will be effective in the prevention of crimes against women. The workshop focuses on highly sensitive topics such as human trafficking, cybercrime, and workplace sexual harassment. Baghel went on to say that poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance are the root causes of today's crimes. The government is work-

ing economically and educationally to prevent human trafficking; as a result of police officers' increased awareness, there has been a significant decrease in human trafficking; however, this is insufficient; human trafficking should not occur at all. Cyber crime is also on the rise; there are innocent people in Chhattisgarh who must be made aware; our government is also working in this direction. Economic independence is critical for women, so we implemented small-scale projects at the grassroots level. Meanwhile, Chief Minister also stated that women must be financially capable. Our government is putting new plans in place to address this. During the Corona period, MNREGA projects were launched alongside rice distribution to provide relief to the people. The group has developed an action plan to help people become financially capable. Today, women in Gauthans are becoming financially self-sufficient by producing vermicompost, Gobarpaint, and green vegeta-

bles. Similarly, RIPA is being established to provide rural youth with employment opportunities. This will encourage both new and traditional works. Legal knowledge is required for society to progress and keep up with the times.

The Chief Minister stated that the Constitution has empowered us, the government's welfare schemes are for us, and it is necessary for everyone to understand their rights and responsibilities; thus, the State Women's Commission operates Mukhyamantri Mahtari Nyay Rath. Mukhyamantri Mahtari Nyay Rath provides people with justice as well as information about the rules on the spot. Modern techniques are also used in the operation of the Women's Commission to expedite case resolution. Aside from short films, divisional level training is also provided by subject experts to raise awareness. Minister of Women and Child Development, Anila Bhediya, stated that it is crucial for women and girls to be aware of their rights in the modern era. The Commission organises public awareness campaigns for them. Mahtari Rath is being organised across the state to provide women with immediate justice. Women's self-esteem has risen in recent years. Women should be aware of their surroundings and make others aware of their surroundings. To control crime, everyone must work together. Legal education is

critical for changing the state's status and direction for women. Women are currently contributing in all areas of livelihood and are on their way of becoming self-sufficient. Chairperson of the State Women's Commission, Dr. Kiranmayi Nayak, spoke about the Commission's tenure, saying that during her tenure, the commission got justice for harassed women by holding hearings in all districts of the state. The commission completed all tasks successfully with the administration's assistance.

In addition to this, Inspector General of Police, Dr. Sanjay Shukla, spoke on the subject of prevention of human trafficking in legal workshop cum training. Forensic expert Dr. Sunanda Dhenge on the topic of women crime and precautions for evidence, AGP Shamim Rahman, on the subject of Family Court and sexual harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal). Cyber expert Monali Guha spoke on the topic of a presentation on cybercrime. On this occasion, the Chief Minister felicitated all the Collectors and Superintendents of Police of the districts on behalf of the Women's Commission for their cooperation in solving the cases. On this occasion, Parliamentary Secretary Vikas Upadhyay, Mayor of Raipur Municipal Corporation Aijaz Dhebar, State Women's Commission member Neeta Vishwakarma, Archana Upadhyay, Anita Raote, Balo Baghel were present.



Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel greeted the Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan at Raj Bhavan today by presenting him with flower bouquet. Matters related to the interest of the state were discussed in the meeting. Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain, Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister Subrat Sahoo were also present on the occasion.

Governor urged to sign upon reservation bill: CM

• Says recruitment into various posts pending for long

Raipur, Mar 12: The Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel after attending a programme in capital city and speaking to media persons later, informed that during his meeting with the Governor at Rajbhavan he has urged to sign upon the Reservation Bill, as it is pending with the Rajbhavan for long time. CM informed him that due to this the recruitment into various posts in the state is pending for long time and on which the youths are fac-

ing lots of problems. Taking decision in the interest of people of Chhattisgarh is everybody's responsibility and therefore the Governor has been asked to sign upon the bill.

It is worthwhile to mention here that earlier the Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan had visited Delhi and met the President and PM and held talks in state's interest. Later CM Bhupesh Baghel also had being to Delhi on Friday and met Prime Minister and held detailed talks on hosts of issue. It is notable here that the new reservation bill passed in the state's

Vidhan Sabha on 2 Dec 2022 is with provision of 32% reservation for ST, 13% for SCs and 27% for OBCs and 4% for EWS and after which it is pending with the Governor for final approval. It was sent to the then Governor of Chhattisgarh Anusuiya Uikey and on which she refused to sign and after this the state government approached High Court as well on the rights of the Governor and which was later withdrawn. Since then it has taken political twist and turn and lots of political statements have come from either side, leading to all sorts of speculations.

Mahila Congress workers bang plates to protest price rise



Raipur, Mar 12: Mahila Congress workers today registered protest in Raipur against price rise. Banging plates Mahila Congress workers came out to gherao MP Sunil Soni's house on the issue of inflation. On being stopped by the police enroute MP's house they shouted slogans against the central government. Inflation has spoiled the budget of the house and rising price of gas cylinders made people upset, Mahila Congress leaders said. During the protest, Congress leader Shakun Dahria alleged that the central government was turning deaf ear to grievances of women. As soon as the festival ap-

proached, the price of gas cylinder was increased by Rs 50, she said, adding that prices of other kitchen items have also increased a lot.

According to Mahila Congress leaders running a middle class household is becoming increasingly difficult. Considering the difficulties of the people they are gheraoing the residence of MPs and registering their protest with the Central Government, they said. While BJP came to power in 2014 on the issue of inflation, no steps have been taken yet to control inflation, they said and added that even the BJP leaders stopped talking on this issue.

Congress to take out march to Raj Bhavan on Adani issue

Raipur, Mar 12: Congress in Chhattisgarh will take out a march to Raj Bhavan here on March 13 in protest against central government's policy in favour of Adani Group. Party office bearers from block to state level will take part in the march.

Congress alleged that country was suffering loss due to centre's crony capitalism policy in favour of Adani group. BJP's Modi government at the centre was selling several key infrastructures to Adani group, besides compelling public sector institutions such

Modi govt patronised Adani group's irregularities: Congress

Congress has charged the Modi Government at the centre with patronising Adani group's irregularities. Pradesh Congress Committee President Mohan Markam said that Adani Group succeeded in committing irregularities by taking advantage of Modi Government's policy, risking branches of country's most

trusted financial institutions like LIC and SBI. He said that despite repeated demands raised by the opposition parties in parliament the Modi Government was reluctant to initiate probe into alleged irregularities of Adani Group. He asked why Prime Minister Modi and central government were scared of probe against Adani group.

as SBI and LIC to invest in Adani group, it alleged. According to Congress investments by

SBI and LIC in Adani Group put deposits worth crores of Indians belonging to the poor

and middle class at risks. Congress is running movement in phased manner across the country in protest against all such steps, it said.

According to information Pradesha Congress has organised Raj Bhavan March at Ambedkar Chowk Raipur at 11 am on Monday.

Party general secretary and Chhattisgarh in-charge Sailja, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, AICC state in-charge secretaries Dr Chandan Yadav, Saptgiri Shankar Ulka, joint secretary Vijay

Jangid along with senior leaders of the party will be present at the programme.

77 jawans posted on Naxal front in Bastar get out of turn promotion

Raipur, Mar 12: On the occasion of Holi, DGP Ashok Juneja has given the gift of promotion to 77 jawans posted in different districts of Bastar division. Maximum 21 jawans posted in Bijapur and 2 women constables Reshma Kashyap, Sunaina Thakur belonging to Danteshwari Fighter have been promoted.

This is the first time that such a large number of jawans have got out-of-turn promotions. The jawans to be promoted include DRG, CAF jawans. On the initiative of Chief Minister Bhupesh

Baghel, operations are being conducted continuously against Naxalites in Chhattisgarh. Role of women in DRG, CAF force is also being encouraged by the Chief Minister. Two women constables have been promoted for the first time.

All those jawans posted in the police stations of Sukma, Dantewada, Narayanpur and Bastar districts have played an important role by being involved in the encounter. They have also killed many dreaded hardcore Naxalites during the encounter.

Hospital to be named after Mata Rajmohani Devi

• Those affiliated to Ambikapur Medical College



The decision to pass the proposal was taken unanimously by Health Minister TS Singhdeo, Food Minister Amarjit Bhagat, Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Renuka Singh, MLA Lundra Dr

Pritam Ram, MLA Prem Nagar Khelsai Singh and Mayor Dr Ajay Tirky at district level committee meeting held at Collectorate Conference Hall on Saturday. Earlier Sarguja

Collector and Member Convener District Level Committee proposed to name the newly constructed hospital affiliated to Rajmata Devendra Kumari Singhdeo Government Medical College, Ambikapur as Mata Rajmohani Devi Memorial Hospital, Ambikapur in accordance with the announcement of Chief Minister. After necessary discussions and deliberations by the members of the district level committee, the proposal was unanimously passed.

MBUY will be launched for the rehabilitation of children: CM

Moving out of child care institutions

New rehabilitation scheme has been made while making the age of boys and girls moving out of child observation homes from 18 yrs-21 yrs

Ch'garh govt will provide assistance in the fields of education, skill development, employment, and housing

Raipur, Mar 12: Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, while making a big provision for the rehabilitation of children moving out of child-care institutions of the state in this year's budget, has announced the launch of Mukhyamantri Bal Uday Yojana (MBUY) for them. This scheme will help children moving out of child-care homes by showing them the right path in their future and helping them to become self-reliant. For this, a provision of Rs. 1 cr has been made in the budget. Additionally, the age for boys and girls moving out of child observation homes has been increased from 18 years to 20 years.

Under the scheme, the State Government will help

in rehabilitating and restoring boys and girls more than 18 years of age who move out of child-care institutions. Earlier, children moving out of rehabilitation centers had to face many problems related to accommodation, employment, and joining the mainstream society. In these conditions, children are often tempted to involve themselves in crime. Keeping this in mind, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has undertaken a thoughtful initiative. Under the instructions of Chief Minister Mr. Baghel and the leadership of the Minister of Women and Child Development Department Anila Bhediya, a detailed action plan is being made

for the rehabilitation and restoration of boys and girls moving out of child homes.

Provision has been made in the rehabilitation scheme to ensure financial aid to boys and girls for their higher education, job security, and other facilities including accommodation. Chief Minister Baghel has said that arrangement for commercial skill development for the youth should also be made, so that they can become self-reliant by being self-employed. Chief Minister Baghel has also given instructions for the provision of community group accommodation for boys and girls moving out of child-care homes in the scheme.

Five arrested for the murder of a young man in Nawagarh

Bemetara, Mar 12: The police have arrested all the five accused in the murder of a youth at Nawagarh bus stand on Thursday. According to the police, due to old enmity, the accused had fatally attacked two youths. Bhagau Yadav died in this attack while another youth Sadanand Yadav has been sent to Ambedkar Hospital Raipur for treatment in critical condition. The knife used in the incident has been seized from the main accused Pramod Sinha and the accused have been arrested.

Accused Pramod Sinha S/o Late Sarju Sinha (21), R/o Ward No. 7 Nawagarh, Gopal Yadav's, S/o Late Mahila Yadav (23), R/o ward no. 10 Nawagarh, Gopi Yadav's S/o Late Mahila Yadav (23), R/o ward no. 10 Nawagarh, Raju Yadav's S/o Late Vinod Yadav alias Banbur



Yadav (23) R/o ward no. 6 newcomers and 1 minor child are included. On March 10, complainant Arjun Yadav S/o Kangla Ram Yadav, (51) R/o resident of ward no. 3 Budhadev Para, Nawagarh filed a report that on March 9, at around 10:45 pm, his son Satanand Yadav did not reach his house and on calling he was informed that he was in the government hospital Nawagarh with a serious injury. After getting the information, when he reached Government Hospital Nawagarh, he

found that Satanand Yadav was undergoing treatment in the ward.

He was bleeding profusely from a sharp-edged weapon injury behind his left waist. When asked about the incident, his son narrated the entire story to him and informed that both he and Bhagau Yadav were attacked by sharp weapon and in this Bhagau died when brought to Nawagarh hospital for treatment. Satanand Yadav has been referred to Bemetara District Hospital for proper treatment.

Based upon the report a case under sections 147, 148, 149, 294, 302, 307 was filed in police station Nawagarh.

Keeping in view the seriousness of the matter, senior officers were informed by the station in-charge Nawagarh regarding the said incident and as per their instructions Addl. SP and SDOP reached the spot and after inspecting the spot, station in-charge Nawagarh and police station staff were directed to take immediate action against the accused. On the direction and guidance of senior officers, the police station in-charge Nawagarh Ajay Kumar Sinha, ASI Tularam Deshmukh and Mohan Sahu, head constables Rajeev Sharma, constables Rahul Dubey, Amit Yadav, Jitendra Dhankar, Bhupendra, Firoz Sahu and other police station staff played an important role.

CM to launch 'Mukhyamantri Vriksh Sampada Yojana' on March 21

On the occasion of the Int'l Day of Forest

State Govt's ambitious scheme to encourage commercial tree plantation in Ch'garh

Programs will be organized in every district

N Chief Secretary has given instructions to ensure timely preparations

of the implementation of 'Vriksh Sampada Yojana' to encourage commercial tree-plantation in Chhattisgarh by the Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the preparations for its execution are in full swing. The Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain has written and sent letters in this regard to all collectors and divisional forest officers giving instructions to ensure required preparations for the inauguration of 'Mukhyamantri Vriksh Sampada Yojana' in their districts. Local public representatives, departmental officers and employees, and a large number of common people will attend the program.

It is noteworthy that under the 'Mukhyamantri Vriksh Sampada Yojana', willing land owners of all categories, governmental, semi-governmental, and autonomous institutions of the Government, private educational institu-

tions, Panchayats, and land contract holders will be eligible to benefit from this scheme. Under this scheme, 100 percent of financial aid will be provided to the beneficiaries for tree-plantation on 5 acres of private land, whereas 50 percent financial assistance will be given to beneficiaries for tree-plantation on more than 5 acres of land.

Through this scheme, a goal of planting 15 crore saplings in 1 lakh 80 thousand acres of land in 5 years has been set at the rate of 36 thousand acres of land every year. The Government will decide the minimum price for the purchase of selected plant species every year, so that farmers can get a definite income. The production of wood outside the forest regions will encourage wood-related industries. Besides, farmers will earn extra income through carbon credit.

Union Bank of India organises health-camp



For its staff and customers

Raipur, Mar 12: The Union Bank of India, regional office Raipur under the aegis of Ram Krishna Care Hospital organised health check-up camp and blood donation camp at its Samta Colony branch here on Saturday. This was organised under the Bank's Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR).

It was informed that in this camp, the Blood Pressure, blood sugar, ECG and other tests of the Bank's staff and its customers was organised. In this camp, the Sub-Area Head of Union Bank of India Saurabh Chafekar also donated blood and he also apprised the persons present about the benefits of blood donation to self and the society.

