



CONG 85TH PLENARY SESSION CONCLUDES

'Will continue to ask questions about Adani till truth is out'

Rahul likens Adani Group to East India Company

Nava Raipur, Feb 26 (PTI):

Playing BJP leaders for coming out in support of the Adani Group in Parliament, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday likened the business conglomerate to the British East India Company and said the party would keep raising questions about its business practices until the truth comes out.

He also said the party should formulate a new plan to carry forward the "tapasya" undertaken through the Bharat Jodo Yatra and that he, along



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses the Congress' 85th Plenary session on its 3rd day, in Nava Raipur, Sunday.

with the entire country, will participate in it, indicating another such initiative. Launching a strong attack on the government on the Adani issue, he charged that the industrialist was working against

'I don't have a house'

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said he has never owned a house and noted that this experience had helped him "change" his Bharat Jodo Yatra and connect with the people. Addressing the Congress plenary session in Nava Raipur in Chhattisgarh, Gandhi said he wanted everyone who joined the Yatra to feel that they were coming home. He recalled the incident in 1977 when his family was preparing to leave their government accommodation. "There was a strange atmosphere in the house. I went to mummy and asked her what happened. Ma told me that we are leaving the house.

the country by cornering its entire wealth.

The US-based Hindenburg Research had made a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions and share-price manipulation, against the Adani Group.

The Adani Group has dismissed the charges as lies, saying it complies with all laws and disclosure requirements.

Addressing the 85th plenary session of the Congress here, Gandhi said, "When we asked in Parliament what is the prime minister's relation with Adani, our entire speech was expunged. We will ask in Parliament thousands of times until the truth of Adani ji is out, we will not stop." His remark drew a round of applause.

'Centre pressurising Chh'garh Cong leaders through probe agencies'

Slams Modi govt over Adani

Raipur, Feb 26 (PTI):

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi on Sunday accused the BJP-led Centre of trying to put pressure on Chhattisgarh Congress leaders through probe agencies, an apparent reference to the recent Enforcement Directorate raids in connection with an alleged illegal coal levy scam.

Such raids were an attack on the people of Chhattisgarh and their rights, she said at a rally in Jora village to mark the conclusion of the 85th plenary session of the Congress here.

She said the Narendra Modi government was ignoring the voices of the poor while listening to



Priyanka Gandhi

only its "industrialist friends".

Speaking about her maiden visit to Chhattisgarh, Gandhi said she had heard about the region's tradition and culture from her grandmother, former prime minister Indira Gandhi, and was now witnessing it first hand.

"I went to Sirpur (Mahasamund district) on Saturday and saw a

Buddha Vihar and a Shiv Temple as well as tribal traditions, which show the togetherness and unity among the people, something that our Constitution believes in," she said.

The Constitution talks about equality and equal rights for all, but if it is made weak then leaders get the chance to commit injustice, she said.

The media, judiciary and the Parliament protect the Constitution but the (Union) government is trying to suppress the media and judiciary as well as voices of the opposition in Parliament, Gandhi alleged. "The Congress wants discussions on important issues but Parliament does not even take our (Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and leader Rahul Gandhi) voices on record," she alleged.

AHEAD OF ASSLY POLL

Cong declares Rs 2800 as support price for paddy

Raipur, Feb 26:

Taking a leaf out of its 2018 election manifesto, Congress today declared to pay Rs 2800 for a quintal of paddy that would be procured from the farmers in the coming kharif marketing season.

The development added a crucial political significance as the higher paddy price had helped Congress to trounce the 15-year-rule of BJP in Chhattisgarh in 2018 state polls. The party had announced to pay Rs 2500 for a quintal in 2018.

The state would go to the polls later in the year and the increase in the paddy price would certainly give

political mileage to the Congress. Besides the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of the Centre, the Chhattisgarh government had been paying the difference amount to the farmers under its ambitious scheme Rajiv Nyay Yojana to ensure the beneficiary gets Rs 2500.

The announcement to hike the price was made by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel at the mammoth rally and public meeting that marked the conclusion of three-day 85th National Convention of the Congress. Baghel said that the six important decisions were taken in the convention.

KHARGE TARGETS CENTRE

'Need to fight against dictatorship to save democracy'

Raipur, Feb 26 (PTI):

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday lashed out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led central government terming it as "undemocratic", and said people will have to strongly fight against its "dictatorship" to save democracy.

He was addressing a public rally at Jora village on the outskirts of Raipur city after the conclusion of three-day 85th plenary session of the Congress.

"The government at the Centre is not democratic. It does not work for the people. This government only



runs its dictatorship," he said. "We are not free to raise issues related to the poor, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Caste and women there (in Parliament). My speech and Rahul ji's speech were expunged. We did not use any derogatory words, we

just asked questions about (industrialist Gautam) Adani," he said. The wealth of Adani before 2004 was Rs 3,000 crore, which increased to Rs 50,000 crore in 2014. From 2021 to 2023, it has increased 13 times, he claimed. "Please tell me which magic is this. The mantra you gave to Adani please give to us," he said.

How Rs 1 becomes Rs 13 or Rs 1 lakh become Rs 13 lakh in only two-and-a-half years, Kharge asked.

Apparently targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Congress chief said, "He mortgaged the entire country for one person."

CONG RESOLUTION

'Make MSP for crops a legally enforceable right of farmers'

Nava Raipur, Feb 26 (PTI):

The Congress on Sunday resolved to make minimum support price for crops a legally enforceable right of farmers with any purchase of agricultural produce below it a punishable offence.

The party also said no criminal proceedings will be initiated against farmers over debt and no land will be auctioned to recover outstanding loans.

The party, in a resolution on farmers and agriculture adopted at its 85th plenary session here, also resolved to provide one-time immediate relief to farmers from indebtedness by bringing a

debt waiver scheme to waive up to Rs 6 lakh each farmer. "The Indian National Congress resolves that MSP (minimum support price) should be a legally enforceable right of the farmers. Purchase of agricultural produce below MSP be made a punishable offense," the party said.

"MSP should be calculated based on the C-2 cost plus 50 per cent profit as suggested by the Swaminathan Commission and subsequently recommended in the report of the Group of Chief Ministers headed by then Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda in 2010," the party said.

BRIEF



Denmark's Crown Prince Frederik Andre Henrik Christian and Princess Mary Elizabeth pose for photographs at Taj Mahal, in Agra, Sunday.

Cong apologises

Nava Raipur: The Congress apologised on Sunday after an advertisement on its 85th plenary session, which did not feature India's first education minister and freedom fighter Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, triggered a controversy and the party received flak from several quarters. The party said it was "an inexcusable slip-up", for which responsibility was being fixed and action would be taken.

New CS

Bhubaneswar: Senior IAS officer Pradeep Kumar Jena was named the new chief secretary of Odisha on Sunday, according to an official notification. Jena, a 1989-batch officer, was the development commissioner and special relief commissioner of the state in his last assignment.

Rescue work

Chhatrapur: A three-year-old girl fell into an open borewell in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatrapur district on Sunday and a rescue operation is currently underway, officials said. The incident took place around 5 pm at Lalguan Pali village under Bijawar police station limits, some 40 kms from the district headquarters, they said.

Arrested

Sidhi: The driver of the truck that allegedly caused an accident involving multiple buses in Sidhi in Madhya Pradesh, killing 14 persons and injuring 60, a couple of days ago was arrested on Sunday, a police official said. The cement-laden truck had hit three buses parked by the road close to a tunnel near Barkhada village on the Rewa-Satna border near on Friday night.

Airlift

Jammu: The Indian Air Force (IAF) on Sunday airlifted 388 stranded passengers from Jammu to the Union Territory of Ladakh, a defence spokesman said. The IAF provided the facility of IL-76 aircraft which airlifted 388 citizens of Ladakh from Jammu to Leh, the spokesman said. He said two IL-76 aircrafts landed at the Air Force Station Jammu and airlifted the stranded passengers under "operation Sadbhavana" (goodwill).

Diverted

Ahmedabad: A Delhi-bound flight was diverted to Ahmedabad on Sunday morning following a suspected bird-hit soon after the aircraft took off from Surat airport, sources said. The IndiGo flight from Surat to Delhi landed at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport here safely and there were no injuries, they added.

Weather
High 35 Low 17

PUBLIC RALLY



Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel addressing a mammoth public rally at Jora village to mark the conclusion of the 85th plenary session of the Congress on Sunday.

Kashmiri Pandit ATM guard shot dead by terrorists

Srinagar, Feb 26 (PTI):

Terrorists on Sunday shot dead a 40-year-old Kashmiri Pandit man in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district while he was on his way to a local market, in yet another targeted killing of a minority community member in the valley. Sanjay Sharma, who worked as an ATM guard, was shot in the chest at point-blank range barely 100 metres from his residence in the Achan area of the south Kashmir district at around 11 am, police said, adding he was rushed to a hospital by passersby but succumbed to injuries. He was not reporting to duty of late following an earlier spate of terror attacks on his com-



Family members mourn for Sanjay Sharma, a Kashmiri Pandit, who was shot dead by terrorists at Achan area in Pulwama district of South Kashmir, Sunday.

munity members, his colleagues said. "Terrorists fired upon one civilian from minority namely Sanjay Sharma S/O Kashinath Sharma R/O Achan Pulwama while on way to a local market," the Kashmir Zone police said on Twitter.

CAF jawan killed in blast of IED

Planted by Naxalites

Narayanpur, Feb 26:

A head constable of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) was killed after a pressure improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Naxalites went off in Narayanpur district on Sunday, police said.

The incident took place at around 7 am near Batum village under Orchha police station limits.

Narayanpur Additional Superintendent of Police Hemsagar Sidar said.

After receiving information that Naxalites have put up banners in the area, a CAF team had launched patrolling from Orchha police station, located around 300 km from

About the incident.....

The incident took place at around 7 am on Sunday near Batum village under Orchha police station limits. After receiving information that Naxalites have put up banners in the area, a CAF team had launched patrolling from Orchha police station, located around 300 km from

state capital Raipur, he said.

When the patrolling team was advancing through Batum, head constable Sanjay Lakra, belonging to CAF's 16th battalion, inadvertently stepped over a pressure IED connection which triggered the blast, leading to his death, the official said.

The body of Lakra, who was a resident of Jashpur district in Chhattisgarh, was brought to a local hospital, he added.

On Saturday, three police personnel were killed in an encounter with Naxalites in the state's Sukma district.

On February 20, two policemen were killed in a Naxalite attack in Rajnandgaon district of the state.

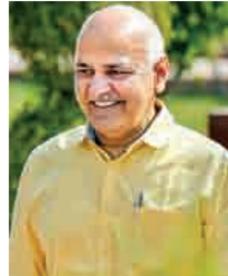
EXCISE POLICY CASE

CBI arrests Manish Sisodia after 8-hr grilling

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

The CBI on Sunday evening arrested Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in connection with alleged corruption in the formulation and implementation of the now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22 after nearly eight hours of questioning as his answers were not satisfactory, officials said.

Sisodia arrived at the CBI headquarters around 11.12 am for the second round of questioning, they said. The officials of the CBI's Anti-



Corruption Branch grilled the minister on various aspects of the excise policy, his alleged link with Dinesh Arora and other accused

mentioned in the FIR, and details of message exchanges from multiple phones among others, they said. The CBI investigators were not satisfied with the Sisodia's responses. It was claimed that he was not cooperating in the investigation and avoiding clarifications sought by officials on crucial points, leading to his arrest, they said.

The probe agency officials said it was felt that custodial interrogation was necessary to put Sisodia through intense questioning, they said.

Gangsters held in Moosewala murder case killed in jail

Amritsar, Feb 26 (PTI):

Two gangsters, who were arrested in connection with singer Sidhu Moosewala murder case and lodged in the Goindwal Sahib Central Jail in Punjab's Tarn Taran district, were killed in a clash among inmates on Sunday, police said.

They were facing other charges as well. Senior Superintendent of Police Gurmeet Singh Chauhan said. One inmate was injured in the fight, he said, adding that all the three belonged to the same group. Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu, popularly known as Sidhu Moosewala, was shot dead in Mansa district on May 29.

Police said Keshav was also arrested in the Sidhu Moosewala murder case.

Forest Wonderland to be developed in Asia's largest man-made forest

Rs 3.83 crores to be spent for Adventure Park at BSP's Nandini Mines

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: Consequent to the tree plantations and mining work done earlier in the Nandini Mines area of Bhilai Steel Plant, small forest areas and ponds have developed. The area has been declared as Asia's largest man-made forest by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel.

The Durg Van Mandal has decided to develop the Nandini Mines area as a forest wonderland. For this project, an estimated proposal of Rs 3.83 crore has been prepared and sent to the government for approval.

In this adventure park, facilities of parasailing, quad-biking, zip-lining, hot air balloon, boating,



trekking, camping, star gazing, different types of adventure activities for children etc. will be available where people can come and enjoy these activities. This location on Nandini is 50 km from

Rajnandgaon, 15 km from Durg city, 40 km from Raipur, 107 km from Kawardha and 72 km from Bemeta.

Being located at a favourable distance, tourists will be able to

come here and enjoy different types of activities. This place is located on the way to Kanha-Kisli, so tourists going there can also enjoy Nandini Forest Wonderland on the way.

Three arrested with illicit liquor and psychotropic drugs

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: Durg Police arrested three ruffians from different places on charges of bootlegging and illegal trade of psychotropic drugs.

CSP Vaibhav banker informed that they are conducting a special campaign Jio Khulkar to curb the smuggling and illegal trade of liquor, drugs, psychotropic drugs and other narcotic substances.

This campaign is being run with the support of local people. Cops are maintaining vigil on the activities of suspects and criminal record holders. The network of informers has also been activated for the purpose.

In this sequel, police received a tip off regarding a bootlegger who was looking for customers at Baghera. Police team



swung into action and rounded up Deepak Kumar Thakur (25) son of Keval Thakur a resident of Sikolabhata, Durg. Police recovered 40 quarters of country made liquor worth Rs 4400 from his possession. He has been booked under the provisions mentioned in section 34 (2) of Excise Act.

Acting on another tip off, police arrested one Sagar Wakoda alias Bhau (20) son of Santosh Kumar Wakoda a resident of Sikolabhata,

Durg. He was peddling psychotropic drugs illegally near Nayapara Square.

1008 nos capsules of the banned drugs - Spascorvon Plus and Spastrans Plus, worth Rs 10500 were recovered from him. He was booked under the provisions mentioned in sections 22/8, 27 (a) of the Narcotics Act.

The third accused was arrested from Nadi Turing of Ganjpara while peddling the banned psychotropic drugs.

A total of 1152 capsules of Spascorvon - Von Plus and Aadspro worth Rs 10500 were recovered from the accused Tarendra Kuma Sahu alias Mouse (20) son of Gangaram Sahu a resident of Wambay Awas, Urla.

He was booked under the provisions mentioned in section 22 of Narcotics Act. Inspector SN Singh, ASI Purandas, Constables Sanjeev Soni and Vikas Thakur played a vital role in arresting the accused.

NTEP training organized at Shankaracharya College



Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: Under NTEP (National Tuberculosis Control Program), training is being provided for identifying those with possible symptoms and testing them. One day training program was organized at

Shri Shankaracharya Medical College, Junwani, Durg. Training was provided by Dr Manish, WHO Consultant and Dr LK Mohanty, HOD, TB & Chest, Shri Shankaracharya Medical College, Durg. Training programme was specially inaugurated by Dr Ajay

Behera, Director AIIMS Raipur, Dr Anil Kumar Shukla, District Tuberculosis Officer Durg, Dr Prakash Wakode, Dean Shankaracharya Medical College Durg and IP Mishra, Chairman Shri Shankaracharya Medical College Durg.

Placement camp for 159 posts on Feb 27

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: Placement camp will be organized by District Employment and Self Employment Guidance Center Durg on February 27 from 10:30 hrs onwards. The employer OSS will recruit a IT Content Writer, one Digital Marketing Executive, six Relationship Managers, one Business Development Manager (Only Female), 15 Tele Sales Executives (Only Female), 15 Senior Accountant, Manager, 10 Computer Operators, 2 AutoCad, Graphic Designer Senior, Business Development Manager, Social Media Manager, Sales & Marketing, Technical Executive, Telecaller, 10 for Field Work, one Branch Manager, 6 Relationship Managers BDM/ BDE/ BDA, 3 BDM, BDE, BDA, 3

Unit Manager, 5 PHP Developer, 3 BDM, BDE, BDA, Unit Manager for HR, 5 PHP Developer, 3 Mutual Fund, 5 for Field Marketing Executive, 5 Web Developer, 2 Senior Web Developer, Project Manager, SR Project Manager, Assistant Branch Manager, 2 Development Manager, 2 Video Editors, 6 Receptionist, LIC Manager, etc. 25 vacancies are there for Staff Nurse at Yashodanandan Children Hospital, Durg. Interested applicants can appear at the District Employment and Self Employment Guidance Center, Malviya Nagar Chowk with all their educational certificates on the due date and time. For detailed information, visit the information board or social media Facebook page of the District Employment Office.

Congress party workers injured in road accident



Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: About 20 workers / supporters of Indian National Congress were injured in a road accident which occurred on National Highway at Old Bhilai on Sunday.

The party workers were

moving towards Raipur in two buses to attend the "Hath Se Hath Jodo" public meeting at Naya Raipur. At Old Bhilai, one of the buses crashed into the rear end of the other. CSP Prabhat Kumar informed that about 40 people were travelling in the

bus bearing registration number CG07-LY-9700.

15-16 passengers suffered minor injuries in the accident. They were given treatment at Sunshine Hospital. Old Bhilai Police is taking further legal action on this case.

Kamdhenu University organises health camp in village Dhaba Anjora

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: A free medical health camp was organized at village Anjora Dhaba under the joint aegis of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry College, Anjora, Durg and Kamdhenu Panchgavya Research Extension Center operated under Dau Shri Vasudev Chandrakar Kamdhenu University.

Local villagers got their health check-up done in this camp. A team led by the Chief Medical and Health Officer also participated in the health camp. NSS volunteers of the college made arrangements in the camp. The team also did the work of making the villagers aware.

They also conducted tree plantations for the protection of the environment.



The camp was inaugurated by Vice Chancellor of the University, Dr (Col) NP Dakshinakar. He extended best wishes and blessings to everyone for this work. The program was presided over by the sarpanch of village Anjora Dhaba, Mrs Thakur.

As a special guest in the program, Dean Veterinary and Animal Husbandry College, Anjora, Durg, Dr SK Tiwari were present. Dean Dr SK Tiwari

presided over the planning of this camp and gave the responsibility of coordination to Dr Rakesh Mishra, Medical Officer of the University and NSS for making this camp successful and providing facilities to the villagers.

The team in-charge Dr Osama Salim and Dr Raina Donoria and Gothan in-charge senior professor Dr AK Santra were entrusted with the responsibility. For



this camp, Dr AK Santra, Head of Department and Nodal Officer Gauthan made the villagers aware.

In the camp, 183 villagers were treated, out of which about 70 were senior citizens, who were also given medicines free of cost. Health check-ups and free medicines were distributed to 90 women, 40 men and 53 children in this camp. 100% participation of the students was made in this pro-

gramme.

They informed the villagers about health benefits. In this camp, Medical Officer Dr Sonam Deshmukh, Narendra Jain, Rural Medical Assistant KK Meshram, Geetu Deshmukh, Neha Salomon, Saraswati Sahu, Rajendra Mishra were specially present. To make this camp successful, 32 NSS volunteers of the college gave their services.

Child Protection Month Vitamin-A supplement program from Feb 28

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: There are 191035 children of 0 to 05 years age in the district. Out of them, 162380 children of 09 months to 5 years will be given Vitamin 'A' syrup and 171931 children of 06 months to 05 years will be given iron syrup.

Under the guidance of Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr JP Meshram and District Immunization Officer Dr Divya Srivastava, the Child Protection Month Vitamin-A supplement program is to be organized in the district from February 28 to March 31. District Immunization

Officer Dr Divya Srivastava informed that under the Child Protection Month Campaign, 25150 children from Block Dhamdha, 30861 from Block Patan, 21531 from Block Nikum, 25446 from Urban Durg and 59392 from Urban Bhilai in the district will be covered under Child Protection Month campaign.

A total of 162380 children of age 09 months to 05 years have been targeted to be given vitamin syrup including Block Dhamdha - 26629; Block Patan - 32676; Block Nikum - 22797; Urban Durg - 26943 and Urban Bhilai - 62886. Vitamin-A can prevent

night blindness in children, iron syrup can prevent anemia, malnutrition etc. Every child will be weighed at the site, so that by checking the nutrition level of the children, nutrition advice and information about supplementary diet services will be given to malnourished children on the basis of age.

Severely malnourished children (NRC) will be admitted for treatment in child rehabilitation centers. Along with this, regular vaccination, check-up of pregnant women and other services will also be provided. The timing of the session is from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm in urban and rural areas.

The entire country has accepted Rahul Gandhi after padyatra: Dr Madan Mohan Jha

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: Dr Madan Mohan Jha (Delhi in-charge of 'Haath Jodo Abhiyan' and former State President and Minister of Bihar) said that the people of the country have made up their mind for a change in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. As far as the competition with Prime Minister Narendra Modi is concerned, today there is no leader of the height of Rahul Gandhi. He is not only the universal leader of the Congress but the whole country has accepted him.

Dr Jha, who was in Chhattisgarh to participate in the 85th National Convention of Congress, paid a visit to the resi-



dence of industrialist and Congress leader KK Jha at Nehru Nagar. While interacting with media persons at Nehru Nagar, Jha said that the Bharatiya Janata Party spent thousands of crores of rupees to tarnish the image of Rahul Gandhi. But Rahul Gandhi has given a befitting reply by travelling 3800 kilometers across the country. Now the public is not ready to listen to anything against him.

Responding to the lack of coordination in the opposition, he said that there are no differences. If all the people sit together and discuss, then defi-

nately a good decision will come out. As far as the Prime Ministerial candidate is concerned, neither Rahul Gandhi has ever claimed the post nor the Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Nitish Kumar has clearly said that he is not interested in the post of Prime Minister. They just want to remove BJP from the power of the country.

On the question of what will be the impact of the ongoing session in the capital Raipur in the coming elections, he said that many constitutional amendments are to be done. Rahul Gandhi has met lakhs of

people during his Padyatra and has seen the problems of the people at the ground level. In the convention, many new schemes will be introduced accordingly. As far as Padyatra is concerned, such yatras will continue in the coming times. Rahul Gandhi has said that he has bigger plans.

Praising Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, he said that Bhupesh Baghel is a grassroots leader. He is very simple and talks directly to the people. Apart from this, looking at the work he has done in the last 4 years, it is no exaggeration to say that the state of Chhattisgarh is on top in the whole country.

316 cadets appear in NCC- B Certificate exam

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Feb 26: Total 316 senior division and senior wing cadets of 10 colleges and 1 CG RNV battalion Anjora under 37 CG NCC Battalion Durg appeared in the B certificate examination. Practical and Theory examination of student cadets was conducted under the joint guidance of Presiding Officer of B Certificate Examination, Commanding Officer of 27 CG Battalion NCC Raipur, Lt Col Pradeep Kumar, Administration Officer of 38 CG Battalion, NCC, Rajnandgaon, Lt. Col. Vivek Kumar.

The entire examination was conducted and man-



aged by 37 CG Battalion NCC Durg Commanding Officer Col Hemant Dubey and Administrative Officer Lt. Col. R. Sethu Madhavan, Battalion Subedar Major Bhupati Thapa, other ANOs, JCOs and NCOs. According to the guidelines given and with the joint co-operation

of NCC officers of 10 colleges under the battalion, the management and examination work was done.

Expressing happiness on the successful conduct of B certificate examination of NCC cadets in St Thomas College campus, the administrator of the college, Rev Father Dr Joshi

Vargese and college Principal Dr MG Roymon expressed gratitude and showered blessings to all cadets. On the first day of the practical examination of the cadets was taken and on the second day of the examination the theory examination was conducted for 3 hours.

CONG TO PARTY LEADERS

'Work with discipline and unity to ensure victory in poll-bound states'



Raipur, Feb 26 (PTI):

The Congress on Sunday gave a call to party leaders in poll-bound states, including Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka, to work with discipline and complete unity to ensure victory that will "set the tone" for 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

In its five-point Raipur Declaration adopted at the party's 85th plenary session here, the Congress de-

clared that it is ready to work with like-minded political parties on the basis of a common, constructive programme to preserve and protect the Constitution and address the challenges.

"The coming year will see important state elections in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana. Party workers and leaders must work with discipline,

solidarity and complete unity to ensure our victory. The results of these elections will set the tone for the all-important 2024 Lok Sabha elections," the declaration said.

The Congress is the only party that has never compromised with the BJP/RSS and its despicable politics, the party said in its declaration.

"We will always fight to protect our political values against the BJP's authori-

tarian, communal and crony capitalist onslaught. We are prepared to work with like-minded political parties on the basis of a common, constructive programme to preserve and protect the Constitution in letter and spirit and to address the three main challenges facing the country: growing economic inequality, intensifying social polarisation and deepening political dictatorship," the party said.

IIM Raipur Y20 consultation event successfully concludes

Raipur, Feb 26:

Two days ago IIM Raipur commenced the Y20 consultation event at its campus with much enthusiasm and anticipation. The event aimed to gather young leaders from all over the world to exchange ideas and thoughts on topics that impact the youth globally.

On the second day of the event, presentation on panel discussions and key takeaways was presented by Abhilash Geda and Sujith Pillai IIM Raipur. Panel Discussion Voice of Youth on Youth, Peace, and Security and it was moderated by Omanshu Yadav, IIM Raipur Youth. The Panellists were



Suyash Pande, Track Chair Y20; Prathamesh Pol, Raipur Youth, Adrish Sinha IIM Raipur Youth, Kaushik Srivatsan, IIM Raipur Youth, Sushree Vishakha Agrawal, IIM Raipur Youth

Reflections for youth was the Session delivered by Sunil Soni, LS- MP, Raipur. He spoke of the youth's responsibility to safeguard the country's re-

sources and to integrate themselves into the country's development. He also spoke of India's role in global development.

Ram Kumar Kakani, Director, IIM Raipur in his press briefing also spoke of how youth from every district of Chhattisgarh participated in the T-20 Summit

He also reiterated that during the 2 days views

from a huge range of professions suffused the atmosphere with inquiry and energy, including Agricultural Economist, Engineer, Advocate, Anthropologist, Psychiatry, Academia, Sports, Medicine, Agronomy, Culinary Science, Civil Services, Politicians, Journalists, Defence, and Transformed Community Influencer.

He also acknowledged the support and encouragement of Ministry officials and experts in making the Y-20 Summit a success. Pankaj Kumar Singh, Director, Department of Youth Affairs concluded the briefing by wishing all success to events such as these.

Newly constructed ADR centre building dedicated to public



Raipur, Feb 26:

Raipur district has got the facility of affordable and accessible justice with availability of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Center. The newly constructed ADR centre building was dedicated to public in the District Court premises at the hands of Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh

High Court Bilaspur on Sunday. Judge, High Court of Chhattisgarh, Chairman, Chhattisgarh State Legal Services Authority and Portfolios Judge, Raipur District Justice Goutam Bhaduri was present on the occasion. With inauguration of newly constructed ADR centre building the parties will get free legal aid on various subjects.

Sant Nirankari Mission inaugurates 'Swachh Jal, Swachh Man' campaign

Raipur, Feb 26:

Sant Nirankari Mission inaugurated 'Swachh Jal Swachh Man' campaign under Amrit Project on Sunday, February 26, 2023 on the occasion of 75th 'Amrit Mahotsav' of Independence in holy presence of Satguru Mata Sudiksha Ji Maharaj and Rajpita Ramit ji.

'Swachh Jal, Swachh Man' work will be conducted by SNCF volunteers throughout the country. The objective behind this project is to chalk out plan to carry out various activities for water conservation. The main point of this project is the awareness of conversion of water bodies through 'awareness campaign' among the local people. Nirankari Baba



Hardev Singh ji in his whole life has done many social works for the welfare of the society, in which comes the tree plantation campaign, cleanliness drives, women empower etc. Taking inspiration from his teachings, The 'Amrit Project' is being organized under the guidance of Mata Sudiksha Ji

Maharaj. The Secretary of Sant Nirankari Mission, P Jogar Sukhija ji gave detailed information about this project. According to P Jogar Sukhija ji this project is organized on a large scale in 730 cities, 27 states and union territories of about 1100 cities all over India. They include Andhra Pradesh,

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Gujarat, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Turkey, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Purba, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, etc.

About 1.5 lakh volunteers of Nirankari Mission are participating in activities for 'water conservation'. Water bodies like sea shores, rivers, lakes, ponds, wells, puddles, jodhs, springs, water tanks, drains and water streams etc. are being cleaned by SNCF. Almost all the branches of the mission are involved in this campaign.

Silk & Cotton Expo exhibition cum sale till March 8



Raipur, Feb 26:

An eight-day Silk and Cotton Expo Exhibition cum sale is being organised from Feb 25 to March 5 and in this exhibition there is massive range of marriage and special fes-

tive collection.

In this exhibition, more than 15000 designs have been presented. The products from states like Bihar, Karantaka, Andhra Pradesh, U PU, Maharashtra, Punjab, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, MP, Assam, WB, Rajasthan, J&K have been put on display. This exhibition has been organised by Ministry of Textiles, GoI and with just two days of its inauguration, people in large number are visiting the stalls and are proud to get products from all the above states under one roof. Here the facility of debit and credit card too is being provided to all the customers.

'Cong could have been more vocal on issues like Bilkis Bano'

And murder in name of cow vigilantism

Raipur, Feb 26 (PTI):

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Saturday said the Congress should be absolutely clear in its ideological stance in favour of an inclusive India and pointed out that party could have been more vocal on issues such as the Bilkis Bano outrage and murder in the name of cow vigilantism.

Addressing the 85th plenary session of the party here, the former Union minister said the Congress should stand up for its foundational principles.

"We should be absolutely clear in our ideological stance in favour of inclusive India. The tendency to downplay some positions or avoid taking a

stand on some issues in order not to alienate what we assume to be the sentiments of the majority only plays into the BJP's hands," Tharoor said.

"We must have the courage of our convictions. We could have been more vocal on the Bilkis Bano outrage, attacks on Christian churches, murder in the name of cow vigilantism, bulldozer demolition of Muslim homes and similar issues," he said.

These are Indian citizens who look to the party for support, Tharoor added.

Last year in August, all 11 convicts sentenced to life imprisonment in the 2002 post-Godhra Bilkis Bano gang rape case walked out of the Godhra sub-jail after the Gujarat



government allowed their release under its remission policy, triggering outrage from various sections, including the Congress.

He asserted that India belongs to all and if the party does not speak up in such cases, it is only surrendering its core responsibility of standing up for India's diversity and pluralism which should be central to the Congress

core message.

He said every effort must be made to strengthen the secular foundations of the country.

"The fact is that India's future is bright as long as the Congress fights the good fight," Tharoor said. He also hailed the Bharat Jodo Yatra, saying it has revived the confidence of the party cadre.

"From here let us send out a message of Congress jodo," Tharoor said.

Speaking on the economic resolution passed on the second day of the three-day plenary, Tharoor said it should outline the elements of a progressive economic agenda that addresses head-on the challenge of unacceptable economic inequality.