SECRMC celebrates Int'l Women's Day

At Railway Cultural Building BMY Charoda

Raipur, Mar 12: South East Central Railway Mazdoor Congress (SECRMC) as per the initiative taken by Divisional Coordinator D Vijay Kumar celebrated International Women's Day on March 11 to honour the female staff working in SECR Raipur Division. Divisional Railway Manager Sanjiv Kumar, Raipur Division president of SECRWVO Mrs. Megha S. Kumar, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer Uday Kumar Bharti and other people participated in this event. Dr. Lijo Daniel from Sparsh Hospital and Dr. Swati Rai from B M Shah Hospital explained the gynecological problems faced by the women staff. It was explained how to stay clean in personal life and how to stay healthy in daily life. Dr. Priyanka Eye Specialist in Railways in her speech explained how to take care of the eye related diseases. Miss Ruheena Tufail Khan ADPO RAIPUR in her speech explained how to solve the problem faced by women at work place. Women from Electric Loco Shed



SECRMC DC D Vijay Kumar and other invitees present in the programme. (inset) SECRWVO Raipur Division president Mrs. Megha S. Kumar addressing the gathering.

C & W, PPyard Engineer Department, Signal Department Durg and many other departments actively participated in this event. The highlight of the event was National Karate Coach Alisha Farin gave a demo on self defense for all women. Mrs. Megha S. Kumar, President of SECRWVO as the chief guest in this program said that it is important for women to be economically strong in the society. Divisional Railway Manager Sanjeev Kumar said that women in railways are fulfilling their responsibilities well, the role of

women in the society is important. Appreciating the organization, he also announced to award 10000 to the South East Central Railway Mazdoor Congress.

Vijay Kumar, DC of Mazdoor Congress, in his motion of thanks, thanked all the officers and doctors for giving their valuable time to participate in the Women's Day program. B D Prasad, Bhimrao, Shesh Babu, Anu Chacko, Balwant Sharma thanked the whole team for the successful conduct of programme.

DEO conducts surprise inspection of highway Schools

Issues show cause notice

Bijapur, Mar 12: The school on the highway of Block Bhopalpatnam were inspected by the District Education Officer (DEO), District - Bijapur Baliram Baghel on Saturday. During the inspection, teachers were not found present in primary and middle school-Gilgichha till 7.45 am. The attendance of children in Primary and Secondary School Sangam Palli was found to be less, and the District Education Officer (DEO) was directed to submit a report by ensuring 100% attendance in three days.

Superintendent and two instructors were found present in the school in the surprise inspection of Gurukul Residential Pota



Cabin Pegdapalli, Head Master Mohan Lal Mandvi appeared late, the cleanliness of the premises was not found properly while doing inspection of residential children and they were found with shabby and dirty clothes. The condition of cleanliness and POTA Cabin school was not found

to be satisfactory; the District Education Officer reprimanded the Principal and POTA cabin Superintendent and gave strict instructions to fix the system in fifteen days.

In High School Pegdapalli, minimum attendance ratio was found. In-charge Principal

Suryanarayan Koram has been directed for correction in the education system. During the inspection of Kanya Primary Ashram School - Pegdapalli, the posted teacher were found to be present and the residential arrangement, the educational level of the children was found to be fine. DEO directed not to stop one-month's salary for March 23' that of Tinge Samaiya Pradhan Pathak, teacher of Secondary School Gilgichha, Krishna Kumari Pupal and Anita Anganpalli's on charges of remaining absent. For which the Block Education Officer, Bhopalpatnam has been directed by the District Education Officer, District Bijapur, not to withdraw the salaries of the teachers of the primary school for the month of March 2023.

Bank of Maharashtra organizes Rajbhasha Sammelan

Trivandrum, Mar 12: The Annual Conference of Official Language Officers of Bank of Maharashtra was organized under the guidance of MD & CEO of the Bank A.S. Rajeev on Feb 24 and 25 at Thiruvananthapuram.

A.B. Vijayakumar, Executive Director of the Bank virtually inaugurated the conference from Pune. During the program, Asheesh Pandey, Executive Director also addressed the participants virtually from Pune. K. Rajesh Kumar, General Manager (HRM & Rajbhasha), Arun V., Zonal Manager, Ernakulum Zone and Official Language Officers and Liaison Officers of all the zones were present on this occasion. The program was compered by Dr. Rajendra Shrivastava, Deputy General Manager (Rajbhasha).

In his address, A.B. Vijayakumar opined that Hindi and regional languages are powerful mediums to convey our ideas even to remote areas. Hindi and regional languages are the best options for better customer service. He expressed satisfaction that Bank of Maharashtra has excelled and



Bank of Maharashtra organizes Rajbhasha Sammelan at Thiruvananthapuram. K. Rajesh Kumar, General Manager (HRM & Rajbhasha); Arun V., Zonal Manager, Ernakulum Zone; Dr. Rajendra Srivastava, DGM (Rajbhasha) and Official Language Officers of the bank are seen in the photo.

has been No. 1 on many business parameters. AB Vijayakumar, Executive Director launched "Mahakosh Mobile App" on this occasion. Through this app, English to Hindi translation will be available on mobile for the employees of the Bank. Latest issue of Bank's E-Magazine "Mahabank Samvad Sarita" was also released in the program.

Asheesh Pandey, Executive Director stated that language connects our customers with us hence it should be our endeavor

to connect language to business. It will increase our customer base and will also help in business growth. Executive Director, Asheesh Pandey launched "WhatsApp Banking Multiple Language Facility" on this occasion, which will facilitate our customers to avail WhatsApp Banking facility in different languages like Marathi, Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu etc. along with Hindi and English. K. Rajesh Kumar, General Manager (HRM & Rajbhasha) said that it is our

endeavor to learn something new through training in this conference as well as better review of official language work can be done and strategy for use of official language can be prepared. K. Rajesh Kumar released "Annual issue" of Bank's E-Magazine "Mahabank Samvad Sarita" on this occasion.

Sessions on various topics were conducted during the conference. Vote of thanks was proposed by Arun V., Zonal Manager, Ernakulum Zone.

Three of Urban Naxalite network nabbed with explosive materials

Konta, Mar 12: Sunil Sharma Superintendent of Police District Sukma, Kiran Chavan Additional Superintendent of Police Naxal Ops Sukma, Gaurav Mandal Additional Superintendent of Police Konta under the supervision of SDOP Konta Rohit Shukla directed to check any naxalite urban suppliers in the region and informed that there was a significant success in 2023 when the presence of Naxal supplier remained towards village Belpochha of Konta area of Police Station.

It was based upon the information, Inspector Shivanand Singh from



Thana Konta, station in-charge Konta, left for information site along with Hamrah District Force and during the campaign, some suspicious persons in the forest of village Belpochha. Seeing the police party coming towards them, the left the motorcycle on the spot and ran away hiding in the jungle. But when they were trying to escape, they were surrounded on all four sides by the police and were nabbed by the police party. On asking the reason for running away from the suspects, they did not give satisfactory answers and on asking their names, they disclosed their names as,



Semal Deepak, S/o Late Semal Ramesh, R/o Konta, Thana Konta, District Sukma; Nara Bhaskar, S/o Nara Raghu, R/o Konta, Thana Konta, District Sukma; Telam Mutta, S/o Telam Raja, R/o Banda,

Thana Konta, District Sukma. After searching all three motorcycle bearing no's CG-26 J-0754, they found 2 no's mobile phone, LI-ION Battery Model BL-5 13.32 WH 7.7V 1800mAh Made in China BAOFENG

company total 20 no's, Electronic detonator 45 no's, Gelatin rod 43 no's, Kordex Wire a bundle of about 49 feet of electrical wire; a red colored Naxalite banner, in which the Konta Area Committee, B.C.P. Maoism written on it was recovered. When the accused were asked to produce necessary documents in support of their materials, they refused to present. So on not presenting any necessary documents, the recovered materials and suspects were brought to the police station and interrogated closely and they informed that the three urban Naxalite associates were working and in con-

stant contact with Konta Area Committee chief Naxalite Vetti Bhima, Hitesh Hunga Kosi and others. Staying there, not only giving information related to police to Naxalites, but also accepted the work of transporting various types of materials for Naxalites through the forest. On charges of being found working against the law, a crime number 09/2023 under section 34 of IPC was filed (b) V.P. Registering the case under Act 23 (1) 38, 39 Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, taking advance legal action, presented before the Special Court on 09.03.2023 and were sent to jail.

Bring results by establishing coordination, says Baij

- To take up govt schemes at ground level
- Action plan approved for 2023-24

Central Chronicle News

Bijapur, Mar 12: Member of Parliament of Bastar Parliamentary Constituency Deepak Baij, during his one-day stay in Bijapur, District Development Coordinator and Monitoring Committee "Disha" Member of Parliament Road Safety Presided over the meeting of Education Committee, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Atrocities Prevention Act 1989, District Level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee.

At the same time, necessary guidelines were given



in the meeting of the Governing Council of the District Mineral Institute, under which, according to the goal of prioritizing the works of MNREGA, to create empowerment giving priority to person-oriented works.

At the same time, under the National Livelihood Mission, it was talked about connecting the self-help groups with employment and providing loans and to speed up road construction works under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana Public Works Department.

Instructions were also given for proper implementation of the Chief Minister's nutrition campaign under the Women and Child Development Department, to reduce malnutrition, to complete the construction work of the approved new building Anganwadi within the time limit, to ensure recruit-

ment to the vacant posts of Anganwadi workers and assistants with transparency, to prepare for ready-to-eat. During the review of the Member Road Safety Committee, the number of dead in road accidents and road accidents in the years 2021-22 and 2023 were evaluated and necessary initiatives to prevent road accidents were discussed.

Regional MLA and Vice President of Bastar Development Authority Vikram Shah Mandavi, Collector Rajendra Kumar Katara, District Panchayat President Shankar Kudiyaam, Vice President Kamlesh Karam, District Panchayat and Bastar Development Authority member Nina Rawatia Udde, Farmers Welfare Board member Basant Rao Tati and others were present.

Cong govt not serious on liquor ban: JCC (J)

Central Chronicle News

Kawardha, Mar 12: Janata Congress Chhattisgarh-Jogi (JCC-J) here in District Kabirdham held a press conference and made serious allegations on the Bhupesh government of Chhattisgarh on the issue of liquor ban.

The office bearers of the party namely state president of Ajit Jogi student organization, Pandariya youth leader Ravi Chandravanshi, said that the Congress government, which had promised to ban liquor in 2018, is today making liquor in our district in the name of Bhoramdev Ethanol Plant undeclared and the work is going on in 100 acres of land at the cost of water for 30 years at an annual income of Rs 5.27 crores only.

It is clear from the information given to KJ Bio Fuel the company with which the MOU has been



signed that in the coming day's alcohol will be made instead of ethanol, the party alleged. Chandravanshi further said that while signing an MOU with the company by Bhupesh Baghel in 2020, it was said that this would provide employment to our local people, but in the past, 115 people were re-

quired to work in the plant, but here too local people were checked off during the recruitment drive.

While District President Sunil Kesarwani said that if a new sugar factory opens in our district instead of making alcohol in ethanol plant, it will be condemned. Further giv-

ing the outline of the program, it was informed that under the leadership of State President of Janata Congress Chhattisgarh Amit Jogi there will lead the workers in the siege of the collectorate on 13/03/2023, and a memorandum will be handed over demanding its cancellation of the project.

Holi celebrated with fervour



Central Chronicle News

Kharora, Mar 12: Holi was celebrated here in the region with great enthusiasm and people had made back-breaking preparations, and the festival saw equal participation from children and adult's alike.

Everywhere in the streets and squares, groups of youths and mastans were seen enjoying and swinging in fun and the fes-

tival was celebrated till late night at various places.

The gaiety of colors and enthusiasm was visible from the morning itself and rainbow shade of colors had painted the entire village-town in pink. Don't feel bad Holi Hai's echo kept echoing all around and people also chose to celebrate it with loud music in may places of the district.

Age old songs like Rang Barse Bheeg Chunar Wali

Rang Barse added to the festival which followed with Holika Dahan in almost all squares of the city. At the end devotees offered colors to the deities in the temples and the festival ended by offering colors on Dhulendi.

Meanwhile Holi trade continued well in all major sectors and people ended the festival on a note of music colors and sweet-meats and savories.

Case registered under Railway Act against stone pelting

In 20826 Vande Bharat Express between Sarona to Raipur

Central Chronicle News

Raipur/Bilaspur, Mar 12: On 10.03.2023, at about 17.50 hrs, Deputy Inspector R K Rathore who was deployed for the escort of train number 20826 Nagpur - Bilaspur Vande Bharat Express was informed on mobile that at km 833/25 between Sarona and Raipur some unknown child who was wearing black colored pants and black coloured T-shirts with something written on the front have pelted stones on train number 20826 Nagpur - Bilaspur

Vande Bharat Express, which had hit the panes of coach number C-13.

On the basis of information head constable P K Gaurah posted on duty at km no 834/07 behind AIIMS hospital and ASI D K Verma along with Head Constable J L Kaushal posted at the same point for the detection of theft were sent to the place of incident by the Inspector M K Mukherjee.

Mukherjee along with SI K B Gupta also rushed to the spot. After arriving at the scene information regarding the incident was

taken from the children playing cricket near the spot. On the basis of information, appearance, and dress, a delinquent boy was stopped near Rajiv Nagar incident site, who voluntarily surrendered on questioning. The body admitted of pelting stones to break glass in the above train just for fun.

After the delinquent boy confessed his mistake, was taken into custody and brought to Railway Protection Force Post Raipur along with his parents. The statement of the delinquent child, was

recorded in front of his parents.

Finding the delinquent child guilty of Section 153 of the Railway Act, crime number 1567/2023 dated 10.03.2023 Section 153 Railway Act was registered after taking him into custody.

Due to sunset and being an delinquent child, the child was kept in the custody of his parents after the consent was taken in written from the parents. The investigating inspector of the case M K Mukherjee is further investigating the case.

Body found in building of old Paper Mill

Dongargarh, Mar 12: On finding body of a youth in damaged building of an old Paper Mill, it created sensation in the area. The police reached the site and after 'panchnama', the body was sent for post-mortem.

As per information in this regard, the body is that of Rupesh Nandeshwar, S/o Narayan Nandeshwar and he was R/o Budhwaripara. The police is checking as to whether the person died probably due to excess consumption of liquor or it was a murder.

Entrepreneurship awareness camp held

Manendragarh- Chirmiri-Bharatpur- (MCB), Mar 12: The General Manager District Trade and Industry Centre (DTIC) of MCB informed that one-day entrepreneurship awareness camp was organised at community building of Janpad Panchayat Khadgawa and in this the officers from DTIC gave information and guidance about PM Rojgar Srijan Karyakram; Mukyamantri Yuwa Swarojgar Yojana; PM Sukhuma Khadhya Unnayan Yojana and state's industrial policy 2019-24.

CEO Janpad Panchayat, Chartered Accountant Arihant Jain and DPI PMFME Sabir Khan motivated the persons presented about establishing of small units as part of entrepreneurship. In this a total of 92 individuals registered their presence and obtained information related to opening of small-scale industries and schemes of the Industry department.

Verma demands water from Madian reservoir



- For drying ponds of villages

Central Chronicle News

Dongargarh, Mar 12: BJP farmer leader of the region and head of Makkatola, Hemlal Verma, has applied to the Sub-Divisional Officer, Water Resources Sub-Division, Dongargarh, to release water from the Madian reservoir to fill the drainage ponds of the villages due to low water level in the water bodies.