"We want economic

growth but we must ensure that the fruits of that growth reach the poor and the marginalised. India will not shine until it shines for all," he stressed.

The former minister of state for external affairs and the convener of the party's sub-group on foreign affairs for the plenary also said policy has long been seen as an area of national consensus.

"There was no Congress foreign policy or BJP foreign policy only Indian foreign policy and Indian national interest. This tradition has sadly been undermined by the (Narendra) Modi government," Tharoor said.

Tharoor also criticised the government, saying it refuses to take the nation into confidence on vital

foreign policy issues, including what is happening on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.

"It is shocking to hear our foreign minister imply that China is too rich to stand up to. We must demand that Parliament be taken into confidence, that the nation be told what is our thinking about our vital foreign policy interests," he said.

Foreign policy must again return to being a consensual national endeavour with bipartisan agreement and support, he asserted.

In its resolution on foreign affairs passed at the session, the Congress expressed its deep concern about the prevailing situation on the LAC between India and China.

'Cong plans new yatra, this time from East to West'

From Pasighat to Porbandar

Raipur, Feb 26 (PTI): The Congress is considering a Pasighat-to-Porbandar yatra, party general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on Sunday after Rahul Gandhi called for taking the "tapasya" of the Bharat Jodo Yatra forward. Ramesh asserted that there was a lot of enthusiasm and energy among party workers for another yatra after the nearly 4,000-km Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir journey that was undertaken by Gandhi and scores of Congress persons from September last year to January this year.

Ramesh told PTI that an east-to-west yatra, probably from Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh to Porbandar in Gujarat, was being considered but its format could be a bit different from the Bharat Jodo Yatra. "There is a lot of enthusiasm and energy. I also think personally it is needed but the format of the east-to-west yatra may turn out to be different from the format of the south-to-north Bharat Jodo



Yatra," Ramesh said. It may not have such an elaborate infrastructure that was mobilised for the Bharat Jodo Yatra and may have less yatris, he said.

He said it would largely be a padyatra but there are jungles and rivers on this route. "It would be a multi-modal yatra, but mostly it would be a padyatra," Ramesh said.

He said that with elections in Karnataka in April, rains from June and again state polls in November, the yatra may have to be undertaken before June or before November. Ramesh also added that the yatra would be of a shorter duration than the Bharat Jodo Yatra. He said all this will be decided in the next few weeks. Addressing the Congress plenary session, Gandhi said the party should formulate a new

plan to carry forward the "tapasya" undertaken through the Bharat Jodo Yatra and that

he along with the entire country will participate in it, indicating another such initiative.

Beginning of new Congress: Kharge

Raipur, Feb 26 (PTI): Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said the party is facing several challenges, which it can meet but what is needed is unity, discipline and determination.

In his concluding remarks at the party's 85th plenary session here, Kharge said the session may be ending but it heralds the beginning of a "new Congress".

"Today, we have many challenges before us, but none that the Congress cannot deal with. What is needed is unity, discipline and determination. Our strength lies in the strength of the party," he said.

"Our conduct at the national level will have an impact on crores of party col-



leagues at every level," the Congress chief added.

Noting that many things change with time, he said people's aspirations and expectations change, new challenges emerge, but new ways are also found out.

"That is why it is said that the path of politics and social work never ends. We just have to keep going. Many of our generations have been walking on this path and will continue to do so in the future," he said.

SNIPPETS FROM PLENARY SESSION



Rahul, Priyanka Gandhi visit archaeological city Sirpur with CM

Visited the world famous Laxman Devalaya temple

Raipur, Feb 26:

MPs Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra along with Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday visited Sirpur, a place of historical and archaeological importance in Mahasamund district. MP Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra visited the world famous Laxman Devalaya temple. They also visited Surang Tila and Tivardeo Bihar. On this occasion, MP Mr. Rahul Gandhi also met the Patel family near Tiwar Dev, Bihar. Significantly, Sirpur is an archaeological site situated on the banks of



Mahanadi. The ancient name of this place is Sirpur. It used to be a huge city. Sirpur was the capital of Dakshin Kosala between the fifth and eighth

centuries. Sirpur has a unique collection of cultural and architectural art. The Somvanshi kings had got the Ram temple and the Laxman temple

constructed here. The ancient Laxman temple made of bricks is a world famous tourist destination. Ancient Buddhist monasteries have also been found here in the excavation. This place has been the center of Vaishnava, Shaiva, Jain and Buddhist cultures. On this occasion, Advisor to Chief Minister Mr. Pradeep Sharma, Parliamentary Secretary Mr. Vinod Sevenal Chandrakar, Chairman of Sirpur Development Authority Mr. Satish Jaggi, Collector Mr. Nilesh Kumar Mahadev Kshirsagar and other dignitaries were present.

CAIT delegation meet Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais

Raipur, Feb 26:

National Senior Vice President of Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Amar Parwani, Chairman Mangal Malu, Amar Gidwani, State President Jitendra Doshi, Working President Vikram Singhdeo, Parmanand Jain, Vashu Makhija, General Secretary Surinder Singh, Working General Secretary Bharat Jain, Treasurer Ajay Agarwal and media in-charge Sanjay Choubey said that CAIT C.G. Chapter delegation paid a courtesy visit to the Governor Ramesh Bais and extended hearty congratulations and best wishes to him on becoming



the Governor of Maharashtra State. During the meeting, CAIT delegates said that Mumbai is the financial capital of the country as well as the film industry. Being the economic city of the country, the traders and industrialists of the state carry out

business activities with the state of Maharashtra. The development of trade and industry of both the states was discussed. Governor Ramesh Bais gave positive assurance for the development of trade and industry of the state. The officials of

Chhattisgarh CG Chapter - Parmanand Jain, Surinder Singh, Bharat Jain, Pritpal Singh Bagga, Jairam Kukreja, Mahendra Kumar Bagrodia, Mohan Varlyani, Anil Kevalani, Ramesh Khodiyar, Mohit Athwani and Rajesh Bihani were present.

Jashpur gets an Archery Centre Eklavya Sports Academy



Raipur, Feb 26:

Jashpur gets an Archery Centre Eklavya Sports Academy Archery Centre will provide world-class training facilities to students Archery Centre will also provide free accommodation and education. In last four years, the state government has established various sports academies and is providing quality training to the sportsperson of the state. The state government has set a new record of success in the development of sports infrastructure and sports activities. These academies are being established to enhance the sport-

ing talent of the state's sportsperson. During the COVID crisis, the preparations for the establishment of new sports academies and sports activities in the state were also going on consistently.

When the new government was formed in the state under the able leadership of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the state government pledged to set its priorities for sports to provide all kinds of world-class training and world-class infrastructure to sportspersons of the state. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel announced to establish Archery Centre Eklavya Sports Academy in Jashpur with a cost of Rs 91 lakh 98 thousand during his Jashpur stay. For the implementation of the above announcement, the district administration has started to operate this academy at the premises of Ranjita Stadium. Selected students of the Pahadi Korwa tribe will be trained here to enhance their sporting talent. Free training, accommodation, and education facilities are being provided to the selected children.

Ch'garh to create world record

Vande Mataram to be sung together by 1 lakh

Raipur, Feb 26: On February a meeting was conducted in which the members present discussed on how at least one lakh people should be able to sing Vande Mataram together. It was discussed about including all schools, NSS, NCC, Scout, all social institutions, university, NIIT, and all educational institutions, sports department, chamber of commerce, as well as all women groups and anganwadi workers, municipal corporation of Raipur and cleaning staff. It was also discussed about taking permission from the Education Minister District Education Officer so that more number of children can come from the school.

'SGVF honoured 30 strong women with Ch'garh Mahtari Samman'

Raipur, Feb 26:

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said - "to make people aware, it is necessary for the women to be awake".

Once a woman takes an initial step, a family, a village and a nation move towards the development. The condition of a state and a country will undoubtedly rise where the women are physically, mentally and socially strong. Keeping this statement in mind, Shri Ganesh Vinayak Foundation (SGVF) conferred Chhattisgarh Mahtari Samman to 30 fearless and influential women on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Shri Ganesh Vinayak Foundation organized Chhattisgarh Mahtari Samman 2023 for the women who have been actively working in various fields for a long time to



bring positive changes in the society. The women were appreciated and honoured by the chief guest, Shatabdi Pandey - former chairman of Bal Sarakshan Ayogya, Mir Ali Mir - renowned poet and Raskhan of Chhattisgarh, Dr. Anil Gupta - President of Shri Ganesh Vinayak Foundation and Director Shri Ganesh Vinayak Eye Hospital and Dr.

Charudutt Kalamkar - Secretary of Shri Ganesh Vinayak Foundation and Director Shri Ganesh Vinayak Foundation. The performance was graced by the children of Kopalvani with a mesmerizing dance on Chhattisgarh folk song. *Harsha Sahu, Varnika Sharma, Aamna Mir Ali, Urmila Nad Paniker, Manisha Agarwal, Shilpi Goel, Subhangi Apte,

Sunita Chansoria, Aarti Upadhya, Madhu Yadav, Padma Sharma, Vaidya Rajput, Dr. Bhairavi Vaishnav, Pallavi Pandey, Saroj Pandey, Chandrakanta Oswal, Kanchan Pusadkar, Param Chandok, Rakhi Baid, Surbhi Singh, Lakshmi Kumar, Sarita Dubey, Priyanka Agarwal Gupta, Rajni Thakur, Divya Dubey, Rachna Nitesh, Aakriti Agarwal, Divya

Patel, Sudeshna Ruhani, Dr. Smriti Singh and Dr. Seema Srivastava were honoured. The stage was well coordinated by well-known litterateur and announcer Dr. Seema Srivastava.

Dr. Anil Gupta, President of SGVF said, "It is heartening to see small drops filling up the pot". While fulfilling our social responsibilities, we have made an effort to honor those women whose efforts are bringing change in the society today. Women empowerment is when women perform their responsibilities at their home as well as in the outside world with excellence. Dr. Charudutt Kalamkar said, "We are thankful to these women who are irrigating the soil of Chhattisgarh in their own way and this is just an encouragement so that more women come forward and do such outstanding work."

BALCO brings joy to underprivileged children in local community

Balconagar, Feb 26: Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO), India's iconic aluminium producer and a subsidiary of Vedanta Aluminium, helped spread joy to the families living in its vicinity recently through its annual Wish Tree Campaign. Now in its second edition, the initiative is focused on bringing joy to children from economically challenged families in the local community by collecting their gift wishes and fulfilling them through the generosity of BALCO's employee volunteers.

The Wish Tree initiative received an overwhelming response again this year, with over 400 wishes collected from the community. More than 200 BALCO employees came forward to bring these earnest wishes to reality, while the Ladies Club of BALCO also volunteered their time and resources to fulfil the collected wishes. Simple but important gifts such as pencil boxes, clothing, schoolbags and others were distributed to the children as per their age and expressed needs. The



campaign also had a special focus on fulfilling the wishes of specially abled children from Divya Jyoti School and Baal Grah (Child Care Home). The Wish Tree Campaign has become a yearly tradition at BALCO, reaffirming the company's commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of its surrounding community members. Through its community development initiatives, BALCO is actively transforming the lives of around 1.5 lakh people living within 123 villages

lying in its operational vicinity. Speaking about the initiative, Rajesh Kumar, CEO and Director, BALCO, said, "At BALCO, we are dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of our local communities through our community development programs. Our employees have always shown a strong commitment to giving back and supporting those in need. This initiative is a proud representation of our commitment to making a difference. BALCO believes in

enabling each individual in the community with the resources they need to empower themselves, and our various community development programs are therefore consistently aligned to the larger vision for shared progress". In addition to the Wish Tree initiative, BALCO's employees are also supporting the community with quality education opportunities through Project Connect. Initiated in the year 2016, Project Connect aims at supplementing the community's need for quality education especially in Science, English, Mathematics and Accountancy (SEMA) through field instructors and volunteers from amongst BALCO's employees. The project focuses on improving the learning ecosystem in government schools by creating an enabling environment for improving students' grades, capacity building of teachers and career counselling, through employee volunteerism. More than 2500 students, between classes 9-12 have benefited from regular and remedial classes.

Youth are getting employment from RYMC

Raipur, Feb 26:

Joining the Rajiv Yuva Mitran Club (RYMC), the youth of the state are playing an important role in promoting the culture, tradition and customs of Chhattisgarh. Through this scheme, the youth are also becoming financially independent. 481 Rajiv Yuva Mitran Clubs formed in urban and panchayat areas in Balrampur-Ramanujan district, the youth here are working for the development of the area and to take the public welfare schemes run by the government to the needy beneficiaries.

102 members of Rajiv Yuva Mitran Club in the urban and panchayat areas of the district were distributed by Collector Mr. Vijay Dayaram K. On the initiative of M.P., the responsibility of meter reading and electricity bill distribution has been given, which the members of Mitran Club are doing



well. Balrampur-Ramanujan is included in the leading districts of the state in the number of members engaged in the work of meter reading, wherein 38 development blocks in Balrampur, 7 in Ramchandrapur, 24 in

Wadranagar, 15 in Rajpur, 5 in Shankargarh, and 13 in Kusmi, club members are doing door-to-door meter reading and bill distribution. In lieu of this work, they are being paid Rs 7 per meter reading. The team of energetic youth is doing

this work in a time bound manner according to the convenience of the common citizens. Through this work, the youth have got employment opportunity and they are also able to develop their work capacity.

Joining Rajiv Yuva Mitran Club, Puneet Singh, who is doing the work of meter reading and electricity bill distribution, said that he is from a poor family and is a student of BA final year, he had to face financial difficulties in his studies but by joining Rajiv Yuva Mitran Club, a government scheme, today he is able to fulfill his and his family's needs.

Puneet has earned about 02 lakh rupees so far from this work, he is using this money for his and his siblings' education. Puneet has thanked the Chief Minister Mr. Bhupesh Baghel and the district administration for establishing the Rajiv Yuva Mitran Club.

'A Glimpse Into Magnificent 60 Years of Medical College Raipur'



An educational Institution which was established on September 09, 1963 with one Dean, two teachers, three rooms and sixty chairs at one corner of Ayurvedic College Campus, has grown as a well organised reputed Medical Educational Institute in last 60 years. On its inaugural function, first dean of this Pt. J. N. M. Medical College, Raipur, Late Dr. N. P. Banavari rightly said-

"One day this region will be proud of this Medical Institute." Today, this is a premier medical centre for approximately three crore people of Chhattisgarh, especially for low socio-economic class and is a prestigious Medical Educational Institute of high repute for meritorious students of this region.

Initially, the foundation stone of its own building was to be laid down on 16th April 1965 in Pt. Ravishankar University Campus, but later on the site was transferred to the present Jail Road site and foundation stone was laid by the then Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Pandit Dwarika Prasad Mishra on the same day. By the order of M.P. Govt., 92 acre land area was transferred from Deptt. of Jail to Medical education

for construction of college building, hospital, hostels and staff quarters. Chief Minister of M.P. Pandit Shyama Charan Shukla inaugurated the newly constructed college building on September 30, 1976 and MBBS admission capacity was increased from 60 to 100.