In the memorandum given to the officer, it was told that every year water is given from the Madian reservoir for drainage ponds in about 14 villages of the area, the fee of which is deposited in the Water Resources Department by the Gram Panchayats.

As per information, due to the drying up of the ponds, the water level of the village's hand pump and bore is also decreasing, due to which there is a possibility of problem of drinking water along with discharge

in the villages, therefore, it is necessary to fill water in the ponds as soon as possible, so that along with discharge, the problem of drinking of cattle can also be removed.

Villagers of Makkatola, Hirapur, village Lal Bahadur Nagar, Khubatola, Barampur, Govindpur, Motipur, Thakurtola, Sendri, Ramatola, Narsingpur, Manikpur, Dhandongari and Jhandatalav have demanded to release water from the reservoir.

SECR Bilaspur Division organizes seminar and felicitation ceremony

- On International Women's Day
- 23 women employees honoured

Central Chronicle News

Bilaspur, Mar 12: Various programs were organized in the division on the occasion of International Women's Day as part of the best initiative towards women empowerment.

A seminar was organized for the women workers of the division in the divisional personnel meeting room. About 40 women workers of the division participated in it with enthusiasm. In the seminar importance of women in the society, women empowerment and awareness and topics related to women's participation in the were discussed.



On this occasion, Assistant Divisional Medical Officer Dr. P Mamta elaborated on various aspects related to women's health. At the same time, while informing about the various problems faced by women, she also gave information about avoiding and solving these problems.

After this, a felicitation ceremony was organized to honour the women em-

ployees of the division. On this occasion, Additional Divisional Railway Manager Shyam Sundar gave citation to 23 women employees of the division who performed excellent work in their respective fields.

Additional Divisional Railway Manager said that gender equality is a better effort towards women empowerment. He mentioned that increase

in the respect of women is possible only when the woman is educated.

Mother is the first teacher of her child, so all mothers should teach respect to women to their children. On this occasion, Assistant Personnel Officer Snehashish Ghosh, office bearers of all the three unions, besides a large number of women railway workers were present.

Sweet shops and restaurants inspected

In view of festive season

Central Chronicle News

Mahasamund, Mar 12: As per the instructions of Collector Nileshekumar Kshirsagar, food safety officer Jyoti Bhanu, Shankhnad Bhoi and the team of mobile food laboratory posted in the district, are inspecting sweet shops and restaurants keeping in view the food safety standards.

In the last one month, 184 food samples were collected by the food safety officers of the district and tested through the state-run food testing laboratory vehicle for the preven-

tion and adulteration of food items. Out of which 11 sub-standard, 19 misprints were found to be sub-standard.

Food businessmen selling sub-standard, counterfeit food items were cautioned not to sell sub-standard, counterfeit food items in future, otherwise strict action will be taken under the Food Safety and Standards 2006 Regulation 2011. Keeping in view the festive season of Holi, samples have been collected by the security officer from various food establishments of Mahasamund district and sent to the State

Food Testing Laboratory, Raipur for testing.

Advance action will be taken under Food Safety and Standards 2006 Regulation 2011 as soon as the test report of food items is received. From January 2022 till now, 160 legal and 97 surveillance samples have been collected by the Food Safety Officers. Out of which 14 samples have been found to be sub-standard, counterfeit. 06 sub-standard cases have been presented in the court of Additional Collector and 01 case in the court of judicial magistrate for trial.

One day workshop on personality development organized

- In Govt Nehru College

Central Chronicle News

Dongargarh, Mar 12: A one-day workshop on personality development was organized for the college students and staff at the local Government Nehru College, Dongargarh, under the guidance of Dr. Pradeep Kumar Jambulkar, Principal of the college, in collaboration with Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashram, Raipur.

Swami Prapatyanand Maharaj, head of

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashram Raipur and editor of Vivek Jyoti Monthly, Head of the Department of Statistical Studies of Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University Raipur and former Vice Chancellor Bastar University and former Vice Chancellor Mats University Raipur Prof. SK Singh and Dr. Vineet Kumar Sahu were the main speakers in the workshop.

Principal of the College, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Jambulkar thanked the guests and the college family including Ramakrishna

Vivekananda Ashram Raipur for organizing the program and all the guests were honored by presenting mementos and certificates on behalf of the college family.

The program was conducted by Neelam Chaturvedani and vote of thanks by Gopalkrishna Yadav. Books related to Swami Vivekananda were presented to the college staff and students by Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashram Raipur. More than 350 students of the college were benefited from the said camp.

NAME CHANGE	NAME CHANGE
I, ANCHAL spouse of 2704368Y NK ANKIT SINGH CHAUHAN resident of H.N. AM-12 Aasma city homes Phase-2, Post Sakari, Distt. Bilaspur, C.G. 495001 have changed my name from ANCHAL to ANCHAL SINGH CHAUHAN, So in future I should be recognized by name ANCHAL SINGH CHAUHAN spouse of ANKIT SINGH CHAUHAN in all government and other documents.	It is informed to the general public that I am JOYSREE BAIDYA W/o PLABAN BAIDYA resident of Tahsildar Gali, Near Durga Pandal, Hemunagar, Bilaspur (C.G.) 495004 have changed my old Name JOYSREE ROY W/o PLABAN BAIDYA So in Future I should be recognized by my New Name that is JOYSREE BAIDYA W/O PLABAN BAIDYA in all government and other documents.
Regards ANCHAL SINGH CHAUHAN W/O ANKIT SINGH CHAUHAN H.N. AM-12 Aasma city homes Phase-2, Post Sakari, Distt. Bilaspur C.G. 495001	JOYSREE BAIDYA Tahsildar Gali, Near Durga Pandal, Hemunagar, Bilaspur (C.G.) 495004

BRIEF



Bollywood actor Sanya Malhotra during a bike ride event organised to commemorate International Women's Day, at Rajiv Chowk in New Delhi, Sunday.

Suicide

Hapur: An Uttar Pradesh Police constable posted at police lines allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself with his service weapon here in the early hours of Saturday, officials said.

Seized

Jammu: Army troops guarding the Line of Control (LoC) recovered small arms and narcotics from Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, officials said. Two pistols, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and heroin was among the recoveries made, they said.

NIA search

Seoni: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) and local police have detained two persons for questioning after carrying out searches in Seoni in Madhya Pradesh, during which some objectionable material and electronic devices were allegedly seized, a police official said on Sunday.

Tribute

Mumbai: Paying homage to Satish Kaushik, megastar Amitabh Bachchan remembered the late actor-director as "a delightful company" and "a most accomplished artist".

Hideout

Srinagar: A militant hideout was unearthed and arms and ammunition recovered in Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Sunday. A search was conducted by police in Shalnar Hangnikoot area of Handwara in the north Kashmir district on Saturday, a police official said.

Mishap

Bulshana: Six persons were killed after the tyre of their car burst on Sunday morning on the Samruddhi Expressway in Maharashtra's Buldhana district, a police official said.

Woman walking along Gomti to raise awareness

● **On river conservation**

Shahjahanpur (UP), Mar 12 (PTD):

With an aim to start a movement for the conservation of the Gomti river, a woman in her early 30s is on a journey to walk along the 690-kilometre stretch of the water body.

Shipra Pathak, who calls herself a water and nature conservationist, started her journey earlier this month from the Gomat Taal at Madhotanda in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh, from where the river originates.

"I have reached Shahjahanpur after covering around 60 kilometres. We had to halt the journey for a few days due to the Holi festivities, but the journey has resumed again from today," Pathak told PTI on Sunday.

Slinging two bags on her shoulder — one carrying a thin carpet and a quilt and another containing two

sets of clothes, her mobile phone and charger — and holding a cloth-covered wooden stick, Pathak is walking along the banks of the river. She wears a brick red dress, a pair of shoes and carries a dupatta. With her hair tied loosely behind, she sports a "tilak" on her forehead and walks with smaller steps, carefully placing her feet on the unpaved, rugged river bank.

"Villagers who think about the betterment of rivers and nature join me in the walk. They often guide me along the river bank," Pathak said.

Besides bringing together people who are concerned about the state of the river, she wants to encourage them to take action.

"People who live along the river are concerned about the health of the river. But they often do not know what to do. I wish to encourage them to take some action, whether it is cleaning the river banks

or clearing the river bed. A sense of belonging that develops while walking along the river bank will surely bring them closer to the river and motivate them to do more for it," Pathak said.

A tributary of the Ganga, Gomti is one of the most essential perennial rivers of Uttar Pradesh. Stretching over 690 kilometres, the river meets the Ganga at Saidpur in Ghazipur district.

On its way, it supplies water to several important towns and cities, including the state capital Lucknow. Despite its importance, the Gomti has been affected largely by the indifference towards it.

Experts fear that unchecked encroachment and extensive farming are turning Gomti into a seasonal (intermittent) river.

"The river bed can hardly be noticed at certain stretches because most of it has been encroached and turned into farmland," said Venkatesh

Dutta, Professor, Department of Environmental Science at the Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University. Dutta carried out an extensive study on the Gomti in 2011 and says the condition of the river has gone from bad to worse in the last decade.

Pathak, a native of Budaun district, echoed similar sentiments.

"As humans, we must realise that we cannot survive without the environment, rivers, water... All our scriptures and religious texts highlight that. We must take measures to protect and conserve these natural resources," she said.

Born to a local politician and a homemaker, Pathak completed her master's degree from the Rohilkhand University, before she "heard the call of my heart and decided to do something for rivers".

"I have already completed the 52-km circumambulation of the Mansarovar

lake and a 3,600-km walk along the Narmada river in Madhya Pradesh. I have started a movement to protect rivers and wish to do the same for the Gomti," she said.

As part of her campaign, Pathak has also pledged to plant one crore saplings on river banks. "Trees are the best friend of rivers. In the last couple of years, with the help of volunteers and locals, we have planted more than 10 lakh saplings on river banks and aim to take this number to one crore," she said.

Pathak has not set herself a deadline to complete her journey.

"I walk along the banks during the day and spend the night at a temple or an ashram. The locals are kind enough to offer me food and a place to rest. I keep pace with the people who walk with me and do not want to hurry this journey but to live and immerse myself in it," she said.

Frequency of landslides increasing in HP

Shimla, Mar 12 (PTI):

Himachal Pradesh has witnessed a six-time increase in major landslides in the past two years with 117 occurring in 2022 as compared to 16 in 2020, according to data compiled by the disaster management department.

There are 17,120 landslide prone sites in the state out of which 675 are near critical infrastructure and habitations. The maximum of such sites are in Chamba (133) followed by Mandi (110), Kangra (102), Lahaul and Spiti (91), Una (63), Kullu (55), Shimla (50), Solan (44), Bilaspur (37), Sirmour (21) and Kinnaur (15).

High intensity rainfall coupled with cutting of hill slopes or rocks at the foothills are the main reason behind the significant number of landslides, experts say.

Extensive cutting of hill slopes for construction

and widening of roads, blasting for tunnels, hydro projects and mining are cited as reasons behind the increase in landslides, geological expert Prof Virender Singh Dhar said.

Though the time span of rains has been reduced, their intensity has increased. High temperatures coupled with heavy rains lead to landslides due to loosening of the strata in places which have undergone cutting downstream on the foothills, said Scientist (Climate Change) Suresh Attre.

Out of the 117 major landslides witnessed in 2022, a maximum number of 21 were reported in Kullu followed by 20 in Mandi, 18 in Lahaul and Spiti, 15 in Shimla and 14 in Lahaul and Spiti, nine in Sirmour, eight in Bilaspur, five in Kangra, three each in Kinnaur and Solan, one in Una while no landslide occurred in Hamirpur.

15 ENNG rebels surrender with arms in Arunachal

Itanagar, Mar 12 (PTD):

A total 15 militants of the Eastern Naga National Government (ENNG) along with the outfit chief Tosham Mossang surrendered before Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday.

The rebels surrendered with arms and ammunition during a homecoming ceremony organised at police headquarters here, officials said.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, state Home Minister Bamang Felix along with Assam Rifles officers, state senior civil and police officers were present at the function.

The other rebels who surrendered include self-styled colonel Chopsai Pangsang and Wangjen Pangtha, self styled major Daniel Sankey, captin Maithangla Tikhak, lieutenants Monpi Mamai and



A total 15 militants of the Eastern Naga National Government (ENNG) along with the outfit chief Tosham Mossang surrendered before Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday.

Samhon Songthing, sergeants Wangwa Hatum and Hemraj Pradhan, the SIT SP Rohit Rajbir Singh said.

The others were self-styled captains Netra Kumar Rai, Limpha Khimsing, Khunglun Mossang and Bainong Mungrey and self-styled second lieutenant Lungphang Jugli, he said.

Nine Chinese-made MQ series weapons, two AK-47 rifles, one Chinese-made

pistol, 19 magazines, 415 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition, five rounds of 9 mm pistol, four Chinese grenades, one under barrel launcher with fins and six walker talkie were deposited during the ceremony, Singh said.

Termining the event as "historic", Khandu lauded the combined offensive and negotiating efforts of Assam Rifles and state police in convincing the cadres to shun violence

and join the national mainstream.

"Gun culture is not a solution to the problem. Today's surrender is a positive move by the outfit to restore peace in the state. I am optimistic that other groups will follow suit in the days to come," he said.

Assuring the surrendered rebels of government support for their rehabilitation, Khandu said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision is to restore peace in the Northeast. As a result many rebel groups of the region have already started peace talks with the respective state governments and many have already joined the mainstream.

Speaking to reporters, Felix said that ENNG has now become "almost non-existent" after the surrender of its chief along with 14 others.

WOMEN'S RALLY



Women bikers of the Border Security Force (BSF), Delhi Police and other organisations take part in a rally to commemorate International Women's Day, at Rajiv Chowk in New Delhi, Sunday.

'Tyre burst human negligence, not act of God'

● **HC rejects insurance firm's plea against compensation**

Mumbai, Mar 12 (PTD):

A tyre burst is not an act of God but human negligence, the Bombay High Court remarked while rejecting an insurance company's plea against compensation to the family of a man killed in a car accident. A single bench of Justice S G Dige in its February 17 order dismissed the appeal filed by New India Assurance Company Limited against a 2016 ruling of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal directing it to pay Rs 1.25 crore to victim Makarand Patwardhan's family.

On October 25, 2010, Patwardhan (38) was trav-

elling from Pune to Mumbai with two colleagues.

The colleague who owned the car was speeding in a rash and negligent manner when the rear wheel burst and the car fell into a deep ditch, killing Patwardhan on the spot. The tribunal in its order had noted the victim was the sole bread-earner of his family.

The insurance company in its appeal said the compensation amount was exorbitant and excessive and that the tyre burst was an act of God and not negligence on the part of the driver. The HC, however, refused to accept this contention and said the dictionary meaning of "act of God" was "an instance of uncontrollable natural forces in operation."

Repair work on Chirag Delhi flyover to cause traffic snarls

● **In south Delhi**

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTD):

Traffic will be affected on certain routes in south Delhi as one of the carriageways of the Chirag Delhi flyover on Outer Ring Road will remain closed for 25 days from Sunday due to repair work being carried out by the public works department, officials said.

With the opening of the Ashram flyover on March 6, there was some relief for commuters, but it seems to be short-lived as the Chirag Delhi flyover is being shut and they will have to brace themselves for traffic snarls again. The repair work of the Chirag Delhi flyover began from Sunday and the work on each carriageway will take 25 days. One car-



Workers repair the Chirag Delhi flyover on the outer ring road, in New Delhi, Sunday.

riageway will be closed for traffic while the other will remain operational, the Delhi Traffic Police said. According to an advisory issued by the traffic police, the repair work of the carriageway from Nehru Place to the IIT flyover will be taken up first and the work on the other carriageway from the IIT flyover to Nehru Place

will be taken up thereafter. Due to the repair work on the flyover, commuters on routes towards all major south Delhi areas, including Malviya Nagar, Panchsheel Park and Vasant Kunj, are likely to face traffic snarls. However, the traffic police has suggested necessary diversions to avoid any inconvenience to commuters.

Ex-Bengal CM Siddhartha Ray's house to get heritage tag

Kolkata, Mar 12 (PTD):

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has decided to include former West Bengal chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray's south-Kolkata residence on its list of heritage buildings, councillor Sandip Ranjan Bakshi said on Saturday.

Built in 1900, Ray's residence, a two-storey red brick structure, is considered to be a landmark in Hazra area.

"This is the house where Ray hosted personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Pandit Ravi Shankar. It is a part of history. We have, therefore, decided to protect this building by enlisting it as one of the city's

heritage sites," Bakshi, who represents the area in the city civic body, told PTI.

He said an announcement in this regard will be made early next week.

Once enlisted, the maintenance of the building will be taken care of by the KMC Heritage Conservation Committee, said Bakshi, who is also the KMC mayor-in-council.

When contacted Ayan Ray, the former Bengal CM's grandnephew, who is also a co-owner of the property, said he will accordingly reply to the KMC if a notice is served in this connection.

Ayan operates a home-stay in the building with his sisters.

DANCE COMPETITION



Inmates of Berhampur Circle Jail during a performance, part of a national online dance competition, at Berhampur in Odisha's Ganjam district.

Punjab village receives 'Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman'

● **For waste management**

Chandigarh, Mar 12 (PTD):

Peroshah village in Punjab's Gurdaspur district, with a population of over 1,000, has earned national-level recognition for properly managing solid and liquid waste.

Harjinder Kaur, the sarpanch of the village, which has been declared a model ODF (open defecation free) Plus, received Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman 2023 by President Droupadi Murmu on March 4 for a commendable work in the sanitation sector.

The event was organised by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in Delhi to honour



President Droupadi Murmu presents the Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman 2023 for waste management to Peroshah village in Punjab's Gurdaspur district. Harjinder Kaur, the sarpanch of the village, received the award.

the women achievers who have contributed towards

the cause. Kaur said that it was a proud moment to receive the award in presence of Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. Recently, Peroshah village was declared a model ODF Plus village for fulfilling the criteria stipulated in the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G, Phase II) guidelines.

Under the mission's guidelines, the ODF plus title is given to a village that sustains its ODF status, ensuring visual cleanliness and proper solid and liquid waste management.

Punjab's Water Supply and Sanitation Minister Bram Shanker Jimpa congratulated the residents of Peroshah village for achiev-

ing this feat.

"Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's dream is that every village in Punjab should be a model village," he said, adding that the sanitation department is working diligently to ensure cleanliness and water supply to every village in Punjab. "At the Delhi event, President Murmu said that people should take inspiration from Peroshah village," Kaur said. A solid waste management and water treatment plant has also been set up in the village. A Peroshah resident Sukhraj Singh said that the village manages its solid waste here and generates several kilograms of compost through effective management of biodegradable waste.

UK records spike in Indians crossing over illegally in small boats

London, Mar 12 (PTI):

Britain has recorded a spike in Indians crossing over illegally into the country across the English Channel last year, when a total of 683 largely Indian men were reported to have landed on its shores via small boats.

This figure, according to the latest UK Home Office "Irregular Migration to the UK" statistics for the year ending December 2022, shows a progressive rise from the 67 Indian nationals recorded to have crossed over in small boats in 2021, 64 in 2020 and none in 2019 and 2018.

The UK has a returns agreement with India under the Migration and Mobility Partnership (MMP), something which

was referred to by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in Parliament last week.

"We have returns agreements with India, Pakistan, Serbia, Nigeria and crucially now with Albania, where we are returning hundreds of people," Sunak told the Commons during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs). "Our position is clear: if you arrive here illegally you will not be able to claim asylum here, you will not be able to access the modern slavery system and you will not be able to make spurious human rights claims. That is the right thing to do," said the British Indian leader. It came during the week in which he struck a new enhanced agreement

with neighbouring France to crack down on small boats illegal migration via the route used by people smugglers, from the French port of Calais to the English port of Dover.

Under the agreement, the UK will deploy funds towards a new migrant detention centre on the French border and additional officers, drones and surveillance technology to clamp down on criminals facilitating unsafe small boat journeys.

According to the Home Office data on irregular migration, there were also over 400 Indian nationals who fell under the category of "inadequately documented air arrivals" into the UK in 2022. The majority of the "irregular arrivals" from India on

small boats were made up of men between the ages of 25 and 40, out of a total of 45,755 in 2022 largely dominated by nationals from Albania and Afghanistan, followed by Iran, Iraq and Syria. Other South Asian nationalities recorded on the list include Pakistanis, Sri Lankans and Bangladeshis.

It is believed that traffickers charge thousands of pounds to transport people illegally on small and often unsafe boats in the hope of claiming asylum in the UK. Several deaths have occurred over the years as a result of such journeys but the number of migrants undertaking these treacherous journeys has continued to spike manifold.

FLOODS IN PERU



A flooded neighborhood is seen in Lambayeque, Peru. Cyclone Yaku is present in the South Pacific off the coasts of Peru and Ecuador, where it has affected some provinces in both countries. The unusual event has caused rainfall, which has led to flooding and the overflowing of rivers.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang

Chinese FM Qin Gang elevated to State Councillor rank

Beijing, Mar 12 (PTI):

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang has been elevated to the rank of State Councillor, which will put him in line for his likely appointment for the post of China's Special Representative for India-China boundary talks, a high-level mechanism to discuss the boundary issue and improvement of ties between the two countries. The National People's Congress (NPC), the Chinese Parliament, which is holding its annual session on Sunday endorsed Qin's appointment as Foreign Minister and elevated him to the status of State Councillor, a high-ranking position within the State Council or the central cabinet, the executive organ of the Chinese government.

Qin, 56, was appointed as the Foreign Minister in December succeeding

Wang Yi who was elected to the Political Bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), a key policy body of the party in the once-in-a-five-year congress of the party in October last year.

Qin's elevation to the rank of State Councillor will put him in line for his appointment as the Special Representative (SR) of the India-China boundary mechanism formed in 2003.

Over the years, it also emerged as a key avenue to discuss the state of relations between the two neighbours beset with a host of problems besides the boundary dispute and steps to improve the ties.

Qin, who was the former ambassador of China to the US and a close confidant of President Xi Jinping, visited New Delhi early this month to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting during which he

held talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Relations between China and India have virtually frozen ever since the eastern Ladakh military standoff between the two countries in May 2020.

The two countries have held 17 rounds of high-level military commanders' talks to resolve the standoff.

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

The NPC also appointed a whole set of new cabinet ministers as part of a once-in-ten-year change of China administration.

Li Shangfu, a member of the Central Military Commission (CMC) - the high command of the Chinese military, has been appointed as the Minister of national defence, succeeding Wei Fenghe.

Pakistani forces kill five TTP militants in Waziristan



Waziristan, Mar 12: Weapons, ammunition and a large quantity of equipment were also recovered from the killed terrorists, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

In a separate statement on Friday, Punjab Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) said 12 alleged militants were arrested linked to the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and al-Qaeda.

The statement said that the militants were arrested due to three separate special operations from three cities of the province, including Lahore. Meanwhile, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the army was determined to eliminate the threat of terrorism from the coun-

try. The statement also said that during the last three months, security forces had killed more than 150 terrorists in several special operations.

Security forces conducted 6,921 operations nationwide in the last three months, arresting at least 1,007 terrorists.

Only in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, around 1,960 operations have been conducted, of which 1,516 were area-dominance operations, 301 were based on intelligence, and 143 were area-sanitization operations.

The statement read that only in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa were 89 militants killed, and 540 were detained due to security forces operations.

However, the TTP, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and other militant groups have intensified their attacks, particularly in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces.

Experts: India poised for deep technology and transformational opportunities

Washington, Mar 12 (PTI):

India, which is now moving fast up the value chain from low-cost software services to manufacturing, offers tremendous opportunity in the areas of deep technology and technology driven transformation, according to eminent experts. "I am very convinced about the opportunity in India, and I saw this when I was in the Obama administration," said Arun Kumar, former Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets and Director General of the US and Foreign Commercial Service (USFCS) in the Obama Administration.

Currently, a Managing Partner with Celesta Capital, Kumar says this is driven by some good fundamentals, availability of international-standard talent, digital has become ubiquitous, making ground for tremendous amount of innovation; ad-

vance manufacturing, which makes India competitive in manufacturing and finally advancement of India-US relationship under the Modi-Biden leadership. "Overall, it's a very upbeat story on India," Kumar said during a recently concluded TechSurge conference in the Silicon Valley presented by Celesta Capital at the Computer History Museum in Silicon Valley.

A video of the conference was made available by the Celesta Capital.

He observed that India is emerging as a key economic and strategic partner for the US.

The US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), which was advanced recently by meetings between the two countries' National Security Advisors laid out commitments to building a robust innovation ecosystem between the two countries covering collaboration in artificial in-

telligence, high performance computing, defence and space technologies, semiconductors and next generation telecommunications. "Normally speaking, or at least until five or six years ago, we were used to India not doing very well. India is having lot of trouble and so on, and the rest of the world is doing much better. It's the other way around now," said World Bank Chief Economist Indermit Gill noting that India has made significant progress since 2014 in ease of doing business, a metric that the Bank had championed though it discontinued it in 2020. "If India does well in attracting investment, this could be India's time," Gill said. Stanford University Emeritus Professor Arogyaswami Paulraj, said the priorities of deep tech in India will be driven by semiconductors and energy, decarbonisation - green hydrogen and electric vehicles.

6 killed, 29 injured in bus accident in Nepal

Kathmandu, Mar 12 (PTI):

At least six people, including two women and a child, were killed and 29 others injured on Sunday when a bus they were travelling in crashed into a hillside in Nepal's Sindhuli district, police said.

The bus carrying 34 passengers from Okhaldhunga to Kathmandu met with the accident in Phikkal Rural Municipality-4 along the Mid-Hill Highway.

Three men, two women and a child died on the spot, police said.

According to the preliminary investigation, the accident occurred when the bus crashed into the hillside after the driver lost control of the vehicle, said Deputy Superintendent of Police Chiranjeevi Dahal.

The injured passengers have been shifted to Khurkot Hospital.

Five of the seriously injured passengers will be airlifted to Kathmandu for treatment, said Superintendent of Police Raj Kumar Silwal.

The bus driver is on the run, police said.

Four astronauts fly SpaceX back home, end 5-month mission

Cape Canaveral, Mar 12 (AP):

Four space station astronauts returned to Earth late on Saturday after a quick SpaceX flight home. Their capsule splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico just off the Florida coast near Tampa. The US-Russian-Japanese crew spent five months at the International Space Station, arriving last October.

Besides dodging space junk, the astronauts had to deal with a pair of leaking Russian capsules docked to the orbiting outpost and the urgent delivery of a replacement craft for the station's other crew members.



From left to right, Roscosmos cosmonaut Anna Kikina, NASA astronauts Josh Cassada and Nicole Mann, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) astronaut Koichi Wakata smile inside the SpaceX Dragon Endeavour spacecraft onboard a recovery ship shortly after having landed in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Tampa, Fla., following a five-month mission on the International Space Station.

Led by NASA's Nicole Mann, the first Native

American woman to fly in space, the astronauts

checked out of the station early Saturday

morning. Less than 19 hours later, their Dragon capsule was bobbing in the sea as they awaited pickup.

Earlier in the week, high wind and waves in the splashdown zones kept them at the station a few extra days. Their replacements arrived more than a week ago. "That was one heck of a ride," Mann radioed moments after splashdown. "We're happy to be home." Mann, a member of Northern California's Wailacki of the Round Valley Indian Tribes, said she couldn't wait to feel the wind on her face, smell fresh grass and enjoy some delicious Earth food.

Japanese astronaut

Koichi Wakata craved sushi, while Russian cosmonaut Anna Kikina yearned to drink hot tea "from real cup, not from plastic bag."

NASA astronaut Josh Cassada's to-do list included getting a rescue dog for his family. "Please don't tell our two cats," he joked before departing the space station.

Remaining behind at the space station are three Americans, three Russians and one from the United Arab Emirates.

Wakata, Japan's space-flight champion, now has logged more than 500 days in space over five missions dating back to NASA's shuttle era.

PROTEST AGAINST THE RUSSIAN



People carry a giant Ukrainian and Lithuanian flags to protest against the Russian invasion of Ukraine during a celebration of Lithuania's independence in Vilnius, Lithuania. Lithuania celebrated the 33rd anniversary of its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union.

Experts SVB collapse to impact Indian startups

Washington, Mar 12 (PTI):

The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, the largest vendor in the startup ecosystem, is likely to adversely impact the Indian startup scenario as well as it has injected a lot of uncertainty in the sector overnight, industry experts say.

"Hopefully the matter will get resolved, but I think it is a big hit for Indian startups," Ashu Garg, a prominent Silicon Valley-based venture capitalist and early-stage investor for over two decades, told PTI in an interview.

California-based Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), the 16th largest bank in the United States, was closed on Friday by the California

Department of Financial Protection and Innovation which later appointed the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as its receiver.

The FDIC, in a statement, said as of December 31, 2022, the Silicon Valley Bank had approximately USD 209.0 billion in total assets and about USD 175.4 billion in total deposits. At the time of closing, the amount of deposits in excess of the insurance limits was undetermined. The number of uninsured deposits will be determined once the FDIC obtains additional information from the bank and customers.

"The reality is that the Silicon Valley Bank has been a real supporter of the Indian startup scene

and has provided banking services. Most Indian startups that do business in the US use this bank because it is one of the few institutes willing to work with the Indian banks. A lot of the banking institutes do not want to work with overseas customers," Garg, an alumnus of IIT Delhi, said.

"So, SVB has been able to work with the Indian companies that do not have US employees. So if they (are gone), it will be very problematic for the Indian (companies)," he said in response to a question.

Over the past several years, SVB has been one of the most preferred choices of banking for startups and tech industry in the Silicon Valley,

mainly because of its understanding of the industry and flexibility in many aspects suiting the startup ecosystem.