As hospital building was not ready, medical college was attached to Dau Kalyan Singh Hospital for practical and clinical teaching of medical students. When Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Hospital came into existence in 1996, it substantially increased medical care and training facilities. In this very campus, an impressive Atal Bihari Bajpai Auditorium of 1200 spectators capacity has been constructed, which is one of the best auditori-



um of Chhattisgarh state. In its initial days, this medical college was affiliated to Dr. Harisingh Gaud University Sagar. In 1965, when Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla University came into existence, its affiliation was transferred to it. Presently it is under Pt. Deendayal Upadhay Ayush & Health Sciences University, Raipur since 2008. MBBS intake capacity increased gradually-earlier it was 60 at the beginning of this institution, later on increased to 100 in year 1976 and presently it is 150+30

since 2009. From next academic year 2023-24 MBBS intake will be 200+ E.W.S. quota. Post-graduate medical courses - MD/MS in various clinical, para clinical and non clinical subjects have been started from 1970. Presently, total number of P.G. seats are 145, which itself is concrete evidence of its high academic status. This college is also running unique, job oriented courses like M.Sc Medical Biotechnology, BASLP and B.Sc./ M.Sc. in renal science. Various para-medical courses and regularly

'Diamond Jubilee'

organised different refresher training courses for medical officers are other significant curricular activities of this institution. Experienced and senior teaching faculty of this college also contribute substantially in teaching of all basic medical subjects to Dental, Physiotherapy and Nursing college students. Recently three super-specialty courses DM/M.Ch have been started and efforts are in pipeline to open broad-specialty and super-specialty courses in few more subjects. Institution is also trying hard to have separate departments of Geriatric medicine, Transfusion medicine and Hematology with P.G. courses.

Stepping on the developmental ladder, medical college hospital Dr. BR Ambedkar Memorial Hospital is making continuous progress and today it is the largest and most modern well-equipped hospital of Chhattisgarh State. With 24 departments, it is providing 1246 indoor patient beds and on an average 1400 patients attend OPD per day. These figures themselves are the best indicators showing significant medical care being provided to the poor population of this region. Besides academic excellence, students of this college have shown their exemplary talents in cultural, literary and sports arena as well. Annual cultural programme of this college has always been subject of attention in the city.

Till date, nearly 6000 doctors graduated from this institution and are giving their significant contribution in medical care services, teaching and research in various part of the state, nation and globe as a whole. Most important contribution is in form of peripheral medical facilities being provided in rural, remote and tribal areas of the state. Nearly 50 to 70% doctor in these areas are product of this institution, who are continuously giving their medical care to make people of Chhattisgarh healthy and hearty.

Dr. ARVIND NERAL
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Troubled by power cuts farmers warn of agitation

Central Chronicle News

Rajim, Feb 26: Farmers are worried due to frequent power cuts and low voltage in the district including the zone, as the crops in the field are not being irrigated properly, due to which the fields are getting dry and cracks are also coming.

As per information, hundreds of farmers of the area came to the residence of District Panchayat member Rohit Sahu, Rajim and informed about their problems.

And further he informed the higher officer of sub-division Paragaon immediately by telephone and ordered to remove the



electrical problems immediately and handed over the memorandum along with the farmers to the Electricity Office, Rajim.

The farmers present there told that there is power cut for 6 to 7 hours daily due to which water is not reaching the fields.

And the problem has come when the paddy is at the stage of maturity and

also warned to go on agitation if the issue is not resolved.

Balak Das, Naresh Sonkar, Sahdev, Khuman Singh, Bhagchand, Champu, and Subelal and a large number of farmers of the region including Dhruv, Naresh Khute, Bhagwat Yadu were present while submitting the memorandum.



Blessing ceremony organized in Saraswati Shishu Mandir

Central Chronicle News



Mungeli, Feb 26: A blessing ceremony was organized in Saraswati Shishu Mandir (SSM) here for the bright future and best exam results of the students studying in class 10th and 12th. As the chief guest in the program, Vimitra Dhritalhare said that students should try for success by making

their goals clear and recognizing the talent of the students, the teachers always help in moving forward.

Dr. Prashant Thakur, president over the programme, said that Kak Cheshta Bako Dhyani, Schwan Nidra Tathaiv, and there can be no doubt in the success of the students in whom these characteristics are found. Prepare for the exam by

being stress-free by making a systematic routine before the exam, he said. Vivekananda Bal Kalyan Samiti President Prakash Lodha blessed the students while wishing them a bright future, while the program was inaugurated with lamp lighting and Saraswati Vandana.

Sagar Singh Thakur, Himani Manikpuri, Denim Sahu, Shivhare

Singh, Dipali Banjare, Anjaneya Shriwas, Prateek Singh of class XII presented an experience narration and song. Officers, members of Vivekananda Child Welfare Committee, school family and Principal Chandrabhan Tiwari were present in the programme. The program was coordinated by Narendra Srivastava.

AAP supporting movement of Anganwadi worker assistant

Central Chronicle News

Arang, Feb 26: Anganwadi worker assistants in Chhattisgarh are sitting on an indefinite agitation for their rights and all the workers of Chhattisgarh, under the banner of Sahayika Kalyan Sangh, have been protesting for their 06-point demands in the entire Chhattisgarh since last 1 month.

In the District Panchayat Arang premises, the Anganwadi worker assistant of Vidhansabha Arang are also sitting in protest, under the leadership of Parmanand Jangde, wherein the team of Aam Aadmi Party Vidhansabha Arang came to support and the office bearers of the party gave their support and addressed the gathering.

Dageshwar Bharti,



leader of Aam Aadmi Party gave information about the facility and salary hike being given by the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi and Punjab for Anganwadi worker assistants.

Parmanand Jangde, the leader of the Aam Aadmi

Party, in his address, while giving the status of primary teacher and mother to Anganwadi workers and assistants for education and nutrition, considering them as the first link to deliver the schemes of governance to the last person of the society, said that

due to their hard work and hard work Corresponding government does not provide salary and government facilities which is unfortunate.

Jangde, while remembering the promise made in the public manifesto of the Congress party de-

manded to give the status of government employees to Anganwadi workers and assistants. Jangde urged the government to complete the above 06-point demands at the earliest, considering the demands to be justified, necessary and full of justice. At the same time, he assured and assured that the party will participate in the fierce movement together in the movement of Anganwadi worker assistants if their demands are not fulfilled.

Workers like Parmanand Jangde, Dageshwar Bharti, Jagmohan Tandon, Panchdas Sahu, Dwarika Narang, Pawan Sahu, Sanjay Tandon, Jitendra Tandon, Bhunesh Jangde, Devendra Banjare, Vicky Tandon, Vishwanath Mahilang etc joined and supported the protest meeting.

'Youth Varta' and awareness prog held



In Govt. Shaheed Venkatrao PG College

Central Chronicle News

Bijapur, Feb 26: NSS unit of Govt Shaheed Venkatrao PG College held College-level 'Youth Varta' and awareness programme in District Bijapur on Thursday. In this selection of subject-wise selectors, judges too was done subject-wise.

In this in-charge of NSS Pramod Kurre was appointed as the Nodal Officer. Busara Khatun

secured first place for her speech on Global Outcome on Climate Change and Yogesh Baske secured second place.

In the same way, Sharun Kuldeep came first for his essay on the subject 'Role of India in World Peace' and Sakshendra Rana came second. In poster competition, Dheeraj Pradhan came first and KG Shiva second.

On this occasion Asst. Professor Ugendra Sahu, Veena Karpal, Shourilal Chouhan and other teachers and students were present.

Adolescent health prog launched



To promote tribal health

Central Chronicle News

Jagdulpur, Feb 26: Under Anamaya Programme (Tribal Health Collaborative), Piramal Health launched the Adolescent Health Programme on Friday, Feb 24 with the aim of promoting tribal health among youth and students aged 15 to 29 years in the tribal-dominated area of district Bastar. Under this programme training is to be imparted to youth and students on topics like mental

health, nutrition and adolescent reproductive sexual health, disadvantages of taking addictive substances, road accidents, use of helmets, seat belts etc. Due to which these youths will get trained at the community level and after which would work to make the people of the village aware. On the occasion of the inauguration programme organized in the 'Aastha Room' of the District Office, the Chief Executive Officer of the District Panchayat Prakash Sarve along with the office bearers and workers of Piramal Health were present.

Grand Shivling to be established in middle of Nandi Sarovar

Central Chronicle News

Takhatpur, Feb 26: The grace of Lord Shiva has remained on the holy land of Belpan for centuries and the religious faith and sentiments of the people of the region are closely linked to the region, therefore keeping in view the public sentiments, a huge Shivling will be installed in the newly constructed Nandi Sarovar, whose appearance will be so grand and attractive that people will come here from far and wide to have a darshan.

Congress state secretary



Ashish Singh Thakur expressed the above statement from the seat of the chief guest during the Bhoomi Poojan program of setting up a platform in the middle of the lake and a Shivling temple on it at a cost of 45 lakhs in the newly constructed Nandi

Sarovar in village Belpan. District Panchayat Chairman Jitendra Pandey presided over it.

Special guests were Sarpanch Mrs. Sunita Yadav, Mandi President Gariba Yadav, District President Jugal Kishore Kaushik, Ajend Singh

Thakur, Abhay Kaushik, Deputy Sarpanch Swarath Maravi were also present.

Sarpanch Sunita Yadav said that in the last 4 years, as the representative of Bhpesh government, MLA Rashmi Ashish Singh has given gifts to Belpan and every citizen of Belpan will remember this for years.

The program was conducted by Krishi Upaj Mandi President Garima Yadav and Sarpanch Sunita Yadav showed gratitude. Area residents were present in large numbers on this occasion.

'GPM district to be developed as a major tourist destination'

In accordance with the CM's announcement
Discussion held on important points in the district-level tourism committee meeting chaired by the Collector today

Central Chronicle News

Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi (GPM), Feb 26: There are immense possibilities for tourism in the newly formed Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi (GPM) district. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, aims to give special recognition to the district as a tourism destination, and plans are being chalked out to develop various tourist sites, including Rajmergarh, in accordance with his announcement.

A district-level tourism committee has been formed to facilitate environmental development



and provide basic amenities to tourists at the major tourist spots. District Collector Priyanka Rishi Mahobiya chaired the meeting of tourism committee meeting held today in the Arpa conference hall of the collectorate, where important issues were discussed.

She said that administrative approval had been granted for the development of Baiga Kutir, pagodas, railings, borewells, pipelines, CC roads, toilets, fencing, gardening, and high mast

the importance of environmental conservation and emphasized the need for organized development by creating designs, layouts, and drawings for tourism development work in Rajmergarh.

For this purpose, instructions have been given to appoint different construction agencies for different tasks, such as the construction of Baiga Kutir, pagodas, railings, borewells, pipelines, CC roads, toilets, fencing, gardening, and high mast

solar lights, among others.

In the meeting, directions were given for the development of tourist destinations including Mai ka Madwa, Dharampani, Laxmandhara, Jhoja Waterfall, Durga Dhara, Beni Bai, Thadhpathara, etc. A roadmap is to be created for these tourist spots, and direction signs and distance indicators are to be displayed for the convenience of tourists.

The meeting also discussed starting boating facilities at Gaganai Nature

Camp, Maliniya Dam, and Smriti Vatika Reservoir. Local youth interested in this field will be trained for this purpose.

Similarly, to attract tourists to village-wise tourist spots, it was decided to construct mud houses using materials such as clay, bamboo, thatch, grass, and sand.

For this, the consultant appointed for tourism development in the district has been instructed to provide training to local tourism and forest committees, and provide network connectivity. Forest department officer Satyadev Sharma, project director D.R.D.A. R.K. Khunte, District Transport Officer Shri Vivek Sinha, Executive Engineer I.R.E.S. Sharad Srivastava, all Janpad CEOs, and office bearers of the non-governmental organization were present at the meeting.

आम सूचना

जारी दिनांक 20.02.23

एतद् द्वारा सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि आवेदक - आर. जगदीश्वर राव पिता स्व. आर. रमणा राव प्राधिकृत अधिकारी इधियन बैंक के द्वारा आशीष विद्यानिवा पिता वीतराम शिवबायिया निवासी रायपुर द्वारा मावेदित भूमि ग्राम - रायपुर पलवाही हल्का नंबर - 57 राजस्व निरीक्षक मंडल - 01 तहसील व जिला रायपुर स्थित भूमि विस्तार क्रमांक नंबर 572/14, 572/16 रकबा 0.101, 0.149 हेक्टेयर का बटाकन न्यायालय तहसीलदार/अतिरिक्त/नायब न्यायालय रायपुर के आदेश दिनांक 21.12.22 के पर्यायान में दिनांक 27.02.23 को समय 01.00 परचात मेरे द्वारा किया जाना निश्चित है। अतः उक्त बटाकन के संबंध में विच किये जायें या शंका को कोई दवा आदिस्त प्रस्तुत करना जो वो ही नियत तिथि में पदवीकरण नंबर 57 के रायपुर में स्थित कार्यालय में या दस्तावेज सौद स्वयं या किसी वैध अभिभावक के माध्यम से उपस्थित होकर प्रस्तुत कर सकते हैं। निम्न तिथि के परचात किये जाने के दाय/आपत्ति पर विचार किया जाना संभव नहीं है।

राजस्व निरीक्षक
रायपुर - 01

ADITYA BIRLA HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED

Registered Office- Indian Rayon Compound, Veraval, Gujarat - 382266
Branch Office- G Corporation Tech Park, Kesarvadavali, Ghodunder Road, Thane -400607 (MH)

DEMAND NOTICE

(under Rule 3 (1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)

SUBSTITUTED SERVICE OF NOTICE U/s.13 (2) OF SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the borrowers as mentioned below that since they have defaulted in repayment of the Credit facility availed by them from Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited (ABHFL), their loan accounts have been classified as Non-Performing Assets in the books of the Company as per RBI guidelines thereto. Thereafter, ABHFL has issued demand notices under section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act) on the last known addresses of the said borrowers thereby calling upon and demanding from them to repay the entire outstanding amount together with further interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. as stated in the said demand notices. However, the demand notice is also being served by way of publication, as per Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (SARFAESI Rules):

Sl. No.	Name and Address Borrower/ Co-Borrower and Guarantor / Co-Guarantor & Loan A/C No.	Date of Demand Notice	Amount due as per Demand Notice as on Date
1.	1. MOHAMMAD FARUK MOLLA, Nazul Sheet No 36c Plot No. 591, Near G-Institute Of II, Mouja Jampara Ward No 21 Rajnandgaon, C.G. 491441. 2. TANJILA MOLLA Nazul Sheet No 36c Plot No. 591, Near G-Institute Of II, Mouja Jampara Ward No 21 Rajnandgaon, C.G. 491441. 3. M/S TAREEF GOLD SMITH Nazul Sheet No 36c Plot No. 591, Near G-Institute Of II, Mouja Jampara Ward No 21 Rajnandgaon, C.G. 491441. 4. MOHAMMAD FARUK MOLLA Majher Ant, Kummara, Hooghly, West Bengal 712704. 5. TANJILA MOLLA Majher Ant, District Hooghly, P.O. Kummara, West Bengal 712704. 6. MOHAMMAD FARUK MOLLA C/O Tareef Gold Smith, Kamptee Line, Rajnandgaon, C.G. 491441. 7. M/S TAREEF GOLD SMITH Kamptee Line, Rajnandgaon, C.G. 491441. 8. MOHAMMAD FARUK MOLLA Ward No 21 Jampara, Rajnandgaon (M Corp), Chhattisgarh 491441.	03.02.2023	Rs. 19,54,442.87/- (Rupees Nineteen Lakh Fifty Four Thousand Four Hundred Forty Two and Eighty Seven Paise Only) by way of outstanding principal, interest (including accrued late charges) and interest till 07.02.2023

We hereby call upon the borrower stated herein to pay us within 90 days from the date of this notice, the outstanding amount (together with further interest thereon plus cost, charges, expenses, etc.) thereon failing which we shall be at liberty to enforce the security interest including but not limited to taking possession of and selling the secured asset entirely at your risk as to the cost and consequences.

Please note that as per section 13(13) of the SARFAESI Act, all of you are prohibited from transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise, the aforesaid secured assets without prior written consent of the Company. Any contravention of the said section by you shall invoke the general provisions as laid down under section 29 of the SARFAESI Act and / or any other legal provision in this regard.