Given that every third startup in the Silicon Valley is founded by Indian-Americans, experts feel a significantly large number of these founders would be impacted as early as next week in terms of even making basic payments and giving paychecks to their employees.

Similarly, a large number of Indian startups which do not have even an employee or an office in the US had opened up their accounts in the Silicon Valley Bank as it let them do so without much regulatory questions and with a customer-friendly approach.



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India's Looming Water Crisis: Urgent Action Needed

India is once again facing an impending water crisis due to the unprecedented heatwave conditions in February that have hit several parts of the country, with temperatures touching nearly 40 degrees Celsius. This is a precursor to the severe water crisis expected in summer 2023. It is imperative that urgent action be taken to ensure the supply of drinking water not only for humans and domestic animals but also for wild animals. Discharging water to drying rivers and other bodies of water will help prevent wild animals from encroaching into human habitats in search of water, thereby reducing the risk of harming people. The management of groundwater resources is crucial to the sustainability of India's agriculture and drinking water security. Unfortunately, India's yearly water crisis has not been adequately addressed, and groundwater resources continue to dry up or greatly deplete. While governments at the Centre and the states promise secure water management systems, little has been done, and the crisis continues to worsen. Groundwater resources are essential for people's livelihood, food security, and sustainable development, and it is high time to implement a structured scientific approach to manage them. Monitoring water level and quality, assessing resources, analyzing hazards, and developing management strategies are essential components of such an approach. The latest Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India report for 2022 reveals a dismal picture of groundwater availability in the country. Total annual groundwater recharge in the country is 437.6 bcm, of which 60.08% is extracted. Categorization of assessment units reveals that only 67% are safe, 12% are in a semi-critical position, 4% are critical, 14% are over-exploited, and 2% are saline. Recharge-worthy areas in the safe category are 66%, while the over-exploited category is 17%. This data clearly shows that India is not working enough to recharge its groundwater resources. India urgently needs an action plan to ensure the supply of drinking water to people and livestock, as well as releasing water from reservoirs into rivers for wild animals. Rainfall is the main source of replenishable groundwater resources, and it contributes nearly 61% of the total annual recharge. With over 75% of the country receiving rainfall mainly during the South-West monsoon season, it is essential to make the most of this opportunity to recharge groundwater resources. It is high time that the Indian government takes urgent action to address the looming water crisis. Water is fundamental to life, livelihood, food security, and sustainable development, and the current situation demands immediate attention. Failure to act now will have dire consequences for the country's future.

Monitoring H3N2 is imperative

Vijaykumar H K, Raichur

Experts in India have suggested that increased monitoring and precautionary measures are needed to combat the H3N2 virus in the country. India has already confirmed its first two influenza-related deaths. According to data released by the ministry on Friday, 600 cases of H3N2 were reported in the country between January and March. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, H3N2 is a non-human influenza virus that normally circulates in pigs and has infected humans (CDC). Symptoms are similar to seasonal flu viruses and can include fever, respiratory symptoms like coughing and running nose, and possibly other symptoms like body ache, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea. As fears grew, some wondered if this was another Covid. Hospitalization has not been very common, with only about 10% of cases reported to be hospitalised. Lockdowns and the extensive use of masks for extended periods of time aids in the control of more virulent versions of the virus, but also prevents good exposure to regular seasonal respiratory viruses according to experts. H3N2 outbreaks can "in fact cause death" and are more severe than the common flu. The occurrence is two to three times higher than usual for this time of year. This virus is classified as an influenza subtype. Though the Covid pandemic appears to be over, a wave of respiratory illnesses among adults continues, with a significant number infected with influenza viruses such as H3N2, adenovirus, and H1N1. According to the most recent data available on the Integrated Health Information Platform, states reported a total of around 4000 laboratory confirmed cases of various subtypes of influenza. Therefore The Union Health Ministry has to monitor the seasonal influenza situation in various states/UTs in real time via the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme network. Flu surveillance is an essential component of public health, saying that disease monitoring is critical to addressing the situation.

Central Chronicle invites articles, write-ups, and comments on a wide range of issues for our editorial page. Submissions should be between 800-900 words in length. In addition, we welcome letters to the editor for this page. While letters may be edited for clarity, we aim to preserve the integrity of the original message, and ask that they be kept to around 50-60 words. Submissions can be sent via email to editorcentralchronicle@gmail.com.

MARSHAL ARTS DEMONSTRATION



Women commandos wing take part in a live demonstration of Marshal arts during the 54th CISF Raising Day Parade-2023, at CISF National Industrial Security Academy in Hakimpet, Sunday, March 12.

Saving Lives and Livelihoods During COVID-19 Pandemic

VINOD K PAUL



India's COVID-19 vaccination program prevented 34 lakh deaths in 2021, and delivered a net positive economic impact of US\$ 15.42 billion (Rs 1,09,325) [Stanford University – IFC working paper 2023]

In January 2021, India started rolling-out a historic COVID-19 vaccination drive. Since then, over 220 crore vaccine doses have been administered. India hit the astonishing figure of 200 crore doses in 18 months making the effort truly unparalleled both in scale and speed. We also created a record of administering 2.51 crore doses on a single day, and of administering more than 1.0 crore doses on nine other days! What is even more remarkable is that the entire COVID-19 vaccination program was powered by two made-in-India vaccines. Over 97% of the vaccines were provided free through the public health system. Real-life data analysed by ICMR showed effectiveness of one and two dose vaccination to be 99.0% and 99.4% in preventing mortality due to COVID-19 disease, respectively.

A study published in the prestigious Lancet Infectious Diseases in September 2022 estimated the impact of first year of COVID-19 vaccination worldwide. The paper showed that many as 34 lakh (range 27.5 - 48.8 lakh) deaths were averted in India by the vaccination program in 2021 alone. Now a working paper released by the Stanford University and the Institute of Competitiveness (titled 'Healing the Economy: Estimating economic impact of vaccination & related measures'), while highlighting and using the above mortality reduction figure, has gone

further to provide an estimate of income-generating potential of the vaccination program. The report estimates that the life-saving vaccination campaign yielded a positive economic impact by preventing the loss of US\$ 18.3 billion (? 1,29,000 crore). According to the paper, a net benefit of US\$ 15.42 billion (?1,09,325 crore) accrued to the nation after taking into consideration the cost of the vaccination campaign.

A related aspect has an important bearing at this point. The government procured the India-made COVID-19 vaccines for under US\$ 3 per dose. The market price of the globally popular mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna), though varied, was typically about US\$ 20 per dose. At such a price, the staggering cost of US\$ 40 billion (? 3,00,000 crore) for two billion doses would have meant an enormous economic stress for the country. In any case, there were simply not enough spare vaccine doses in 2021 in the global market to meet India's humongous need from any external source, and we would have been left high and dry if we did not have our own production. Thanks to atmanirbharta, the country sailed through the crisis with head held high by developing and delivering affordable and effective made-in-India vaccines. We not only protected our own people, but also shared our produce with over 100 countries through Vaccine Maitri initiative.

According to the Stanford paper,

India set an example for emerging economies aiming to expand vaccination coverage across the length and breadth of the country. With a strategic and prioritised vaccination drive and efficient coordination among the stakeholders, India proved that expanding vaccination coverage was not an insurmountable goal despite a range of challenges. Further, the role of India's frontline health workers, especially the ASHAs, in the vaccination drive is a testimony of their importance in the healthcare system especially at the local level. The report notes that the ASHA workers served as the point of contact between the authorities and the masses. They richly deserve the Global Health Leaders Award bestowed by the World Health Organization at the 2022 world health assembly.

The vaccination drive however, was only one important part of India's globally recognized pandemic management and response strategy. The paper elaborates the three cornerstones of India's strategy - containment, relief package, and vaccine administration. It observes that these three measures working in conjunction were critical in saving lives and ensuring uninterrupted economic activity by containing the spread of the COVID-19, sustaining livelihoods, and developing immunity against the virus. India's pandemic management and response was bolstered further by acclaimed IT tools such as CoWIN, Aarogya Setu and eSanjeevani. The Stanford report notes that robust measures at the ground level, like contact tracing, mass testing, home quarantine, distribution of essential medical equipment, revamping healthcare infrastructure, and constant coordination among multiple stakeholders at the centre, state, and district levels, helped contain the spread of the virus and prepare a massive hospital infrastructure for care. It highlights that, as against the top-down approach, a bottom-up approach was critical in containing the virus.

The Economic Survey (2020-21) had shown that India was able to save more than 1 lakh lives due to the lockdown in 2020. It pointed out that because of this measure, the country took around 175 days to reach the peak from its first 100 cases, while many countries reached

their first peak in less than 50 days (including Russia, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, etc.). As per the Stanford report, the lockdown and subsequent containment measures helped flatten the curve and struck a balance between saving lives and sustained economic activity. The calibrated approach used by India in formulating a comprehensive relief package, as opposed to a front-loaded stimulus package, played a major role in reducing the financial stress on the people and in ushering in a resilient post-pandemic trajectory.

With a comprehensive package that encompassed people belonging to old age, women, farmers, and the working class, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) amounting to Rs 68,820 crore (US\$ 9.7 billion) ensured that the impact on the livelihoods of the people was moderated to an extent. According to the Stanford report, as a fiscal stimulus, the PMGKY had an economic impact of US\$ 7.57 billion (Rs 53,679 crores). Under the PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan, 40 lakh beneficiaries were provided employment which resulted in an overall economic impact of US\$ 4.81 billion (Rs 34,095 crore). The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY) involved distribution of free food grains to approximately 80 crores people which ensured that no one slept hungry. It made a huge economic impact of US\$ 26.24 billion (Rs 1,86,026 crore) as per the Stanford study. The pandemic had devastating effects on the global economy. Institutions such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund estimated losses of trillions of dollars to the global economy. For India, a country heading into higher orbits of its development and economic robustness, such a setback could have been catastrophic. Yet, India continues to be the fastest growing major economy even after the pandemic. Indeed, India has emerged stronger in the post-pandemic world under the leadership of the Prime Minister having been successful in protecting lives and livelihoods, and in preserving the energy and dynamism of nation's economy.

(Vinod K Paul is Member (Health), NITI Aayog. Views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Importance of school playgrounds

I am writing to express my views on the importance of school playgrounds. It is widely accepted that school playgrounds keep children fit and healthy. However, the benefits of playgrounds go beyond physical health. Children learn important skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and decision-making while playing. Playground activities also contribute to the development of emotional and cognitive faculties and social skills, which are essential for their overall growth. Playing on the playground helps children develop muscle strength, motor skills, and eye-hand coordination, among other things. Additionally, creativity and talent are nurtured through playing. When a student steps onto the playground and showcases his/her skills, it enhances self-esteem, thought process, and immune system. Playing on the playground also teaches important life lessons that cannot be taught in the classroom. As one thinker said, playgrounds teach students that they are 'not alone' in life, and every individual needs to be taken along life's path.

Manoj Kumar, Raipur

Sino-Indian relations

Ongoing aggressive posture of China towards the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean is a concern for its neighbours. It is heartening to see that friendly nations are joining hands to thwart China's designs in the region. The recent standoff between India and China has become a much-needed trigger for friendly countries to support and seek India's cooperation on common interests. One such international forum that has emerged as a crucial player in this regard is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). Comprising the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, the Quad has been initiated to keep China on its toes. The recent meet of the Quad at New Delhi has reaffirmed the group's commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is indeed a welcome development. I believe that it is high time for the international community to come together to address China's aggressive posture in the region. The Quad has shown that when friendly nations unite, they can make a significant impact on the global stage. I hope that more nations will come forward to join hands with India and the Quad in their efforts to safeguard the interests of the Indo-Pacific region.

Satish Dhawan, Korba

Xi tightens grip: What it means for the world

China's parliament, the National People's Congress, has "unanimously elected" Xi Jinping as the country's president for a historic third term. With this victory, Xi has become China's longest-serving leader since Mao Zedong, setting the stage for a lifelong rule. Xi was also re-elected as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, ensuring his continuation as the head of the People's Liberation Army.

The outcome was inevitable, with no other candidates in the race. Xi has further consolidated his grip on China, at a time when relations with the West and the US are strained over issues like Taiwan and the Ukraine war, and tensions with India continue over the Ladakh standoff. The country's military budget has increased by 7.2%, indicating no let-

up in China's muscle-flexing.

However, balancing military augmentation with economic revival will be a significant challenge for the Chinese President. India needs to be cautious of Xi's absolute power; with the latest report from the US intelligence community stating that China will continue its efforts to achieve its vision of becoming a "major power" globally by undermining US influence.

Xi has set a goal for China to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049, the centenary year of the people's republic. With Xi more firmly in control, China may make provocative moves in retaliation for the growing closeness between India and the US. New Delhi must stay well-prepared, both militarily and diplomatically, for any eventualities.

The safety net of digital financial literacy

India's exponential growth in digital payments highlights the user-friendly and cost-effective nature of payment platforms. However, awareness of digital fraud is critical to building a robust ecosystem. The Reserve Bank of India's "Har Payment Digital" mission aims to popularize digital payments across the country. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das noted that the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) has become the most popular payment mode in India, accounting for 75% of digital payments. The volume of UPI transactions has increased from Rs 0.45 crore in January 2017 to Rs 804 crore in January 2023, while the value of UPI transactions has increased from just Rs 1,700 crore to Rs 12.98 lakh crore during this period.

The government's incentive scheme for the promotion of RuPAY debit cards and BHIM-UPI transactions has also been instrumental in popularizing digital payment. However, the digital divide remains a significant obstacle to achieving full financial inclusion. About 45,000 villages in the country still do not have access to

4G internet connectivity, and over 8,000 villages in the Northeast region lack access to 3G or 4G connectivity. Bridging this divide is crucial for expanding digital transactions in remote villages along international borders. The rise in digital fraud is also a concern. While digital payments are safe and secure, fraudsters take advantage of the lack of digital financial literacy to steal digital identities and dupe users into sharing their vital credentials.

This underscores the need to prioritize digital financial literacy to strengthen the safety net against digital financial fraud. The RBI's campaign theme for Digital Payment Awareness Week, "Digital Payment Apnao, Auron ko bhi Sikhao" (Adopt digital payments and also teach others), can have a sub-theme of imparting digital financial literacy. The government's push for improving digital connectivity and promoting digital transactions has brought a digital revolution to the country, and prioritizing digital financial literacy can further enhance the safety net of digital payments.

BRIEF

Bank of Maharashtra

New Delhi: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Sunday announced a reduction in the interest rate on home loans to 8.4 per cent from the existing 8.6 per cent. The new rate is effective from March 13, 2023, BoM said in a statement. The home loan at 8.4 per cent makes it one of the lowest in the banking sector. Besides, it said, the bank has also a special rate of interest (ROI) for defence personnel, including paramilitary forces, benefiting salaried and pensioner categories for home loans.

Arzoo

New Delhi: Consumer durables marketplace Arzoo has partnered with electronic manufacturing firms like Dixon and Amber Group among others to offer smart range of home appliances. Arzoo is foraying into the consumer durables category offering next generation products that will come with new-age technology, superior quality and designs, said a company statement. Arzoo has partnered with prominent players in electronic manufacturing like Dixon, Amber Group and others to introduce an expansive line up of innovative products such as smart electronics and home appliances to customers across tier 1, 2, and 3 cities.