Please note that as per sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, if the dues of ABHFL together with all costs, charges and expenses incurred by ABHFL are tendered to ABHFL at any time before the date fixed for sale or transfer, the secured asset shall not be sold or transferred by ABHFL and no further step shall be taken by ABHFL or transfer or sale of that secured asset.

Date: 27.02.2023
Place: CHATTISGARH

Sd/- Authorised Officer
(Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited)

BRIEF



A voter poses for photo after casting his vote for the Chinchwad bypoll, Sunday.

Mishap

Sitapur: An infant was crushed to death and 14 people were injured after being hit by a car at a village in Sandana, police said. A 'Bhagwat Katha' was organised at Mudiya village on Saturday night.

Arrested

Chaibasa: Six Maoists including a self-styled commander were arrested and explosives seized from their possession in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, a senior police officer said.

Suspended

Chandigarh: The Haryana Government on Sunday ordered suspension of mobile internet and SMS services in Nuh district for three days over apprehensions of communal tension and breach of peace following a call for more protests over the abduction-murder of two men from Rajasthan allegedly by cow vigilantes.

43 ill

Khargone: Forty three people fell ill after having food at a marriage function in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone district, an official said on Sunday. The wedding function was held in Khargone's New Housing Board Colony on Saturday night.

Book release

Jaipur: Lt Gen (Retd) KJS Dhillon, a former commander of the Srinagar-based Chinar Corps, on Saturday shared his experiences with police officials at a programme here. On the occasion, Rajasthan Director General of Police Umesh Mishra released Dhillon's book "Kitne Ghazi Aaye Kitne Ghazi Gaye".

Shot dead

Ramgarh: A 35-year-old Congress leader was shot dead by motorcycle-borne criminals in Jharkhand's Ramgarh, two days ahead of a bypoll in the district, police said. The incident took place around 8 pm on Saturday near an old petrol pump on the Bhurkunda-Patratu road in Saunda area, around 50 km away from the state capital Ranchi, a senior officer said.

Shot at

Jaipur: Two people travelling in an SUV opened fire at the occupants of another vehicle, injuring two persons, in Rajasthan's Jaipur on Sunday. The incident occurred in the early hours of Sunday on Ajmer road, according to police.

'Will fully cooperate with CBI'

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday said he will fully cooperate with the CBI that has summoned him for questioning in the excise policy case, and asserted that he does not care if he has to go to jail over "false allegations".

Ahead of his questioning, Sisodia visited Raj Ghat, the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi.

Sisodia, who also holds the Finance portfolio in the Delhi Cabinet, was originally summoned last Sunday but he sought deferment of his questioning citing the ongoing Budget exercise, following which, the CBI had asked him to appear on February 26.

In a tweet in Hindi, Sisodia said he will fully cooperate with the probe.

"Today, I am going to the CBI. Will fully cooperate in the probe. I have the love of lakhs of children and crores of countrymen with me. Even if I have to go to jail for a few months, I do not care. We are followers of Bhagat Singh.



Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia during a roadshow going to Rajghat enroute to CBI office for his questioning in the liquor policy case, in New Delhi, Sunday.

Bhagat Singh died for the country. If I have to go to jail over such false allegations, it is a small thing," he said.

Several AAP leaders, meanwhile, claimed that some of their councillors have been put under house arrest to prevent them from visiting Raj Ghat. "We have come to know that many of our

leaders have been put in a kind of house arrest. Police is at their houses and not allowing them to step out. Even for visiting memorial of Mahatma Gandhi, we are being asked to take permission from the Centre," AAP national spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj claimed.

AAP leader Adil Ahmad alleged their councillors have been put under house arrest as the BJP is "scared of their party". "Many of our councillors are under house arrest. This is a black day for democracy. BJP is scared of us that's why they are attempting to stop our leaders," he alleged.

Describing Sisodia as the future national education minister, Bharadwaj said, "Arvind Kejriwal is the new challenge for the BJP and the PM. The danger is not from Rahul Gandhi but from Arvind Kejriwal that's why they are after our party. They raided his house, office bank locker and even his village but nothing was found".

'Earthquake swarm' in Amreli as 400 mild tremors recorded

In 2 years

Ahmedabad, Feb 26 (PTI):

Gujarat's Amreli district has been the epicentre of an 'earthquake swarm' as it has recorded nearly 400 mild tremors in the last two years, according to officials.

A swarm is a sequence of mostly small earthquakes which are usually short-lived but can continue for days, weeks, or sometimes even months and often recur at the same location.

Residents of Amreli's Mitiyala village, where many of these 400 tremors were felt, have started sleeping outside their houses as a precautionary measure so that they are not caught unawares in case of any

major seismic activity. Explaining the reason behind the 'earthquake swarm' in Amreli district of Saurashtra region, Gandhinagar-based Institute of Seismological Research's (ISR) officiating Director General Sumer Chopra told PTI that tectonic setup and hydrological loading are the reasons for the seasonal seismic activities.

In the 48 hours from February 23, Amreli's Savarkundla and Khamba talukas recorded four tremors in the intensity range of 3.1 to 3.4, making residents worried.

The seismic activity in Amreli has been witnessed just after the recent devastating earthquake in Turkiye that killed more than 45,000

people. In January 2001, a massive earthquake in Gujarat's Kutch district killed 13,800 people and another 1.67 lakh were injured. The earthquake had caused severe damage to properties in various towns and villages of the district.

Asked about the recent seismic activity in Amreli, Chopra said this is an "earthquake swarm" event in which small tremors keep on recurring. This is mostly seasonal.

"In the last two years and two months, we recorded 400 mild tremors in Amreli, out of which 86 per cent were below the intensity of 2, while 13 per cent were between the intensity of 2 and 3 and only in five events, it went above 3

magnitude," he said. "Most of these mild tremors are not even felt by the people. Just our machine records them," he said.

With a caveat that "earthquakes cannot be predicted", Chopra said the possibility of a major earthquake is low when the 'earthquake swarm' is taking place. "Most of the Saurashtra region including Amreli district falls in seismic zone three, which is categorised as moderate damage risk zone. The main reason is there are no major fault lines in that area," he said.

The fault line in Amreli is of 10 kilometres. For major earthquakes, the fault lines should be of more than 60 to 70 km, the official said.

CLEANLINESS DRIVE



Volunteers of the Sant Nirankari Mission participate in a cleanliness drive along the banks of the Krishna river, in Karad, Sunday.

Old education system 'rogue' as students had to 'read, write, vomit'

Kolkata, Feb 26 (PTI):



Subhas Sarkar

The old Macaulay system of education was "rogue" as students had to "read, write and vomit", Union MoS for Education Subhas Sarkar said on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters at the Raj Bhavan, he said the New Education Policy (NEP) will help students get holistic education.

"The previous Macaulay system of education was rogue. Students had to read, write and then vomit. The entire globe is shifting from the old educational policy to a new holistic manner of education, which is imparted in such a way that students can give back to society,"

he said. British politician Thomas Babington Macaulay played a key role in introducing English as the medium of instruction for education in India in the 1800s.

"Now, we need holistic education, and there should not be any compartment. An Arts student can study Physics and Chemistry, whereas a

Science student can include History and Economics as his choice of subjects," Sarkar said.

He was part of a panel discussion on NEP at the Raj Bhavan, organised by the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Governor CV Ananda Bose and several eminent educationists were also present. Sarkar said he does not agree with people who allege that attempts were being made to "saffronise education". "Please show me a single instance of saffronisation. Is it saffronisation if I say that India has given the world 'Zero', or if I mention that 'Pi' was discovered by Indian saints," he asked.

BOOK LOVERS



Book lovers visit the World Book Fair, in New Delhi, Sunday.

55 tagged Olive Ridley turtles return to Rushikulya river mouth

Berhampur (Odisha), Feb 26 (PTI): Fifty-five Olive Ridley turtles, which were tagged with metallic flipper in the last two years on the Odisha coast, have returned to the Rushikulya river mouth to lay eggs this time, officials said.

The tagged marine reptiles were among 3.20 lakh Olive Ridley turtles, an endangered species, nested in the five km-long rookery of the Rushikulya river in the last two days, Berhampur Divisional Forest Officer Amlan Nayak said on Saturday.

Mass nesting of the species started near the river mouth from Thursday, he said. Tagging

of Olive Ridley sea turtles would help scientists identify the migration path and places visited by the marine reptiles after congregation and nesting.

"In the last two days, we have detected 55 female tagged turtles, which have returned to the Odisha coast for nesting this time," said Anil Mohapatra, a senior scientist and officer-in-charge of Estuarine Biology Research Center (EBRC), a regional unit of the Zoological Survey of India, Gopalpur.

In the last year, at least 12 tagged turtles were detected during the mass-nesting period at the Rushikulya river beach.

TMC, BJP, Left-Cong to fight it out

Kolkata, Feb 26 (PTI):

In Sagardighi by-poll

The stage is set for a three-cornered contest in the by-poll to the Sagardighi assembly constituency in Murshidabad district on Monday, as the ruling TMC, opposition BJP and the Congress-Left alliance are ready for the fight to bag the minority-dominated seat. The TMC, which has been winning the seat since 2011, won in 2021 by a margin of nearly 50,000 votes, securing more than 50 per cent of the total votes polled, whereas the BJP and the Congress-Left alliance had bagged 24 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. The TMC has fielded local leader Debashish Banerjee, who is up

against Dilip Saha of the BJP, and the Left-supported Congress candidate Bayron Biswas who is known as the beedi-baron in the area. The constituency is known for its beedi industry and is also a cradle of migrant labourers, who venture out to various parts of the country in search of jobs. Apart from more than 60 per cent minority population, the rural seat also has around 18.5 per cent Scheduled caste and 6.5 per cent Scheduled Tribe population. It has approximately 2.3 lakh voters. The by-poll to the Sagardighi assembly seat was necessitated by

the death of its three-time TMC MLA and state minister Subrata Saha in December last year. The TMC, confident of winning the seat for the fourth consecutive time, has employed party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and a host of other top leaders and ministers to campaign in the area.

"In the by-poll, we must improve our margin further and expose the unholy opposition nexus of BJP, CPI (M) and Congress. I wish to tell everyone here that a vote for the Congress will strengthen the hand of the BJP and its designs to implement NRC in future," Banerjee had said during a recent election campaign.

'Naxal problem in J'khand in last stage'



Ajay Kumar Singh

Ranchi, Feb 26 (PTI): The Naxal problem in Jharkhand is in its last stage as the security forces have launched a coordinated assault to wipe out the menace, Director General of Police, Ajay Kumar Singh said on Sunday.

The 'Naxal hotbed and training Centre' in Jharkhand - Budha Pahad - on the border with Chhattisgarh was recently

captured by security forces after over three decades of Naxal dominion. Singh, a 1989-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer was appointed as the new Director General of Police of Jharkhand earlier this month. "The Naxal problem in Jharkhand is in its last stage. Whatever remains it needs to be tackled. We have enough manpower and expertise to do it and we will be able to reduce it further", Singh told PTI in an interview. A total of 31 Naxalites including regional committee members, zonal, sub zonal and area commanders were gunned down in last three years while 1,319 were arrested including polit bureau and central committee members.

RPP decides to withdraw support from Prachanda-led govt in Nepal

Kathmandu, Feb 26 (PTI):

The Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (PPP), a key partner in the seven parties ruling alliance in Nepal, has decided to withdraw its support to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'-led government, citing changes in the political equation.

Four ministers from the RPP, including the party's Chairman and Deputy Prime Minister and Energy Minister Rajendra Lingden who was part of the coalition government, on Saturday submitted their resignations to Prachanda.

A joint meeting of the party's central executive committee and lawmakers on Saturday decided to withdraw its support to

the Prachanda-led government and the provincial governments, The Kathmandu Post reported.

"In view of the sudden change in the political equation and cooperation within the ruling government, the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party has decided to quit the government," said a statement issued by RPP spokesperson Mohan Kumar Shrestha.

The party believes that the recent changes are clear signs of inherent instability, and it would be inappropriate for the party to remain in power in the changed context," Shrestha added.

"We have decided to withdraw the support given to the government, and quit the government with effect from today," the Post reported, quoting

the statement. "The party also carries the same belief in the context of the provincial governments and hence, has decided to withdraw the support given to the provincial governments as well."

The RPP is the fifth-largest party in the House of Representatives with 14 seats in the 275-member House.

Maoist Center Chairman and Prime Minister 'Prachanda' has dealt a blow to the ruling alliance by selecting a presidential candidate from outside the ruling alliance.

The presidential election scheduled for early next month has put a serious question mark on the future of the seven-party ruling alliance.

Pak probe agency accuses Imran Khan of 'misusing' interim bail



Islamabad, Feb 26 (PTI):

Pakistan's top investigative agency on Saturday accused Imran Khan of "misusing" his interim bail to skip court hearings in a prohibited funding case against his party and sought the formation of a special medical board to determine the ex-premier's health condition. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in October last year filed a case in an Islamabad-based banking court against Khan and other leaders of his Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party over allegedly receiving prohibited funding.

54TH NAACP IMAGE AWARDS



Tyler James Williams, from left, Quinta Brunson, Janelle James, and Sheryl Lee Ralph accept the award for outstanding comedy series for "Abbott Elementary" at the 54th NAACP Image Awards, at the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena, Calif.

Migrant boat breaks apart off Italy, about 30 dead



Rescuers recover a body at a beach near Cutro, southern Italy, after a migrant boat broke apart in rough seas, Sunday, Feb. 26. Rescue officials say an undetermined number of migrants have died and dozens have been rescued after their boat broke apart off southern Italy.

Rome, Feb 26 (AP):

The Italian coast guard has recovered about 30 bodies after a migrant boat broke apart in rough seas on Sunday off the southern coast of Italy's

mainland, RAI state radio reported.

Quoting unidentified port authorities near the coastal town of Crotona, in Calabria, the toe of the Italian peninsula, RAI said the ship was carrying

more than 100 migrants when it ran into trouble at dawn in the Ionian sea.

By mid-morning, about 40 survivors had been found, said Luca Cari, a spokesperson for firefighters who were involved in

rescue efforts.

"At the moment there are various victims," he said, without specifying a number of dead as rescue efforts were still underway.

The Italian news agency AGI put the number of recovered bodies at 27 and said a baby a few months old was among the dead.

The radio report said vessels from the coast guard, border police and firefighters were involved in rescue efforts.

The coast guard was not immediately available for more details.

Details about the nationalities of the migrants were not immediately provided in the reports. It was not immediately clear where the boat had set out from, but migrant vessels arriving in Calabria depart from Turkish or Egyptian shores.

Snow falls in Los Angeles area, 1,000s still without power

Los Angeles, Feb 26 (AP):



A powerful winter storm that swept down the West Coast with flooding and frigid temperatures shifted its focus to southern California on Saturday, swelling rivers to dangerous levels and dropping snow in even low-lying areas around Los Angeles. The National Weather Service said it was one of the strongest storms to ever hit southwest California and even as the volume of wind and rain dropped, it continued to have significant impact including snowfall down to elevations as low as 1,000 feet (305 meters). Hills around suburban Santa Clarita, north of Los Angeles, were blanketed in white, and snow also surprised inland suburbs to the east. Blizzard warnings continued in the mountains and flood advi-

sories blanketed the region, but forecasters offered some relief, predicting the storm would taper off later in the day.