Simpliwork

New Delhi: Managed flexible workspace provider Simpliwork Offices is planning to invest Rs 750 crore next fiscal to expand its portfolio and raise up to Rs 2,800 crore in equity and debt for future growth. Founded in 2018, Bengaluru-based Simpliwork Offices currently has an office portfolio of around 4.2 million square feet, roughly 50,000 desks, across major 8 cities. Salarpura Sattva, one of the leading real estate firms in the country, with a large presence in the office market, has a 50 per cent stake in Simpliwork Offices.

Godrej

Panaji: Godrej Locks and Architectural Fittings is looking at clocking Rs 1,100 crore turnover this fiscal, a 24 per cent year-on-year growth, a senior company official has said. Talking to reporters in Panaji on Saturday, Shyam Motwani, Business Head, Godrej Locks and Architectural Fittings and Systems, said the unprecedented success for the company was due to a huge demand for digital locks and spurt in residential real estate.

ELCOT

Chennai: State-owned Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT) has been notified as the nodal agency to address issues relating to telecom infrastructure in the state, and to develop a single electronic application process, required for submission of online applications by infrastructure providers for grant of Right of Way (RoW) permissions.

Hybrid energy project likely to start by 2024: JSL MD

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The 300 MW hybrid project in partnership with ReNew is expected to commence operation in the next 18 months, Jindal Stainless Managing Director Abhyuday Jindal said.

In December 2022, Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL) partnered with ReNew to develop the proposed 300 MW hybrid energy project.

When asked about the timeline of the project, Jindal told PTI, "We (JSL and ReNew) are on track on the pact. That project is 300 MW. Land acquisition has already been completed for the project". The project will start in the next one and a half years' time, he said. On the company's hy-



Jindal Stainless Managing Director Abhyuday Jindal

drogen project, the MD said it is expected to start in July this year. In August 2022, the country's largest stainless steel player partnered with Hygenco India Private Limited to set up a green hydrogen plant. "These green initiatives are part of

our mission to switch from a thermal energy-intensive manufacturing setup to renewable energy alternatives," he said. The company will continue to take proactive steps to reduce carbon emissions of its present and planned capacities, Jindal said. JSL is also in process of investing Rs 120 crore to set up a 21 MW rooftop solar capacity at its Jajpur unit and another 6 MW in the Hisar facility, he added. The energy generated from the solar, wind and hydrogen units will be used in various processes of stainless steel-making plants, he said. In FY22, JSL reduced its carbon emissions by 1.4 lakh tonnes and aims to become carbon neutral by 2050, Jindal said.

India, Aus to expedite comprehensive free trade agreement

New Delhi Mar 12 (PTI):

India and Australia have agreed to conclude the negotiations for a comprehensive free trade agreement "as soon as possible" as there is huge potential to enhance bilateral commerce in the next five years, according to a joint statement issued on Sunday.

The statement was released after the meeting of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Australia's Minister for Trade and Tourism Don Farrell here on March 11. Both countries have already implemented an economic cooperation and trade agreement (ECTA) in December 2022 and are now negotiating to widen the scope of that pact into a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA). "Ministers look forward to concluding CECA as soon as possible," the statement said.

Oil giant Saudi Aramco makes a historic USD 161B profit in 2022

Dubai, Mar 12 (AP):

Oil giant Saudi Aramco reported on Sunday earning USD 161 billion last year, claiming the highest-ever recorded annual profit by a publicly listed company and drawing immediate criticism from activists.

The monster profit by the firm, known formally as the Saudi Arabian Oil Co., came off the back of energy prices rising after Russia launched its war on Ukraine in February 2022, with sanctions limiting the sale of Moscow's oil and natural gas in Western markets.

Aramco also hopes to increase its production to take advantage of market demand as China reenters the global market after lifting its coronavirus restrictions. That could raise the billions needed to pay for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plans to develop



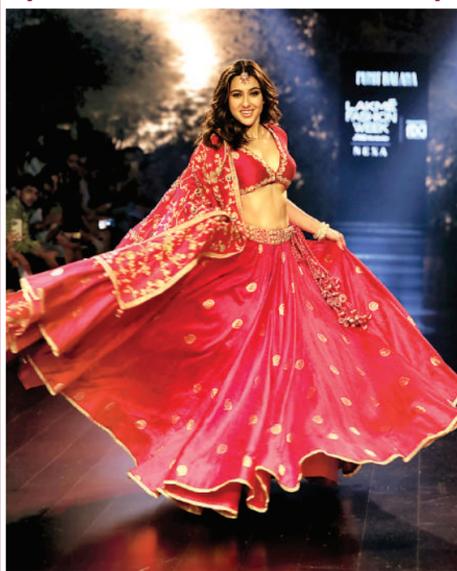
op futuristic cityscapes to pivot Saudi Arabia away from oil.

However, those plans come despite growing international concerns over the burning of fossil fuels accelerating climate change. Meanwhile, higher energy prices already have strained relations between Riyadh and Washington, as well as driven up inflation worldwide. "Given that we anticipate oil and gas will remain essential for the foreseeable future, the

risks of underinvestment in our industry are real including contributing to higher energy prices," Saudi Aramco CEO and President Amin H. Nasser said in a statement.

Profits rose 46.5 per cent when compared to the company's 2021 results of USD 110 billion. It earned USD 49 billion in 2020 when the world faced the worst of the coronavirus pandemic lockdown, travel disruptions and oil prices briefly going negative.

LAKME FASHION WEEK



Bollywood actor Sara Ali Khan walks the ramp showcasing a creation by designer Punit Balana during 'FDCI X Lakme Fashion Week', in Mumbai.

Inflation expected to come down over the year: Ashima Goyal

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Inflation is expected to come down over the year, RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Ashima Goyal said on Sunday, asserting that the government's supply-side action coordinated with a flexible inflation-targeting regime has kept the rate of price rise lower than that in other countries.

Goyal said that India has successfully dealt with 'pluri-shocks' over the past three years, showing considerable resilience.

"Inflation rates are expected to come down over the year. Government supply-side action coordinated with a flexible inflation targeting regime has kept Indian inflation rates lower than other countries and our own past averages even in this period of



RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Ashima Goyal

major adverse external supply shocks," she told PTI in a telephonic interview. She was asked whether high inflation become the norm in India.

"Since nominal policy rates rise with inflation to maintain an expected real positive rate under inflation targeting this pre-

vents demand over-heating and anchors inflation expectations," she noted.

Goyal said policy rates had been cut steeply during the pandemic, so they had to be raised fast after recovery was established.

"But policy rates must not rise too much at present because of slowing external demand. Domestic demand must be allowed to compensate," she emphasised.

According to Goyal, as long as the expected future real policy rate does not rise much above unity, RBI is not over-tightening.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has raised its benchmark repo rate by 250 basis points since May last year with expectations of another 25 basis points hike to 6.75 per cent in April before hitting pause until year-end.

Govt to infuse more capital in public sector general insurers next year

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The government may have to infuse more capital in the three public sector general insurance companies to improve their financial health, a senior government official said.

The government last year provided Rs 5,000 crore capital to three insurers - National Insurance Company Limited, Oriental Insurance Company Limited and United India Insurance Company.

Based on the performance in the FY23, the finance ministry would take a call as to how much capital they would require to meet regulatory requirements, the official said. They are not in good financial health and fund would

be infused in these entities to augment their solvency margin, the official added.

The solvency margin is the extra capital the companies must hold over and above the claim amounts they are likely to incur. It acts as a financial backup in extreme situations, enabling the company to settle all claims.

As per the regulator IRDAI's mandate, the minimum solvency ratio insurance companies must maintain is 1.5 to lower risks. In terms of solvency margin, the required value is 150 per cent.

The Budget 2023-24 has not provided for the capital infusion for insurance companies but the funds can be sought through supplementary demand, the official said.

Welspun India and Walt Disney to collaborate for kids' market: CEO

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Home textiles major Welspun India is seeking to tap opportunities in the kids segment through its licensing pact with The Walt Disney Company, according to Welspun's CEO and Joint Managing Director Dipali Goenka.

The company, which had signed a brand licensing agreement with Walt Disney in January for the Europe and the UK market this year, also sees an increase of shelf space of licensed brands as compared to its private labels.

"If there's a recession, or a slowdown, people will not compromise on their kids' demands...The kids' opportunity is huge. Whether there's a slow-



Welspun's CEO and Joint Managing Director Dipali Goenka

down or there's a peak, that demand never tapers off," Goenka told PTI.

The licence agreement had given Welspun the rights to design, develop, manufacture and distribute a complete range of home textiles products leveraging on Disney's franchises and characters across Disney, Pixar,

Marvel and Lucas brands. Welspun India President & Global Head Keyur Parekh said the licensing pact with Walt Disney marks the foray of Welspun into the new segment of kids.

"Disney resonates so well, in terms of this category (kids) and the segment. It allows us to create a wagon for growth into absolutely a new space. So, this actually helps us to bring incremental revenues and to address the whole new segment," he added.

Further, Parekh said, "The current licence that we have with Disney is for three years. It encompasses all the EU countries, the UK and the South African market."

Eight of top 10 firms lose Rs 1.03 lakh cr in market valuation

RIL, ICICI hit hard

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Eight of the top 10 valued firms faced a combined erosion of Rs 1,03,732.39 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank taking the biggest hit amid an overall weak trend in equities. During the holiday-shortened week, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 673.84 points or 1.12 per cent amid concerns over the quantum of the next interest rate hike by the US Federal Reserve. Barring Bharti Airtel and ITC, eight firms suffered erosion from their market capitalisation (mcap). The market valuation of Reliance Industries plummeted by Rs 41,878.37 crore to Rs 15,71,724.26 crore, the most among the top 10 firms.

Lamborghini eyes Tier I, Tier II cities for biz growth in India

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

Having established a presence across top cities in India, Italian automaker Automobili Lamborghini is now eyeing customers in smaller centres to generate additional volumes, according to a top company official.

The super sports car maker is bullish on the country's economic growth, a rise of first-generation entrepreneurs and large-scale road infrastructure development to fuel future business growth. In an interaction with PTI, Lamborghini India Head Sharad Agarwal said a few years ago the demand was largely concentrated in bigger cities and metros but now



it is well spread out. "We launched a programme and reached out to possible customers in 100 cities. Today we have 50 cities in India where you can find a Lamborghini owner and these Tier I and Tier II cities now contribute to more than 25 per cent of the business. So these cities are becoming very important for us," he

noted. Lamborghini began its India operations in 2007. Last year it sold 92 units in India, a growth of 33 per cent over 69 units in 2021. The Italian brand sells three models - premium SUV Urus and two super sports cars Huracan Tecnica and Aventador in the country, with prices starting upwards of Rs 3 crore.

Govt Report: 95% Rural population have access to Potable Water

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

A government survey has revealed that 95 per cent of people in rural areas and 97.2 per cent in cities are having access to improved sources of drinking (potable) water during 2020-2021.

According to the report based on the Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS) of the National Sample Survey (NSS) 78th round, about 56.3 per cent of the persons in the rural areas and about 76.3 per cent of the persons in the urban areas used improved source of drinking water located in the household premises, which was suf-



ficiently available throughout the year.

The primary objective of the MIS was to collect data for generation of some important national indicators of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The survey was initially planned to be conducted

during January-December 2020, but due to Covid-19 pandemic, the data collection was continued up to August 15, 2021 for ensuring completeness of survey operation in terms of its coverage.

For the central sample, the survey was spread over 14,266 first stage units (8,469 in rural areas and 5,797 in urban areas) covering 2,76,409 sample households, including 1,64,529 in rural areas and 1,11,880 in urban areas.

The report based on the MIS released in March stated that about 78.7 per cent of the house-

holds in the rural areas and about 97.1 per cent in the urban areas reported that majority of household members had access to latrine.

Among those who had reported access to latrine, about 97.5 per cent in rural areas had access to improved latrine while about 99 per cent in the urban areas had access to improved latrine, it found. About 77.4 per cent of the persons in the rural areas and about 92.7 per cent in the urban areas had access to hand washing facility with water and soap/detergent within the premises, it stated.

PepsiCo bottler predicts significant growth in Indian soft drink market

New Delhi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Indian soft drink market is expected to see "significant growth" as consumption is anticipated to increase steadily, which will deliver sustainable and healthy volume growth across all product categories, said Varun Beverages Ltd (VBL), PepsiCo's largest franchise bottler.

This would be driven by factors such as shifting population demographics, the rising spending power of young consumers, accelerated urbanisation, and growing rural consumption.

The company is in the process of further expanding its capacities to meet the higher demand expecta-

tions, said VBL in its latest annual report.

Its distribution model and on-the-ground end-to-end infrastructure facilities continue to be the key growth drivers and VBL remains committed to extending it to newer areas and under-penetrated regions to further boost its market presence," it added.

While from an operational standpoint, VBL continues to focus on new product categories and evolving customer preferences.

Launch of new products such as energy drink 'Sting' performed well across various geographical regions and recent launches in the value-added dairy segment have received positive consumer response. "Overall, VBL is confi-

dent in its ability to deliver strong and sustained growth moving forward, owing to the exceptional performance during the year, normalisation of the environment, and the expanded capacities to meet the high demand expectations," it said.

VBL is PepsiCo's second largest franchisee (outside the US), possessing rights to manufacture, distribute and sell carbonated soft drinks, fruit juice-based drinks, packaged drinking water, sports drinks and energy drinks spanning across 6 countries. In India, VBL has a presence in 27 states and 7 Union Territories and accounts for 90 per cent of PepsiCo India's beverage sales volume in the country.

I might get into trouble for saying this, says Priyanka about pay parity

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming spy-action thriller series 'Citadel', has shared that for the first time in her 22 years' career, she got equal pay with 'Citadel'. Recently at the inauguration of the South by Southwest Film Festival, the actress spoke with Amazon Studios head Jennifer Salke and shared her version with a bit of scepticism. "I might get into trouble for (saying this), depends on who's watching," she said, quoted by The Hollywood Reporter. "I've been working in the entertainment industry for now 22 years, and I have done about almost 70-plus features and two TV shows."

She continued: "But when I did Citadel, it was the first time in my career

that I had pay parity. I'm laughing about this, but it's kind of nuts, I put in the same amount of investment and work, but I get paid much less. But the ease in which Amazon Studios said, 'That's what you deserve, you are co-leads, that's just fair,' and I was like, 'You're right, it's fair.'" 'Citadel' is Prime Video's upcoming big-budget, globe-trotting spy thriller produced by the

Russo Brothers and showrunner David Weil, and stars Richard Madden along with Priyanka. "And I wonder: Did that happen because there are very few female decision-makers in Hollywood? Would that have been a different conversation if a woman didn't make that decision? Those are not conversations that happened very easily," the actress concluded.