After days of fierce winds, toppled trees and downed wires, more than 120,000 California utility customers remained without electricity, according to PowerOutage.us. And Interstate 5, the West Coast's major north-south highway, remained closed due to heavy snow and ice in Tejon Pass through the mountains north of Los

Angeles. Multiday precipitation totals as of Saturday morning included a staggering 81 inches (205 centimeters) of snow at the Mountain High resort in the San Gabriel Mountains northeast of Los Angeles and up to 64 inches (160 centimeters) farther east at Snow Valley in the San Bernardino Mountains. "There's already been reports of 2 to 3 feet (60 to 90 centimeters) across some of the higher peaks, and we're looking at an additional foot,

maybe two, of additional snowfall through the rest of the day," said National Weather Service meteorologist Zach Taylor. The Los Angeles River and other waterways that normally flow at a trickle or are dry most of the year were raging with runoff Saturday. The Los Angeles Fire Department used a helicopter to rescue four homeless people who were stranded in the river's major flood control basin. Two were taken to a hospital with hypothermia, said spokesperson Brian Humphrey. In the Valencia area of north Los Angeles County, the roiling Santa Clara River carried away three motorhomes early Saturday after carving into an embankment where an RV park is located. No one was hurt, KCLA-TV reported, but one resident described the scene as devastating.

Russia, Iran sending top envoys to UN's human rights council

Geneva, Feb 26 (AP):

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will help kick off the latest and longest-ever session of the UN's top human rights body on Monday, with Iran's foreign minister, a senior Russian envoy, and the top diplomats of France and Germany among scores of leaders set to take part.

The more than five-week session of the Human Rights Council opens as the world grapples with rights concerns including Russia's war in Ukraine, repression of dissent in Russia and Belarus, new violence between Palestinians and Israelis, and efforts to solidify a peace deal in Ethiopia that ended two years of conflict between

the national government and rebels in the Tigray region.

The council, made up of 47 members countries, takes up an extensive array of human rights issues including discrimination, the freedom of religion, right to housing or the deleterious impact of economic sanctions targeting governments on regular people as well as country "situations" like those in Afghanistan, Syria, Myanmar, Nicaragua and South Sudan. It usually meets three times a year.

Proponents say the Geneva-based rights body has grown in importance as a diplomatic venue because the UN Security Council in New York has been increasingly divided in recent years due to a

major rift between affiliations among its five permanent members: China and Russia on one side, Britain, France and the United States on the other. On Monday, among the speakers after Guterres and the presidents of Congo, Montenegro and Colombia, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian will come up between Germany's Annalena Baerbock and France's Catherine Colonna. China's foreign minister, Qin Gang, is set to make a statement by video.

Amirabdollahian's visit comes in the wake of vociferous and continued protests that erupted in Iran after the death in September of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini following

her arrest by the country's morality police. Moscow is set to be represented at the highest level since Russia suspended its council membership last year largely because the UN General Assembly was on the cusp of stripping it. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, known more for his expertise on defence matters, is set to attend on Thursday.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to speak by video message the same day.

A year ago, scores of diplomats walked out of the council chamber as Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appeared by video, to express their opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine days earlier.

4 killed, 10 injured in blast

Peshawar, Feb 26 (PTI):

At least four people were killed and 10 injured in an explosion inside a market in the Balochistan province of Pakistan on Sunday morning, police said.

Barkhan Deputy Commissioner Abdullah Khoso told Dawn newspaper that the blast occurred in the Rakhni market area when an improvised explosive device (IED) planted on a motorcycle exploded.

Barkhan Station House Officer (SHO) Sajjad Afzal said the injured persons were moved to a nearby hospital.

The official said a police team had reached the site and cordoned off the area for further investigations.

Unverified videos making the rounds on social media show volunteers carrying bloodied victims away as a crowd gathers at the purported site of the blast. Mangled motorcycles and charred vegetables can be seen strewn about on the road.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo has condemned the blast and directed the authorities to take all possible steps to arrest the culprits.

Cut foreign aid to countries which hate America if voted to power: Nikki Haley

Washington, Feb 26 (PTI):

Indian-American Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley has vowed that if voted to power, she will cut every cent in foreign aid for countries which hate America. She mentioned Pakistan, China, Iraq and other countries, saying "a strong America doesn't pay off the bad guys".

The 51-year-old two-term Governor of South Carolina and the former US Ambassador to the United Nations formally launched her 2024 presidential bid earlier this month.

"I will cut every cent in foreign aid for countries that hate us. A strong America doesn't pay off the bad guys. A proud America doesn't waste our people's hard-earned money.

And the only leaders who deserve our trust are those who stand up to our enemies and stand beside our friends," she wrote in an op-ed in the New York Post. She said that America has spent USD 46 billion on foreign aid last year, which is given to countries like China, Pakistan, and Iraq.



American taxpayers deserve to know where that money is going and what it's doing, she added. "They will be shocked to find that much of it goes to fund anti-American countries and causes. As president, I'll put a stop to this fiasco," she said.

According to Haley, the Biden administration resumed military aid to Pakistan, though it's home to at least a dozen terrorist organisations and its government is deeply in hock to China.

She said that as the US ambassador to the UN, she strongly supported then president Donald Trump's decision to cut nearly USD 2 billion of military aid to Pakistan

because that country supported terrorists who kill American troops. "It was a major victory for our troops, our taxpayers and our vital interests, but it didn't go nearly far enough. We've still given them way too much in other aid.

As president, I will block every penny," she added. She said that the Biden administration restored half a billion dollars to "a corrupt United Nations agency" that's supposed to help the Palestinian people but in fact covers for deeply anti-Semitic propaganda against our ally Israel. She added the US has given Iraq more than USD 1 billion over the last few years, even though its government is getting closer to Iran.

She said American taxpayers still give money to "Communist China for ridiculous environment programs, despite the obvious threat China poses to Americans." "We give money to Belarus, which is Russian dictator Vladimir Putin's closest ally.

India, UK finance ministers agree to make further progress on FTA

London, Feb 26 (PTI):

India and the UK have agreed to make further progress on the ongoing negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) and also to swiftly organise the next bilateral Economic and Financial Dialogue soon, the British government has said. India has recently concluded the seventh round of talks with the UK.

At the conclusion of UK Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's India visit for the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting, held under India's 2023 Presidency, the UK's Treasury department said the finance minister held talks with Indian counterpart Nirmala Sitharaman with a focus on deepening bilateral economic and financial ties.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor of Exchequer, United Kingdom in Bengaluru.

"At a meeting with Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, both sides agreed to make further progress on the UK-India Free Trade Agreement and deepen bilateral economic and financial ties," the Treasury department said in a statement on Saturday.

"They agreed to make swift progress on setting up the next UK-India Economic and Financial Dialogue," it said. Hunt, on his first international visit as UK Chancellor, also met with business leaders in Bengaluru and visited the offices of tech multinational Wipro which employs

over 4,000 people in the UK. "Meeting fellow Finance Ministers face to face is an excellent opportunity to make real progress on the key global economic issues of our time," said Hunt. "I first visited India 38 years ago, and it's been fascinating to see how much the country has changed in this time there are positive lessons to be learnt from their successful rapid development.

"It's been great to hear from Indian technology business leaders here in Bengaluru how they are pushing the country's economy forward, and I look forward to further collaboration between India and the UK as we continue to trade and create jobs delivering on the government's plan to grow the economy," he said.

दक्षिण पूर्व मध्य रेलवे
सर्वसाधारण को सूचना

यह कि नया रायपुर, मंदिर हस्तदर एवं केन्द्री के बीच नये रेलवे लाईन का निर्माण किया जा चुका है तथा उक्त रेलवे लाईन का 25 किलो वोल्ट के उच्च शक्ति के विद्युत संरक्षण के द्वारा परिचालन दिनांक 28.02.2023 को किया जायेगा।

उक्त ब्रॉड गेज रेलवे लाईन पर रेल गाड़ियों के आवागमन प्रारंभ करने हेतु रेल सुरक्षा आयुक्त के द्वारा अधिकतम गति 120 कि.मी. प्रतिघंटा पर ट्रायल रन किया जायेगा।

उक्त ट्रायल रन के पश्चात ब्रॉड गेज के रेल गाड़ियों का परिचालन प्रारंभ हो जायेगा। अतः सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है नियमानुसार उक्त रेल लाईन के आवागमन स्वयं के ज्ञान माल के साथ-साथ स्वयं के सभी मवेशियों को उक्त रेलवे लाईन से सुरक्षित दूरी बनाकर चलें।

अशाक कुमार
मुख्य अभियंता (निर्माण)
द.प.म.रेलवे, विलासपुर

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केन्द्रीय विद्यालय, बचेली
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WALK-IN INTERVIEW

Kendriya Vidyalaya Bacheli is going to conduct a walk-in interview in the Vidyalaya premises in order to prepare a panel of teachers on purely part time / contractual basis against the following vacancies as and when occur during the session 2023-24. Eligible candidates may login Vidyalaya website <https://biobachelikvs.ac.in> to download Application Form and bring a Hard copy of the same duly filled-in, along with 2 passport size photographs, experience certificate (if any) and one set of photocopies of certificates and Marks statement (from HSC onwards) on the date of interview. Original certificates must be produced for verification. For more details visit Vidyalaya website.

Schedule of Interview:

S.NO.	POST	DATE & TIME	Note:
1	Primary Teacher (PRT)	12.03.2023 (Sunday) From 09:00 AM onwards	Candidates should arrive at the venue to register their names and submit forms from 08:00 AM to 09:00 AM on the date of interview. Late comers will not be allowed.
2	Trained Graduate Teacher (TGT) (Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Mathematics, Science & Social Science)	13.03.2023 (Monday) From 09:00 AM onwards	Important: It is mandatory for the candidates to follow the COVID-19 Safety Protocol, drafted by the Government of India.
3	Post Graduate Teacher (PGT) (Hindi, English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Commerce, Economics, Computer Science)	14.03.2023 (Tuesday) from 09:00 AM onwards	

Specialist Teachers: Computer Instructor, Sports Coach, Academic Counselor, Music Coach, Yoga Instructor

Principal



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AI like ChatGPT will be a co-worker, not replace jobs

As an AI language model, ChatGPT is a technology designed to assist with tasks such as answering questions, providing information, and engaging in conversation. It is not a coworker in the traditional sense, as it is not a human and does not perform tasks in the same way that a human would. In fact, platforms like ChatGPT can be beneficial to businesses by improving efficiency and allowing employees to focus on higher-level tasks that require human skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, and decision-making. While it is possible that certain jobs may become automated through the use of AI, new jobs and industries may also emerge as a result of technological advancements. Ultimately, the impact of technology on employment is complex and multifaceted, and it is important for individuals and organizations to adapt and evolve in response to these changes. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), the country's largest information technology services, feels generative artificial intelligence platforms like Microsoft-backed OpenAI's ChatGPT will create an "AI co-worker" and not replace jobs. Emergence of such tools like ChatGPT will help to improve productivity, consistency of the work which gets delivered and reduce the need for governance, up the pace of delivery and reduce the need for peripheral functions, but not change the business models for firms, said Milind Lakkad, the chief human resources officer (CHRO) of TCS. The context for a piece of work to be implemented will be industry and customer-centric, which will continue to come from the human who is being assisted in tasks by such a co-worker. The emergency of platforms like ChatGPT has led to concerns on whether a trained human is needed at all to deliver the work which a technology firm offers to clients. Also, there are scenarios where an entire code is being generated through ChatGPT. One of the reasons for massive layoffs by big tech firms globally is being attributed to the emergence of such intuitive platforms. The amount of work to be done by a human being versus the generative AI platforms will vary as per industry as well. If anything, it will reduce the need for managerial talent but the demand for workers lower down the hierarchy will continue as they will get crucial skills on the context front.

Save water today to secure your tomorrow

Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit

There is no life without water. Water is not only important for human beings but for the entire ecosystem. In summer heat wave repeats year after year. This year it is more. We should be prepared. Water sources should be created. Unmindful of bad impact on the ecology, we have been destroying forests, drying up lakes by filling mud and construction of buildings, unplanned urbanization, and the like. The greed has no bounds. Small trees are cut ruthlessly. On the other hand we do not want to reduce harms of infinite solar heat by adopting simplest methods of keeping premises solar passive like white roofs and planting trees drip irrigated by self harvested infinite water. William Ashworth has said that "Children of a culture born in a water-rich environment, we have never really learned how important water is to us. We understand it, but we do not respect it." India is one of the many countries that are facing water scarcity today. Water Covers two-Thirds of the Surface of the Earth, but fresh Water is only 0.002% on the earth. Water is central to our lives but has not been the central point of focus in our planning while we rapidly evolve into an urban society. Water is critical for sustainable development, including environmental integrity and the alleviation of poverty and hunger, and is indispensable for human health and well-being. The water scarcity is mostly man made due to excess population growth and mismanagement of water resources. Water scarcity can be defined as a situation when people don't have enough water to fulfil their basic needs. Depletion of fresh water has become a threat to our existence. According to some scientists, the quantity and the quality of water are degrading day by day. Although Earth is covered with almost 71% of water, the quality is that we cannot use it in day-to-day life for domestic purposes. There is an acute water shortage in almost all the cities due to changed lifestyle of people. Most of our lakes have dried up. Ground water levels are abysmally low, besides being contaminated. There is not enough water for the city's burgeoning population. On must remember that India's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture. Rain water harvesting can also be used effectively to strengthen irrigation networks. There are plenty of ways to save and recycle water. Fix all leaking taps in your house. Seventy to 150 litres of water are wasted due to dripping taps. As long as water flows from our taps we are satisfied. We don't understand the value of water. One can purify the stored water and use it for various purposes like washing, cleaning and cooking. The government needs to enhance its investment in technology and include all stakeholders at the planning level to ensure optimization of existing resources. Increasing population and rapid urbanization has led to over-use of water resources leading to water pollution and scarcity. Rain, rivers and wells have been man's traditional sources of fresh water. Global warming upsets natural patterns of rainfall. Rivers are slowly killed at their sources by steady destruction of forests and the construction of big dams, and overdevelopment of groundwater. Development cannot be reversed. But technology could be reoriented to serve the dual purpose of conserving water and regulating its use. We have to pay attention to the importance of fresh water and be able to maintain the management of fresh water resources. Don't we think leaving aside global solutions; something should be done at the national and regional levels? It is rightly said "A drop of water is worth more than a sack of gold to a thirsty man."

Central Chronicle welcomes, articles, write ups, comments on different issues for editorial page (800-900 words), Letter to editor for this page. It can be sent by e-mail at: editorcentralchronicle@gmail.com

The letters can be edited or rewritten for clarity of thoughts.

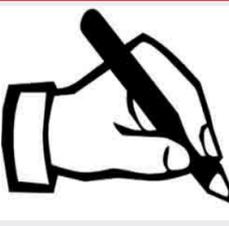
VENDOR MAKES CHANG



A vendor makes chang (a kind of tambourine) ahead of the holi festival, in Jodhpur, Sunday, Feb. 26.

Impact of Pakistan's political and economic turmoil in India

LATA MONI DAS



Normalcy is being eroded in our neighbouring country as a result of disruptions in the economy and politics. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal need urgent humanitarian help due to a worsening food crisis. Pakistan is in crisis, from inflation to political instability, and people are struggling to make ends meet. The economy of Pakistan has been dependent on aid. At the budding stage, aid works to run the economy of any country, but today, 75-year-old Pakistan is realizing that aid is a problem, not a solution. Slower growth and skyrocketing inflation have crippled the backbone of the country of 240 million people. Aid from the IMF and support from friendly countries are the only hope. A looming crisis in the neighbourhood cannot be ignored by India. Now, the question arises as to what the Pakistan crisis means for India?