Actress Parul Gulati goes home with Rs 1 cr cheque from 'Shark Tank India 2'



Actress Parul Gulati got a cheque worth a whopping Rs 1 crore by entrepreneur Amit Jain on the show 'Shark Tank India' season 2. Parul, who is the owner of a hair extension brand called Nish Hair, appeared on 'Shark Tank India 2' during the finale and went home with the cheque. She took to Instagram, where she said that she made it with her business. Parul shared a picture holding the cheque and wrote: "I have had this cheque for a while now & how I wanted to share my joy with you all. I MADE IT with my

business. Who could have ever thought my business will one day be valued at 50 Crore." She called Amit Jain her hero. "Also @amitjain_cardekho you are truly my hero, not just because you gave me the best deal but also because you and your team, you have been so supportive & have been guiding me through my tough times." Parul concluded by saying: "I don't know how many of you remember when I was facing troubles with my payment gateway it was his team @megha_alley who lent me theirs till I got one of my own."



&TV shows to continue with love and hatred



This week on &TV's Doodh Maa, viewers will witness Krishna's hatred for his father Ashok. And new love stories will bloom in Happu Ki Ultan Paltan and Bhabiji Ghar Par Hai. About &TV's Doodh Maa track Krishna shares, "Yashoda (Neha Joshi) slaps Krishna (Aayudh Bhanushali) in anger as he tells her that Ashok (Mohit Dagga) is a coward, which is why he ran away from them. Ashok meets Mandal Baba and approaches him for diksa. Meanwhile, Kamini (Priety Sahay) devises a plan and gets Aastha (Aadvika Sharma) injured to get Yashoda and Krishna back. The family takes her to the hospital when Kamini calls and informs them about her injury to Yashoda, leaving her shocked." About &TV's Happu Ki Ultan Paltan track Daroga Happu Singh shares, "After the Master complains to Happu that the kids are physically inactive, Happu (Yogesh Tripathi) decides to get a badminton coach for them. He hires Janardan (Hartaj Singh), a badminton coach, who came to file a report at his police station. When Janardan comes to train the kids, gets attracted to Rajesh (Kamna Pathak), and motivates her to play badminton. Happu and Katori Amma (Himani Shivpuri) also agree for her to take badminton lessons. Meanwhile, Manohar (Nitin Jhadav) talks about a wife being clouded by a sportsman, leaving him insecure."

Heroini Awards applaud women from various fields

Radio Nasha has been consistently promoting women empowerment and continues to celebrate women achievers every year through their flagship awards. Every year in March around Women's Day RJ Rohini celebrates and applauds the finest journeys of the most inspiring women in our country to the fore at 'Radio Nasha Heroini Awards'.

In its 5th edition this year, the evergreen heart-throb Raveena Tandon has made it to the illustrious list. RJ Rohini says "As a woman in media I know the challenges faced by women from across industries and decided to present a series of interviews where we talk about the real stuff like when Sonali Bendre Bahl told me about that phase when she lost her hair when was battling cancer, I had goosebumps. I believe



Every woman overcomes her shortcomings and emerges as a Diva, everyday. Radio Nasha is doing a noteworthy job acknowledging the contribution of women in our country. I would like to applaud every woman rising above all the odds and taking a step closer to living the life of her dreams. A determined woman can do everything that she aspires to do so no matter the obstacles, and this honour celebrates every such woman who wants to break out of the shell and conquer the world right from the one who wants to excel in her career to the one who is giving it her all while raising the family".

"Heroini awards are a special Women's Day initiative that strengthens the relationship between female achievers and their viewers and supporters. Kudos to Radio ki Heroini Rohini for bringing all these stalwarts together.

bringing these stories to the forefront will serve as great inspiration to our listeners". These stories are unique and goes beyond just entertainment. Through this initiative, Radio Nasha is building lasting conversations with these amazing Heroinis'.

Raveen Tandon added, "I am honored by this recognition. I believe every woman is a Diva in herself at whatever she chooses to do in her life.

Ram Charan attends pre-Oscars event with wife Upasana

Indian actor Ram Charan attended the South Asian Excellence pre-Oscars event and Priyanka Chopra Jones's party, along with his wife Upasana Konidela. Priyanka and Ram Charan share a great camaraderie as the two have worked together in the 2013 film 'Zanjeer'.

Ram and his wife spent time with the actors, directors and producers from the west. He wore a Dolce and Gabbana suit paired with glasses. Ram is currently in the US waiting for the Oscar awards to take place on Sunday. His song 'Naatu Naatu' from the film 'RRR' is nominated at the 95th Oscar awards.

'Naatu Naatu' has already won a Golden Globe and a Critics Choice Award this year. At the Oscars, the song is contending against tracks sung by Lady Gaga and Rihanna.

'RRR' stars NTR Jr., Ram Charan, Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt and Shriya Saran and tells the fictional story



of two real-life Indian revolutionaries, Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem and their fight against the British Raj. Set in the 1920s, the plot explores the undocumented period in their lives when both the revolutionaries chose to go into obscurity before they began the fight for their country.

'Have become an even bigger fan of Akshay Kumar'

Singing sensation Stebin Ben is currently creating waves in North America as he is performing for the Entertainer's Tour with Akshay Kumar and others. Grateful for the experience, an overwhelmed Stebin Ben penned a heartwarming note for Superstar Akshay Kumar.

Posting pictures from the stage with Akshay Kumar for the performance of Entertainer's Tour in Atlanta, North America, Stebin Ben said, "Dear @akshaykumar sir

Sharing the stage with you in Atlanta was the highlight for me!

Your love for music and your energy on stage just cannot be matched and I'm blessed to have expe-



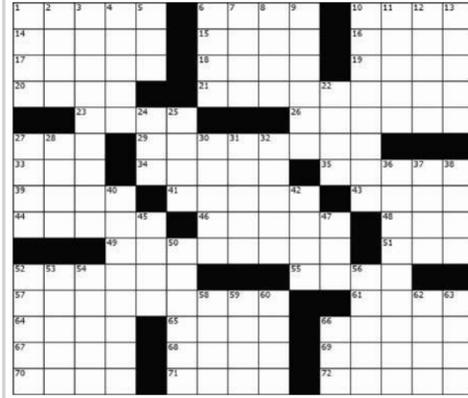
rience this tour with you. Have become an even bigger fan of your hard-

work and fearlessness! Cheers to beginning The Entertainer's journey with a bang!! Dallas be ready!"

While live performances are Stebin Ben's forte, the charming singer has collaborated with a celebrity tour for the first time. Interestingly, Stebin also sang for Akshay Kumar's latest film Selfie. Titled Deewane, the special track from the film features Akshay Kumar, Emraan Hashmi and Jaqueline Fernandez.

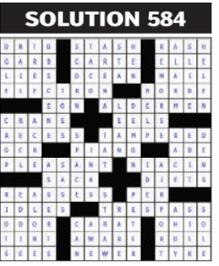
After beginning the year with a bang owing to the success of Tu Mile, Stebin Ben is currently garnering praises for Deewane and busy with his international tour with Akshay Kumar, Mouni Roy, Disha Patani, Sonam Bajwa, Nora Fatehi, Jasleen Royal, and Aparshakti Khurrana.

CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Swindle
 - Gent
 - Wise about
 - Synthetic fabric
 - Volcanic emission
 - Red wine
 - On one's toes
 - Tiny particle
 - Send out
 - Ink stain
 - Pierce
 - Actor _____ Newman
 - President, e.g.
 - Get by
 - Ocean beach
 - Mr. Franklin
 - Peruvian range
 - Lugged
 - Sugar source
 - Bath powders
 - Wander
 - Bit of parsley
 - Platter

- DOWN**
- Seafood choice
 - Foyer
 - Shocking revelation (2 wds.)
 - Large artery
 - Explosive (abbr.)
 - Thunder sound
 - Detest
 - English river
 - _____ Anderson of "Baywatch"
 - Phone company employee
 - Wanderer
 - Stale
 - Water mammal
 - Experiment
 - Neighbor of Mex.
 - Pre-Easter period
 - Declines
 - Retain
 - Modify
 - Viola's kin
 - Hollywood award
 - Acceptance of others
 - Fifty-fifty
 - Legal paper
 - Having endless energy
 - Fret
 - Heredity carrier
 - Bard's "before"
 - Skunk feature
 - Dwell
 - Aromatic herb
 - Streamlined
 - Expiate
 - Thought
 - Close
 - Inquires
 - Peaceful
 - Individuals
 - What a cow chews



Kohli dazzles, India dominates Aussies

Ahmedabad, Mar 12 (PTD):

India's batting mainstay Virat Kohli finally ended a near 40-month wait for his 28th Test hundred as his scrappy but brilliantly effective 186 set up a gripping final day of the fourth Test against Australia here on Sunday.

Kohli's epic knock helped India amass 571 in response to Australia's first innings score of 480.

With a lead of 91 runs, India had a go at Australia in the six overs before stumps but visitors managed to keep all wickets intact. With a lead of 88 at close, India will have to go for the jugular on day five on a track where there is finally some turn and bounce on offer but not something that batters can't tackle.

A draw still looks the most likely result but if any team wins the Test from here, it will be India, who would then go on to win the series 3-1 and directly qualify for the World Test Championship final, without having to wait on the fate of Sri Lanka's Test series versus



New Zealand. For the 15,000 odd people present at Motera, it was a Sunday to remember as Kohli guided Nathan Lyon towards mid-wicket to complete his first Test hundred since November 2019. The hundred, his 75th in international cricket, came off 241 balls.

The celebrations were muted as there was still some way to go before India would be in driver's seat and hence he didn't want to lose focus by getting elated. There was a smile of satisfaction and a now familiar kiss on his engagement ring.

It was an innings of different character from Kohli. Having had his troubles dealing with deliveries outside the off-stump, he traded caution in exchange of flair and hardly played those beastly cover drives till he reached his hundred.

There were shades of Sachin Tendulkar's 241 at Sydney in 2004 in this innings of Kohli's, when one compares the sheer discipline of the two knocks.

A supremely fit athlete, Kohli ran 84 singles, 18 doubles and twice he took

three runs, including once when he was batting in his 160s. By sheer volume of running between the wickets, he collected 126 of his 186 runs with 15 hits to the fence.

Wife Anushka Sharma put up an Instagram post which informed that Kohli showed this enormous composure despite being "sick".

It was pity that Shreyas Iyer couldn't turn up for batting due to recurring back pain and Kohli was the ninth and last Indian man to be dismissed after his 364 ball knock that spanned over 8 hours and 36 minutes. No one deserved those 14 runs more than him.

As he dragged his tired body towards the pavilion, rival skipper Steve Smith and bowler Todd Murphy along with other Aussie players came to shake his hands and the crowd near dressing room gave a standing ovation. He did have some significant partnerships but no better than the 162 that he added for the sixth wicket with an ever-improving Axar Patel (79 off 113 balls).

Feels great to get a Test hundred in India: Gill

Ahmedabad, Mar 12 (PTD):

Young Indian opener Shubman Gill, who scored his maiden Test century at home in the ongoing fourth Test, said he was determined not to play a loose shot on the most batting friendly pitch of the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

Gill slammed a patient 128 off 235 balls on day three of the game here on Saturday.

"Honestly, I was thinking I don't know when next I will get a wicket like this. I didn't want to miss the opportunity by playing a bad shot. That's what going through my mind," Gill told his teammate Cheteshwar Pujara in an interview posted on BCCI.TV after the day three's proceedings.

"It feels great to be able to get a Test hundred in India. This is my first one, and to be able to get it in India which is my home ground in the IPL, is amazing."

Going through a dream run in 2023, the 23-year-



old has struck centuries across formats. His maiden Test century had come in the Chittagong Test against Bangladesh in December 2022.

On day three, only the spinners were getting some purchase and Gill said his strategy was to see through them and "balance it out" by being aggressive against the pacers.

"I was blocking myself against the spinners, and I can't be doing the same against the fast bowlers as well. You have to balance it out and that was I

trying to do. "I was still trying to be positive, keep looking for the singles and go for a bad ball."

It was a hard toil for the Indians and especially Gill who after fielding for almost two days batted till the third session on day three. As a result, he developed some cramps while batting.

"I was getting cramps, but that is a good thing because if you are getting cramps, you know you are doing well," Gill said. The duo of Gill and Pujara put together 113 runs for the second wicket.

Shreyas Iyer suffers lower back pain again



■ Could be doubtful for Australia ODIs

The BCCI Medical Team is monitoring him," BCCI said in a medical update.

Iyer's injury came to light after wicketkeeper-batter Kona Bharat came out to bat ahead of him following the dismissal of Ravindra Jadeja (28) in the morning session. Iyer had also missed the first Test in Nagpur due to a back issue before returning for the second game in Delhi. However, the bigger question now is that whether NCA once again gave go-ahead to a player who isn't fully fit.

It is learnt that Iyer felt the discomfort on Saturday and hence Ravindra Jadeja was promoted to No. 5.

On Sunday, the player didn't even come to the ground as he was in no position to bat. "Yes, it could be a case of the injury resurfacing after fielding for nearly 170 overs during the Australian innings. But I fail to understand why was the earlier norm of making it mandatory to play at least one domestic game wasn't made applicable for Iyer?," a former national selector told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Ahmedabad, Mar 12 (PTD):

The Indian team and National Cricket Academy's injury management has once again come under scanner with the recurrence of Shreyas Iyer's back injury.

Pain in his lower back forced Iyer to miss his batting turn on day four of the fourth Test here.

There is a high possibility that Iyer could miss the three-match ODI series against Australia, starting March 17 in Mumbai.

With World Cup being the most important tournament of the year and the player set to lead KKR in the IPL, it would be prudent if he takes rest for some time.

"Shreyas Iyer complained of pain in his lower back following the third day's play. He has gone for scans and

Mathews' 115 helps SL set NZ a stiff target

Christchurch, Mar 12 (AP):

Ageless Angelo Mathews ground out a determined century to steady Sri Lanka, then put it back into a competitive position in a closely-fought match Sunday on the fourth day of the first test against New Zealand.

At 35 and in his 101st test, Mathews produced his 14th century and one of his best. He was at the crease when play began, 20 not out overnight, and was finally out after tea for 115 with Sri Lanka 242 runs in front after trailing by 18 on the first innings.

Sri Lanka eventually was all out for 302, a lead of 284. At stumps, after 17 overs, New Zealand was 28-1, still 256 behind, and the test is set for a thrilling final day. If New Zealand reaches its target, it will be its third-highest successful run chase in tests.

If Sri Lanka wins, it will be only for the third time in New Zealand and it will keep alive its chances of reaching the final of the World Test Championship.

Sri Lanka improved its chances of winning the match and leading the two-match series when it dismissed Devon Conway for 1 in the fifth over. Conway played defensively but with an unusually full follow-



through at a ball from Kasun Rajitha which held up at little. The ball flew back to the bowler who took a two-handed catch above his head. On a day of undu-

lating fortunes when both teams at times felt in charge, Mathews was the most influential figure.

Sri Lanka began the day at 83-3, effectively 65-3 be-

cause of New Zealand's narrow first innings lead. The wicket of night watchman Prabath Jayusuriya was the only one to fall in a slow morning session after which Mathews was 54 and Sri Lanka was 150-4, leading by 132. Mathews had support throughout the day from Dinesh Chandimal who made 42 in a 105-run partnership for the fifth wicket and Dhananjaya de Silva who made an unbeaten 47 batting at No. 7.