However, there would be some hope had it only been the economy that was ailing, but polarised opinions, a lack of social cohesion, and aggressive behaviour by the Taliban are making the situation an uncertain one. Rising tension between the Tahrir-i-Taliban and Pakistan Taliban might strengthen their position in the country, which would be a headache for India. Hence, immediately after Kabul fell to the Taliban, India-supported UNSC Resolution 2593 forbade the use of Afghan territory for terrorist attacks. It is also

seen that since Taliban rule, terrorist activity has risen in Pakistan, be it in Baluchistan or Pakhtunkhwa. Their main difference is with the Pakistani army in the context of applying Sharia law. India is worried because anti-Indian groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, who are in favour of Sharia Law, are very much present in Afghanistan, and seeing the growing threat of the Pakistani Taliban in the current situation, it poses a threat in J&K. Taliban consider Kashmir as independent India. With the rise of Tahrir-i-Taliban amid both political and economic turmoil in Pakistan, India would also have to deal with foreign fighters entering India via Pakistan, aiming to further fuel the Kashmiri insurgency.

Several UN reports say Pakistan's financial crisis is the result of supporting terrorism and the strong presence of terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and DAESH. It is likely that high inflation, political instability, and religious intolerance will contribute to an escalation of terrorism in Pakistan and give rise to extremist organisations in India that will be able to gain a larger presence. Furthermore, the possibility of nuclear-armed terrorist regimes in Pakistan has grown from a fear to a serious strategic challenge that even the world cannot ignore. National security advisor Mr. Ajit Doval's recent visit to Moscow, where he discussed

Moreover, China does not allow Pakistan to become weaker by undermining Indian sovereignty. China's influence grows in weaker Pakistan in the form of infrastructure or loans in order to serve as a counterbalance to India. The China-Pakistan economic corridor is one such example, which India has firmly and consistently opposed because it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. There is some good news for India amid the crisis in that the China-Pakistan economic corridor

has been slowing down due to the ongoing crisis in Pakistan and China's economic slowdown. The majority of its projects have not yet begun, and the ones that have already begun are incurring losses and becoming liabilities. Now, when Pakistan approached Beijing for 6.3 billion dollars, China did not respond due to its own economic slump. Another reason could be that China prefers a more stable government in Pakistan and rising security risk in Pakistan. Pakistan's growing debt to China worries New Delhi as it may lead to Islamabad becoming security risks there accommodating Beijing's larger ambitions, which would be against India's interests. Besides, Pakistan goes bankrupt tomorrow; China may seek alternate routes to the ports of the Indian Ocean Region (IBesides, if only, the Indian government has urged China to restructure its loans in a transparent manner and to take losses on loans to struggling economies.

In spite of some relief from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Pakistan has roughly \$30 billion worth of foreign debt owed to China. The debt of the country is three times greater than its IMF debt, and is greater than the total of its borrowings from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank combined. Without aid from the IMF, the country will have no choice but to lay off workers, leaving the masses in financial difficulty. Since the economy in Pakistan is collapsing, India might have a sudden increase in refugees. It will be a burden on the economy. It can also disturb law and order of the country. India is trying to end illegal immigration. Illegal immigrants and refugees have been a concern for many years since they threaten the socio-political fabric of any country. During the next few months, Pakistan needs \$20 billion to clear its debt obligations. The Dawn newspaper reported that Pakistan would receive \$9 billion in

financial support from China and \$4 billion from Saudi Arabia on top of about \$20 billion in investments. On 12th February, immediately after IMF team left Pakistan after giving a hard time at unimaginable crisis. An increase in power tariffs, an end to subsidies, and a revised circular debt management strategy were approved by the cabinet in order to meet the demands of the IMF, though the rise in taxes created more challenges in normal life.

Does this crisis in Pakistan present any hope for India? In the midst of this crisis, when Pakistan decided to begin talking to India, India may take advantage of the opportunity to settle down the Kashmir talks as well as establish peace along the border. The question is whether India has any hope when Pakistan's government is weakened and elections are pending under economic uncertainty. By the time their new government is formed, India will be busy with its own election, which brings its own compulsions and challenges. There is an alternative opinion circulating in the country from several politicians and commentators that India should help Pakistan. While helping Pakistan on humanitarian grounds, we cannot forget Pakistan's highly unpredictable nature. In 1999, we saw a rise in terrorism in J&K, but we were positive about the relationship at that time, due to the efforts of then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who attended SAARC meetings and bilateral meetings in 1988 and 1989. The same thing happened in the 1999 Kargil War; PM Vajpayee made a historic trip to Lahore at that time, looking forward to a positive relationship between them. In spite of Pakistan's interest in peace and dialogue, India must be aware of its inconsistent behavior, which is bolstered by Pakistani military strength.

(The writer can be reached at latadas2020@gmail.com)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Javed Akhtar: A true Indian

Very recently, Javed Akhtar, a famous poet, lyricist and a writer in the Bollywood was in Lahore at the invitation of a cultural organisation of Pakistan. As usually, once again, he was at his best keeping the audience spellbound. But at the same time very strangely unlike many super secular politicians who visited Pakistan in recent times to speak in an anti-India tone, Akhtar Sahab was totally different and candid. He condemned Pakistan straight away for 26/11 Mumbai terror attack by Pakistani ISI trained terrorists killing hundreds of innocent people. Speaking to Pakistani media, the noted poet cum lyricist was not scared to speak his thoughts while being in Pakistan. We also have some people like M/S Mani Shankar, Ayer, Rahul Gandhi, Digvijay Singh, Sashi Tharoor etc., who should emulate Javed Akhtar Saab to be an Indian first rather than a secular Indian. Hats off to Javed Akhtar.

Dr. Ashim Chowdhury,
Guwahati.

Road rage

There is not a single motorist in India who is unfamiliar with the dangerous 'road rage'. The powerful, the rich and, of course, the hooligans are the worst types of road rage perpetrators. Traffic congestion, undue distraction, high noise level, drivers' high on alcohol and paucity of time—all lead to road rage. Gestures to verbal assaults, the ultimate fistfight, the repercussions of road rage can be frightening. Despite more and more relaxation exercises alluring the people over the years. The general decrease in tolerance level has resulted in people blowing hot and cold at the slightest pretext. The sudden violent behaviour following road rage is mostly verbal. When it turns a physical fight, it is a law and order problem. Studies have indicated that almost sixty five per cent of Indian drivers are stressed out. Most of them lose their temper at least once per day. Anger is a powerful emotion; a person should not be angry at a thing that he can help, and at a thing he cannot help. The National Crime Bureau (NCB) has said approximately forty thousand Indians are subjected to road rage every year. A lot of concerned citizens have demanded road rage to be included as a punishable offence under the Motor Vehicle Act. However, most road rage cases do not reach the police. This may embolden a habitual offender.

Dr Ganapathi Bhat Akola
(Maharashtra)

How Sri Lanka sleepwalked over a debt cliff

Umesh Moramudali

The issues that led Sri Lanka to become an economic basket case in 2022 serve as a warning for other nations. When politicians chase popularity over sound economic management, it can spell disaster. Just ask Sri Lanka's former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Rajapaksa quit in July last year after fleeing to Singapore at the height of protests against his government's mismanagement of the economy which resulted in Sri Lanka declaring sovereign default in April 2022. Many blame Rajapaksa for driving the country into its worst economic crisis since independence, leading to severe shortages of fuel, food and medicines. While it's easy to blame one person, Sri Lanka's economic crisis and sovereign default were the result of long-lasting fiscal indiscipline, weak institutions, lack of transparency and accountability and short-sighted economic policies that were taken for political popularity. Since the default, Sri Lanka has made some progress with debt restructuring. Private bondholders have expressed a willingness to restructure debt. The Paris Club group of creditors and India have provided financing assurances.

The makings of disaster

Sri Lanka's problems go back decades. While global shocks such as COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war had some impact on the country's economy, the major causes were long lasting structural weaknesses successive governments failed to properly address. Instead of fixing these weaknesses, Sri Lanka continued to focus on debt-fueled growth. The result was economic catastrophe. Sri Lanka grappled with persistent twin deficits (fiscal and current account) that lasted decades. A fiscal deficit is when a government spends more than it earns. A current account deficit is when a government spends more foreign currency than it earns. Both of these deficits resulted in five major structural weaknesses: Falling government revenue, stagnant exports, an overvalued currency, lack of direct foreign investment and continued losses by state-owned enterprises twinned with subsidised energy prices.

Sri Lanka has lacked fiscal discipline. It has one of the lowest tax to GDP ratios in the world, meaning it barely collects any taxes, usually a substantial part of government revenue. In 1990, Sri Lanka's tax GDP ratio was approximately 20 percent of GDP. By 2015 this had dropped to 10.1 per cent. Gotabaya Rajapaksa's decision to

hand out tax cuts in 2019 in order to fulfill an election promise reduced this further. By 2021, Sri Lanka's tax ratio dropped to 7.7 per cent. This decline took place while the country's GDP per capita income increased significantly. In 1990 Sri Lanka was a low-income country with a per capita of USD 464. Seven years later it had lifted itself to a middle-income country with a per capita income of USD 814. Its GDP per capita continued to grow and was USD 4,060 in 2018.

Accordingly, the World Bank classified Sri Lanka as an upper middle income country in 2019. (Although it was downgraded a year later.) But while GDP per capita grew, the tax ratio fell, forcing the government to borrow heavily to breach the fiscal deficit. So people's incomes grew but taxes fell. At the same time, government expenditure increased. From 2005, ex-president Rajapaksa's brother Mahinda led a government which invested heavily in public infrastructure. This made him popular, with the construction of highways, a new port, an airport and massive road development projects. Foreign loans, from capital markets and China, paid for most of it. To secure this money, Sri Lanka offered government bonds at high interest rates. This meant the

country would need significant foreign currency reserves to pay creditors when the bonds matured. Most of the Chinese loans were not commercial but had far higher interest rates than loans from the World Bank, ADB and Japan which were Sri Lanka's three major traditional lenders.

This infrastructure development took place largely for political reasons. For instance, Mahinda Rajapaksa decided to build a second airport in his hometown of Hambantota when the sensible option would have been to expand the existing international airport near Colombo. Corruption was also a major problem in these projects. In 2004, the share of non-concessional debt of Sri Lanka's foreign loans was only 2.4 per cent. This rocketed to 50 percent in 10 years, increasing the debt burden. There are two reasons why: access to concessional loans fell as Sri Lanka's income levels rose forcing the government to look for alternative foreign financing to bridge the budget deficit. And the government was obsessed with building large scale infrastructure development and maintaining import substitution policies such as increasing import tariffs.

The hard road ahead

Sri Lanka is now compelled to reverse most of these policy mishaps.

Electricity and fuel prices have increased, taxes have increased, interest rates have increased, the exchange rate has increased, causing inflation to soar. In January it was 53.2 percent. This means the country's middle-class as well as business community is struggling as the government no longer can subsidise them. Almost a year after protests against the Rajapaksa government, more protests and strikes opposing tax reforms and other policy reforms have wracked the nation.

Austerity is hard and it is harder in a shrinking economy, but Sri Lanka has no choice. It is compelled to carry out reforms in order to receive the support of the IMF, other multilateral agencies and to conclude a debt restructuring progress. The lesson Sri Lanka teaches is that middle-income transitions sound and look fancy for many low-income countries. But, hurrying into it without fixing structural issues in the economy, strengthening institutions and ensuring strong checks and balances can create economic catastrophe. In the short term, people, businesses and politicians may be very happy. But that party won't last unless the country has been able to get its house in order. Sri Lanka didn't. Now Sri Lanka is trying to do it and it is not easy. Parties are fun while it lasts, but hangovers often are bitter.

BRIEF

OYO

New Delhi: Travel tech platform OYO on Sunday said it has requested the tourism ministry to probe the functioning of Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) and order eviction of the "erring" executive committee members. The representation by OYO alleges that FHRAI's actions are detrimental to small hotel owners. It urged the tourism ministry to take necessary action against FHRAI's "illegally run" executive committee and its members alleging that they are working for self-interest rather than the interest of the small hotel owners.

DLF

New Delhi: Real estate major DLF has no plans to launch public offer of REIT in the next one year to monetise its rent-yielding commercial properties, its CEO Ashok Tyagi said. DLF holds bulk of its rental assets (offices and shopping malls) through joint venture firm DLF Cyber City Developers Ltd (DCCDL). DLF holds 66.67 per cent stake in DCCDL, while Singapore sovereign wealth fund GIC has 33.33 per cent share-holding.

IOC

New Delhi: India's top oil firm IOC will set up green hydrogen plants at all its refineries as it pivots a Rs 2-lakh crore green transition plan to achieve net-zero emissions from its operations by 2046, its chairman Shrikant Madhav Vaidya said. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) is remodelling business with an increased focus on petrochemicals to hedge volatility in the fuel business, while at the same time turning petrol pumps into energy outlets that offer EV charging points and battery swapping options besides conventional fuels as it looks to make itself future-ready, he said.

Wockhardt

New Delhi: Drug firm Wockhardt plans to roll out two vaccines within a year from its UK-based facility as part of a tie-up with Serum Institute of India, a top company official said. Last year, a Wockhardt unit tied up with a subsidiary of Serum Institute of India to set up a vaccine manufacturing facility in Wrexham, North Wales (UK).

Indian Energy Exchange

New Delhi: Indian Energy Exchange has planned to launch the High Price Day Ahead Market segment by mid March, which will facilitate electricity generating firms to sell power at a price as high as Rs 50 per unit. Earlier this month, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) allowed three categories of power generators to participate in the HP-DAM market - gas-based generating stations using imported RLNG and naphtha, thermal plants using only imported coal, and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) - on the petition of IEX (Indian Energy Exchange).

Digital economy can contribute 25% GDP by FY29: Kamath

Mumbai, Feb 26 (PTI):

Noted banker KV Kamath, who now chairs the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID), expects the digital sector to contribute a quarter of the incremental GDP by the time the economy becomes a USD 7 trillion giant by FY29.

Currently, the contribution of the digital economy is a low 4 per cent, whereas it is as much as 40 per cent in China.

The government and planners see the economy becoming the third largest in the world by FY29, overtaking Japan, with a GDP of USD 7 trillion from the present USD 3.3 trillion.

The digital infrastructure, e-commerce and other digital payments and services segments—can be the country's biggest growth-driver and can contribute as much as 25 per cent of the incremental GDP by the



time India becomes a USD 7-trillion economy by FY29. Currently, the share is a low 4 per cent, Kamath told PTI in an interaction over the weekend.

"As much as 40 per cent of the Chinese economy come from the digital sector today, and I don't see any reason why we can't achieve this," the former ICICI Bank chairman quipped.

The chairman of NaBFID, the newest development finance institution funded by the government, does not see any reason to stop pushing infrastructure investments as the economy has lot more appetite for more expressways, highways, airports,

seaports, and high-speed railheads, discounting a question whether he sees any room for an encore of the banking crisis that befell on lenders after the government push on infrastructure during FY06-08.

"The economy has more appetite for infrastructure and we still have a lot to do on the key infrastructure sectors of transport such as expressways, highways, airports, seaports, and high-speed railway networks. I would say on roads, we've to have more and more expressways going forward, large airports and dedicated high-speed railheads for both goods as well as passengers," Kamath said.

"More important, we can have more urban rejuvenation projects. Why to limit this to the top cities alone? Let's build more world class cities and also upgrade the existing ones," he said.

The economy will need more expressways, more

airports and seaports to handle the demand of an economy that will be doubling from the present size to be the third largest with a USD7 trillion GDP over the next five years, he explained.

He also does not see the asset quality of banks imploding again as happened in the last leg of the past decade as most of the infrastructure companies went bust due to their excessive debt-driven expansion.

When pointed out that the highly talked about NPA resolution -- from over 12 per cent to under-5 per cent now—come with a heavy cost on banks, having written off close to Rs 13 lakh crore since the IBC came into force as the recovery has been less than 30 per cent so far, Kamath said whatever progress has been made so far is the topping and as "we move forward and as the IBC system improves, there will be more incremental gains."