New Zealand was a bowler short throughout the fourth day because Neil Wagner has back and hamstring injuries and couldn't bowl. The bowlers had to work hard but were rewarded by pace and bounce on a Hagley Oval pitch which will still be competitive for batters and bowlers on the last day Blair Ticker took four wickets, Matt Henry three and Tim Southee two as the New Zealand seamers worked hard to make up for Wagner's absence. Daryl Mitchell also bowled 12 overs to play his part.

"I'm a bit sore and tired. We worked hard to bowl them out and we're going to push for the win tomorrow," Ticker said. "It was an overall great performance by the bowling team."

Cool show to watch: Meg Lanning on Shafali blitz



Mumbai, Mar 12 (PTD):

Shafali Verma's sensational 76 not out off 28 balls in a small run chase for Delhi Capitals took even her inspirational skipper Meg Lanning by surprise.

Lanning admitted that explosive batter Shafali Verma produced a knock against Gujarat Giants on Saturday that no one saw

coming in the Women's Premier League (WPL).

After Marizanne Kapp's 4-0-15-5 blew away the Gujarat Giants, who could manage a mere 105/9 in their 20 overs, Shafali hammered five sixes and 10 fours in the company of Lanning (21 not out) to power Delhi Capitals to a 10-wicket win.

"I did not see that coming from Shafali. I do not think anyone did," said Lanning to the media after the match here at the DY Patil Stadium. "She played to her strengths and got on a roll and when that happens in T20 cricket you just got to be going with it." The Delhi Capitals captain said the pitch assisted the pacers early on.

"The pitch was a new-ball wicket. There was a little bit (of help) there if you got it in the right areas which we felt like we did," Lanning said.

"But Shafali took the wicket out of the equation, she backed herself, played to her strengths, stayed still and hit straight. On these wickets if you do that, you are going to be successful. I loved standing at the other end watching her do her thing," she added.

Brenda rallies to beat Ankita, clinches ITF Women's Open title



Czech Republic Brenda Fruhvirtova plays a shot against India's Ankita Raina during the final match of ITF Women's Open at KSLTA stadium, in Bengaluru, Sunday.

Bengaluru, Mar 12 (PTI):

Top seed Brenda Fruhvirtova of the Czech Republic gave a fine demonstration of fighting skills on way to beating India's Ankita Raina 0-6, 6-4, 6-0 to clinch the ITF Women's Open singles title here on Sunday.

Brenda, world No. 163, did not look sharp in the first set against the fourth seed India in the USD 40,000 event.

She had four double faults and committed several unforced errors as Ankita did not put a foot wrong and converted all three break points.

The second set began in similar fashion with Raina building a 3-0 lead, and a quick end to the match loomed. But a break in the fifth game proved to be the turning point as Brenda soon levelled the score at 3-3 and then converted a break point in the ninth game to take a 5-4 lead. The Czech player served out the game and took the match to the decider. A visibly shaken Ankita was hardly a match for Brenda in the third set, though the Indian had a chance to break serve in the fourth game. But Brenda raised her game just in time to hold serve.

Brenda ended the two-hour-19-minute contest with a crushing forehand. "I didn't feel good in anything in the first set and it was like I was fighting with myself. I had to shut out the opening set because she (Ankita) was playing well at that point. But once I won the second set, things became easier from there," said Brenda.

Swiatek dominates at BNP Paribas Open



Indian Wells, Mar 12 (AP):

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek routed Claire Liu in 65 minutes to win her opening match at the BNP Paribas Open.

Swiatek, the defending champion who took over the No. 1 ranking nearly a year ago, won 6-0, 6-1. She lost just seven points in the first set.

"Tactically and tennis-wise, everything was on point," she said. "I had so many matches that were going my way in last couple of weeks that I know what to do." Taylor Fritz, the defending

men's champion, rallied past former NCAA singles champion Ben Shelton, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. Shelton's biggest serve reached 147 mph.

"I expected him to come out serving bombs, playing well," Fritz said. "I was ready for it, I just had to regroup, just find a way and problem solve. He's an incredible player and it was an extremely tough first match to come out and play, so I'm happy to get through it."

Andy Murray beat Radu Albot, 6-4, 6-3 in his first straight-set victory of the year to set up a third-round match with Jack Draper. Murray had just 18 unforced errors to 35 for Albot, and never faced a break point on his serve while firing six aces.

"Hopefully I can keep pushing myself up the rankings, keep building that confidence, and maybe get a few more straightforward draws, as well," Murray said.

Jannik Sinner defeated Richard Gasquet, 6-3, 7-6 (2). The 21-year-old Sinner fired 20 forehand winners against the 36-year-old veteran.

"Obviously it was a tough match today, especially in the beginning I was a little bit tight," Sinner said on court.

Mbappe nets late goal as PSG beat Brest 2-1

Paris, Mar 12 (AP):

Paris Saint-Germain refocused on its last shot at silverware this season in the French league and beat Brest 2-1 with a late Kylian Mbappe goal.

Mbappe beat the off-side trap to collect a throughball from Lionel Messi in the 90th minute and rounded goalkeeper Marco Bizot to slot into an empty net.

The France striker was lucky to still be on the pitch after kicking Haris Belkebla, who was on the ground in the 85th.

"We're not saying that we lost because of that, but I'd like to know whether all the players would get the same treatment if they did that," Brest midfielder Pierre Lees-Melou said. "I asked the referee for an explanation. He said that it was tame. So, I'd like to see what's a real kick."

Mbappe initially fouled Belkebla from behind. Belkebla fell to the ground and held onto



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (L) kicks the ball during the French L1 football match between Stade Brestois 29 (Brest) and Paris Saint-Germain FC at Stade Francis-Le Ble in Brest, western France.

Mbappe's leg. In an act of petulance, Mbappe kicked Belkebla in the stomach. The referee showed only yellow cards to Mbappe and Belkebla for that incident.

PSG was knocked out of the Champions League by Bayern Munich on Wednesday

and is left with winning Ligue 1. PSG leads second-placed Marseille by 11 points.

"Of course, there is this disappointment, but we have to go and get this title, and there is unity. And have no doubt about this unity," PSG coach Christophe Galtier said.

'Cong busy digging my grave, while I'm working for poor'

Maddur (KTK), Mar 12:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the Congress and other opposition parties of being busy digging his grave, while he was striving for the development of the country and the welfare of the poor, as he also declared that blessings of the people is his biggest protection shield.

On his sixth visit this year to Karnataka, where Assembly elections are due by May, he also asserted that the "double engine" government is a necessity for the fast-paced development of the state.

"Amid the efforts of the double engine government for the development of the country and the progress of its people, what is Congress



Prime Minister Narendra Modi felicitated during a public rally, in Mandya district, Sunday.

and its associates doing? ...Congress is dreaming about digging the kabr (grave) of Modi," said the

PM, who inaugurated the 118 Km long Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway project here in Mandya district.

Addressing a public gathering here, he said, "Congress is busy digging the grave of Modi, while Modi is busy building Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway. Congress is busy digging Modi's grave, while Modi is busy in improving the lives of poor."

"Congress people who are dreaming about digging the grave of Modi, don't know that the blessings of crores of mothers, sisters, daughters, and people is the biggest protection shield for Modi," he added. The Expressway will reduce the travel time between the two cities from around three hours to about 75 minutes, accord-

ing to officials. Prior to 2014, Modi said, "it was a coalition government (at the Centre) running with the support of various types of people."

"It did not leave any stone unturned to destroy poor men and poor families. The money that was there for the development of the poor, thousands of crores of rupees of it was looted by the Congress government," he claimed.

Congress never bothered about pains and sufferings of the poor, he alleged, adding that "In 2014 when you (people) gave me the opportunity to serve you, it paved the way for the formation of a government for the poor in the country, the government which understood the pain and suffering of the poor."

SAREE RUN 2023



Women warm up before taking part in the Women's Day Saree Run 2023 organised to commemorate the International Women's Day, in Chandigarh, Sunday.

Dipping groundwater cause of worry in Bihar dists

Patna, Mar 12 (PTI): The dipping groundwater levels and deterioration in its quality in some Bihar districts over the past two years have become a cause of worry for the state authorities, according to the latest economic survey of the state. An assessment of pre-monsoon groundwater level across the state revealed that districts such as Aurangabad, Saran, Siwan, Gopalganj, West Champaran, Sitamarhi, Sheohar, Khagaria, Saharsa, Supaul, Madhepura, Purnea, Kishanganj, Araria, Katihar has witnessed a decline in groundwater levels in the last two years. When asked Bihar Public Health Engineering Department Minister Lalit Kumar Yadav told PTI, "The matter is being examined by the department. We are planning a fresh study to find out the reasons behind the deterioration in water quality and preventive steps that can be taken to check it."

Tulip garden in Kashmir ready to welcome visitors

From March 19

Srinagar, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Indira Gandhi Tulip Garden, Asia's largest tulip garden, ensconced between Dal Lake and the Zabarwan hills here is in full bloom and ready to welcome tourists form next week. "Preparations like gardening, engineering, fungicide treatment, nutrient spraying and minor repair which we do before the tulip show are going on," Inam-ul-Rehman, in-charge of the tulip garden, told PTI.

The garden, a well-known landmark, will be open to the public from March 19. Besides 1.5 mil-



Tulips bloom inside Asia's largest tulip garden on the foothills of Zabarwan Mountains overlooking Dal Lake, in Srinagar.

lion (15 lakh) tulips of various colours and hues, the garden, also known as Siraj Bagh, will have other spring flowers, such as hyacinths, daffodils, muscari and cyclamens, on display.

"Every year we expand this garden and new varieties are here. This year we have extended the fountain channel... It should set an example of gardening professionalism across the globe,"

Rehman said. He said there will be a rainbow of tulip colours this year, including yellow, red, crimson, purple and white.

"The shadow of the Zabarwan mountains gives a good ambience to this garden. That is why people like this garden," he added. Mushtaq Ahmad Mir, the supervisor of the garden, said preparations for the tulip garden are at their peak as it is expected to open next Sunday. Expecting a heavy footfall of visitors at the garden this season, Mir said, "Work is going on day and night. We have a heavy flow of inquiries from outside Kashmir regarding the opening of the garden."

POLITICAL ANALYSTS VIEW

'Installing opposition-less' govt in Nagaland will be mockery of democracy'

Kohima, Mar 12 (PTI):

As Nagaland heads towards an opposition-less government with almost all parties extending support to the NDPP-BJP alliance, political analysts and commentators in the state have slammed the arrangement, calling it a mockery of democracy. NDPP-BJP had contested the assembly elections on a 40:20 seat sharing formula, and retained power for a second consecutive term with a comfortable majority.

According to political analyst Jonas Yanthan, the parties extending support to the NDPP-BJP combine "do not have any agenda for the

people who trusted their leaders, and are trying to fulfil its own selfish interests". "Who would raise the concerns of the public in the assembly without an opposition member in the assembly?" Yanthan told PTI.

He also said the claim of the parties that they would facilitate the government to facilitate the Naga peace talks is a "political melodrama". Social activist Niketu Iralu said he did not subscribe to the idea of an opposition-less government, which he described as "opinion-less".

H Chishi, a senior journalist and writer, told PTI that the proposition of a opposition-less government is

a "political gimmick to come to power for vested interests". "There has to be a common voice from all sections of people, and not only the 60 MLAs (Nagaland Assembly strength), to facilitate the ongoing peace talks," Chishi said.

"We have had opposition-less governments in the past, but what have they delivered? It is undemocratic and the Union government should intervene," he said.

In 2015 and 2021, opposition-less governments were formed during the term of a government, but this would be the first-ever assembly that is set to be an opposition-less one even before the House has been sworn in.

CISF RAISING DAY



CISF commandos perform live demonstration during the 54th CISF Raising Day Parade-2023, at CISF National Industrial Security Academy in Hakimpet, Sunday.

Kerala govt to install air quality monitoring devices

At select hospitals

Kochi, Mar 12 (PTI):

The Kerala government has decided to install air quality monitoring devices in select hospitals of the coastal city, which is reeling under toxic haze from the fire at the Brahmapuram waste treatment plant. State Health Minister Veena George said installing the air quality monitoring devices will help identify the possibility of people getting sick due to the worsening air quality.

"The devices will help identify the possibility of people falling sick and ensure preventive measures to be taken well in advance," George said in a release. Meanwhile, the Ernakulam district admin-

istration and the State Disaster Management Authority has held an online discussion on the fire situation with the New York Fire Safety Department Deputy Chief, George Healy.

During the meet, Haley urged the administration to remain cautious as there are chances that fire may breakout again even after it appears to have been doused, the district administration said in a statement.

The New York Fire safety official said the current method of dousing the fire and smoke is the most effective method, the release said. District Collector N S K Umesh, State Disaster Management Authority member secretary Shekhar Kuriakose and others attended the online

meeting. Haley suggested the use of drones fitted with infrared cameras that can detect smoldering fire underneath the waste heap.

The state government had on Saturday said 90 per cent of the fire at the Brahmapuram Waste Treatment Plant was extinguished and efforts were on to douse the rest.

As many as 23 fire units, 32 excavators/JCBs and

three high pressure pumps are currently being pressed into service for extinguishing the smoke.

The health department has also earmarked a 'smoke casualty' in hospitals while 100 beds in General Hospital, Ernakulam, and 20 beds in Taluk Hospital, Tripunithura have been set aside for patients coming from the affected areas.

Many entrepreneurs in Arunachal showing interest in bamboo products

Itanagar, Feb 12 (PTI):

For Nyapu Doni, selecting a new business after closing her poultry and piggy units, was a risky affair. But her grit and determination paved the way to overcome the risk factor and today she is an established bamboo entrepreneur in Arunachal Pradesh. The bamboo industry in the northeastern state could be a money spinner, if its potential can be exploited, as the state boasts of having 74 species of the grass species, literally known as the 'green gold'.

Doni, who started her 'Arunachal Bamboo' in-

dustry in 2019 after leaving aside her poultry and piggy units, now earns more than 50,000 per month by selling her wide range of bamboo products including, furniture, home utility items and jewellery items. With growing demands for bamboo in the country, many entrepreneurs in Arunachal Pradesh are evincing keen interest to bamboo-based industries for its high-end value products with less investment.

"Bamboo industry is more comfortable and lucrative than other businesses as bamboo products with indigenous touch are a craze among



Furniture and other bamboo-based decor in Arunachal Pradesh.

the people," Doni, who owns a large bamboo plantation, said. She claimed that furniture and home utility items produced in

her unit are in high demand. "Recently my unit has constructed all the furniture and utility items for a restaurant in the

state capital. We have also designed the interiors of the restaurant with traditional designs made of treated bamboo which will last for over 20 years," she added.

Another lady entrepreneur Techina Anna, who owns the Poma Cane and Bamboo Industry near here, revealed that her efforts were to popularize the unique bamboo products of the state in other parts of the country.

"The unique products of my unit are bamboo plates and bowls which are being produced through bamboo coil technique. We are also producing furniture, home utili-

ty items besides jewellery which are available in our showroom at Itanagar," Anna said.

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