Tata AIA launches 'Fortune Guarantee Supreme'

Mumbai, Feb 26:

Tata AIA Life Insurance Co. Ltd. (Tata AIA), one of India's leading life insurers, has launched Tata AIA Fortune Guarantee Supreme, a non-linked, non-participating, Guaranteed Savings plan that provides life insurance cover with guaranteed regular income from the very first month of investing. Commenting on the launch Samit Upadhyay, President and Chief Financial Officer, Head of Products, Tata AIA, said, "We live in a world wherein we must grapple with uncertainty, even as we aspire to fulfill our dreams. In such a scenario, being financially secure becomes a necessity, rather a luxury. What we need is a savings cum protection solution that offers financial protection, guaranteed income, and the flexibility to tailor the plan to suit one's needs.

At Tata AIA, we are delighted to launch 'Fortune Guarantee Supreme', our latest offering as part of our Guaranteed safe free regular income portfolio.

SHAADI BY MARRIOTT



Bollywood actor Sonam Kapoor poses at the launch of Shaadi by Marriott Bonvoy Reimagined, in Mumbai.

Services exports to cross USD 300 bn this fiscal: SEPC

\$1trn achievable by 2030

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

Services exports are recording a healthy growth rate and going by this trend, the out-bound shipments will cross USD 300 billion in 2022-23, and tapping global opportunities would help achieve USD one trillion target by 2030, SEPC said on Sunday.

Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) Director General Abhay Sinha said support measures in the forthcoming foreign trade policy (FTP) would help further boost the exports.

Performance of sectors including IT, ITeS, tourism and healthcare is helping the exports register significant growth rates, he said. "Going

by the current growth rate, the services exports will cross USD 300 billion this fiscal," Sinha said.

According to the data of the commerce ministry, the estimated value of services export in April-January 2022-23 is USD 272 billion as compared to USD 206.28 billion in the year-ago period. In 2021-22, these exports touched an all-time high of USD 254 billion.

IT and ITeS accounts for 40-45 per cent share in the exports. It is followed by travel and tourism, education, and financial services like banking, and accountancy. Developed countries are contributing maximum share in these exports, he said adding Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries holds huge potential to increase the exports.

India offers many tailwind opportunities in many sectors: McKinsey India

Chennai, Feb 26 (PTI):

Companies must choose growth mindset and constantly evaluate resource allocation to boost growth, McKinsey India said.

Growth is the only oxygen that India needs, McKinsey India senior partner Jaidit Brar said at the annual convention of Madras Management Association here.

"The drivers of margin accretive growth are relentless cost and value engineering; quality of revenue, new business models and scale benefits," he said at the event which was held on the theme "India's Century: How to Drive Sustainable, Inclusive Growth?". Companies must choose growth mind-



Jaidit Brar

set, constantly evaluate resource allocation, pursue adjacent opportunities, serve global markets, he said.

NITI Aayog former CEO Parameswaran Iyer said the Centre wants to create facilities that would remove the divide between villages and cities and government would be an enabler and not implementer.

India is very much on the path to become a developed nation, thanks to its economy, sound macro-economic fundamentals, robust public finance, strong manufacturing, export growth and leadership in climate action, he said. Lok Sabha MP N K Premachandran, who inaugurated the conference, said business management plays an important role in the growth of a nation and underlined the need for proper scientific management of resources. MMA President and Tata Consultancy Services vice president, Suresh Raman, MMA senior vice president and TSM Group of Companies partner-director K Mahalingam were also present on the occasion.

FPIs sell-off spree continues

Withdraw Rs 2,300-cr from equities in Feb

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

Foreign investors have turned cautious and pulled out Rs 2,313 crore from Indian equities so far this month ahead of the release of Federal Reserve's latest meeting minutes.

However, the pace of selling has come down compared to January, when Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) took out Rs 28,852 crore.

This was also the worst outflow in the last seven months, data with the depositories showed.

Prior to that, they made a net investment of Rs 11,119 crore in December and Rs 36,238 crore in

November. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said rising rates in the US might lead to more capital outflows from emerging markets including India.

According to the data, FPIs withdrew a net amount of Rs 2,313 crore from Indian equities during February 1-24.

"FPIs turned cautious ahead of the release of the minutes of FOMC meeting and on the back of series of disappointing economic data in the US, indicating slow pace of moderation in inflation. This fanned concerns that the Fed will have to continue raising rates longer than expected," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

Axis Bank enables settlement of cross border transaction

Mumbai, Feb 26:

Axis Bank, India's third largest private sector bank, has successfully enabled cross border transaction in real time via the UPI Network. This initiative is a part of the joint initiative between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) to develop cross-border payments between India and Singapore. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and PayNow of Singapore will be linked to enable faster and cost-effi-

cient transfer of cross-border remittances. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong virtually launched this cross-border connectivity on 21 February, 2023. Axis Bank will act as the settlement bank for P2P foreign inward remittance transactions initiated through PayNow by the Liquid Group in Singapore. A remitter in Singapore using the mobile application of Liquid Group can now initiate a remittance by entering the UPI ID of the intended recipient in India.

Usha launches Onio series

Mumbai, Feb 26:

Usha International, one of India's leading consumer durables brands, and a pioneer in the fans category, today launched the Onio series comprising 6 ranges - Lambda, Phi, Upsilon, Pi, Kappa, and Rho.

With a total of 54 SKUs, this is the biggest launch for the company in the last decade. The Lambda, Phi, and Upsilon ranges come with multi-directional RF remotes. Alongside, the company also introduced 28 SKUs of the Striker range in refreshed colours and trims.

India's economic growth appears to be very fragile: Varma

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

India's economic growth appears to be 'very fragile' and it may fall short of what the country needs to meet the aspirations of its growing workforce, RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Jayanth R Varma said on Sunday.

In India, Varma said he expects inflation to remain high in 2022-23 but come down significantly in 2023-24. "However, growth appears to be very fragile, and monetary tightening



RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Jayanth R Varma

is compressing demand," he told PTI. Explaining further, he said rising EMI payments increases the pressure on household budgets and dampens

spending, and exports are struggling in the face of global factors.

While noting that high interest rates make private capital investment more difficult, Varma said the government is in fiscal consolidation mode, thus reducing the support to the economy from this source. "Because of all these factors, I fear that growth may fall short of what we need to meet the aspirations of our growing workforce given our demographic context and income level," he said.

Vastu Dairy launches new products

Surat, Feb 26:

Shree Radhe Dairy Farm and Foods Ltd (Vastu Dairy), the leading producer of milk and milk products from Surat launched its new product Vastu Premium Gold Ghee on February 19. The Vastu Premium Gold Ghee, which comes in two varieties (Gold Premium Cow Ghee and Gold Desi Ghee), is made from the finest quality butter and is a result of the company's belief that we are what we eat. Speaking at the launch, Bhupat Sukhadia, founder and chairman of Vastu Dairy said the company is committed to serving quality, health and trust through its new premium products.

Gautam Adani slips to No.30, group stocks lose Rs 12 lk cr in 1 month

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

Gautam Adani was the world's third and Asia's richest man a month back but a damning report by a US firm triggered a massive sell-off in shares of his apples-to-airport group, plunging his own wealth by USD 80 billion and the tycoon slipping to No.30 on the world billionaire index.

Adani's sprawling conglomerate, which spans from sea ports to airports, edible oil and commodities, energy, cement and data centres, is under attack by US short-seller Hindenburg Research, which successfully deflated electric-vehicle maker Nikola Motors in 2020. Hindenburg, which held short positions in unidentified shares of Adani Group firms through its US-traded debt and offshore derivatives, on January 24 accused the conglomerate of "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud" and

using a number of offshore shell companies to inflate stock prices. The group has denied allegations, calling them "malicious", "baseless" and a "calculated attack on India".

SELL-OFF Since the Hindenburg report, the group's 10 listed companies have lost Rs 12.06 lakh crore, nearly equivalent to the market capitalisation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) - India's second most valuable company.

Adani Total Gas Ltd - the group's joint venture with France's TotalEnergies for retailing CNG, has lost 80.68 per cent of market value while Adani Green Energy, where the French firm has also invested, has seen 74.62 per cent loss. Adani Transmission has lost 74.21 per cent in market value since January 24 while its flagship Adani Enterprises is down close to 62 per cent. Adani Power and Adani Wilmar as



well as its cement units, media company NDTV and Adani Ports & SEZ too have lost market value. Group's founder chairman Gautam Adani, 60, a first-generation entrepreneur, has lost USD 80.6 billion in wealth, which was primarily based on valuation of his holding in group companies. He was worth USD 120 billion before Hindenburg report but now is ranked No.30 on the world billionaire index with about USD 40 billion networth. Rival Mukesh Ambani, whom he had overtaken last year to become Asia's richest and the world's third most wealthy businessman, is now ranked

No.10 with USD 81.7 billion wealth.

ENRON MOMENT?

Former US treasury secretary and former Harvard University president Larry Summers recently likened the crisis in Adani Group to the accounting scandal that exposed US energy major Enron in 2001. "We haven't talked about it on the show, but there's been a kind of possible Enron moment in India," he had said during Bloomberg's Wall Street Week. "And I imagine with India emerging as the world's largest country, and the (G20) meeting taking place in India, there's going to be a lot of curiosity from all present, about how that's gonna play through and what if any larger systemic implications that's gonna have for India".

The comparison was to Enron Corporation shares plummeting in 2001 following revelation that the company inflated revenues and hid trading losses.

ALLEGATIONS

Hindenburg claims Adani Group uses a number of shell companies to inflate stock prices and flout shareholding rules, which require at least 25 per cent of listed companies to be held by the public. It also flagged debt-driven growth and the group being "deeply overleveraged". On January 27, Adani published a 413-page response, calling Hindenburg "the Madoffs of Manhattan", a reference to Ponzi schemer Bernard Madoff. At the heart of Hindenburg's allegations is the question of whether Adani executives or family members had influence over entities that hold Adani company shares. A Mauritius-incorporated company called Opal Investment Pvt Ltd, which holds a 4.69 per cent stake in Adani Power, was reportedly incorporated by Trustlink International Ltd - a financial-services company with ties to the Adani family. One of Trustlink's directors sits

on the board of Opal. In its January 27 response, Adani Group had stated that it has no control over what stocks Opal and other independent shareholders buy nor the source of their funds.

The opposition Congress party has used the Hindenburg report to cast Adani Group as an oligarch enabled by the Modi government. The government as well as the ruling party BJP has denied all allegations.

COMEBACK STRATEGY

Adani Group is plotting a comeback strategy focused on addressing investor concerns around debt, consolidating operations and fighting off allegations with help of a top-shelf US crisis communication and legal teams. It has scrapped a Rs 7,000 crore coal plant purchase as well as shelved plans to bid for stake in power trader PTC to conserve expenses and repaid some debt.

It has brought in Kestek CNC as a global communications advisor and engaged American law firm Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz to fight back against Hindenburg's allegations. The group has repaid USD 1.11 billion to release pledged shares in Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone Ltd, Adani Green Energy Ltd and Adani Transmission Ltd. It will repay a USD 500 million bridge loan that was taken to finance purchase of Holcim Ltd cement assets. Adani Ports has repaid Rs 1,500 crore to SBIO MF and Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Fund and will repay another Rs 1,000 crore in commercial papers due in March. The group had a gross debt of Rs 2.26 lakh crore as of September 30, according to a stock exchange filing. Total cash and cash equivalents was Rs 31,646 crore. It faces a repayment obligation of Rs 17,166 crore between January 2023 and March 2024.

I was drugged & raped during my teen years: Paris Hilton

American socialite Paris Hilton is opening up about a traumatic moment from her teen years. The 42-year-old reality star and DJ claims she was drugged and raped at age 15 after she and her friends met a group of guys at the Century City Mall in Los Angeles, reports 'People' magazine.

"We would go there almost every weekend," Hilton told 'Glamour UK'. "That was our favorite thing to do and these (older) guys would always just be hanging around the stores... we'd talk to them, give them our beeper numbers."

Hilton claimed the men invited her and her friend back to their house, where the group drank "these berry wine coolers".

"I didn't drink or any-

thing back then, but then when I had maybe one or two sips, I just immediately started feeling dizzy and woozy," she said, quoted by 'People'. "I don't know what he put in there, I'm assuming it was a roofie".

Hilton said she woke up a few hours later and immediately knew what had happened. "I remembered it," she explained. "I have visions of him on top of me, covering my mouth, being like, 'You're dreaming, you're dreaming,' and whispering that in my ear."

"This was something that I had blocked out from my memory, but after hearing the story from other survivors, I started having flashbacks," she told the publication. "Late at night, staff members would come in and take certain girls and bring them into this room."

Akshay Kumar turns emotional on the sets of 'The Kapil Sharma Show'

Entertainment, entertainment & only entertainment! This is exactly what the upcoming episodes of Sony Entertainment Television's The Kapil Sharma Show is set to offer this Sunday. Welcoming the star-studded team of the much-awaited tour, 'The Entertainers' - Akshay Kumar, Nora Fatehi, Disha Patani, Mouni Roy and Sonam Bajwa, this episode promises to be an entertainment extravaganza like none other! So, get ready to laugh your heart out with an evening filled with endless laughter, quirky gags and mazedaar gupshups along with Kapil Sharma and his atrangi parivaar. But amidst all the fun conversation, Bollywood superstar - Akshay Kumar will be seen having an emotional moment.

Akshay Kumar mentions that whenever he comes on the show, Kapil lands up calling Akshay's friends or sister on stage. But this time, Akshay



takes the opportunity to invite Kapil's mother on stage for a candid tete-a-tete about her son in Punjabi. Revealing some fun facts about Kapil's childhood, Kapil's mother will share how their neighbours would always come over to complain about her son. But, being a typical mother, she would always take her son's side. Pulling Kapil's leg some more, Akshay Kumar will ask her if Kapil takes good care of her, and she would sweetly agree to it saying 'yes'.

Looking at the lovely mother son bond, the 'Khiladi Kumar' will reminisce about his own mother who passed away a year and a half ago. Expressing his feelings, Akshay Kumar will go to say, "I was sitting here and watching you for a long time and I remem-

bered my mother, so I thought of calling you on stage. I always tell people, everything you can find at the feet of your parents. So, I tell them touch their feet and lead your life, one should always take and have their blessings with you." Tune in to watch The Kapil Sharma Show every Saturday and Sunday at 9:30 pm only on Sony Entertainment Television.

Kareena's look test for '3 Idiots' revealed after a decade



Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan's look test pictures from the film '3 Idiots', which was released in 2009, has been unveiled.

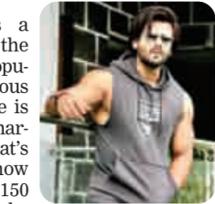
Kareena played a medical student named Pia Sahastrabudhi in Rajkumar Hirani's directorial. The film also stars Aamir Khan, R. Madhavan and Sharman Joshi. It's been 14 years since the film was released and Vidhu Vinod Chopra films released a slew of photos on their Instagram page.

The pictures were captioned: "@ka-reenakapoorkhanas look test for Pia in 3 Idiots #behindthescenes #ka-reenakapoor #3idiots #looktest #vidhuvinodchopra #vvc," they wrote with the post.

In the first image, Kareena is seen dressed in a green kurta and with her hair tied in a ponytail and a nose-pin. The second picture has her dressed in a purple saree with some jewellery and a red blouse and thin spectacles.

Shoaib Ibrahim recalls incidents of pranking Ayushi Khurana on the sets

Shoaib Ibrahim is a prominent actor in the industry where he is popularly known for his various roles in many shows. He is currently portraying the character Rajveer in Star Bharat's show 'Ajooni' where the show has recently completed 150 episodes. Shoaib Ibrahim who has marked his remarkable existence entertaining in the television industry from a very long time recalls incidents of pranking his co-star Ajooni aka 'Ayushi Khurana while shooting on sets.



Raashii Khanna tops IMDB's Popular Indian Celebrities list



Sensational actress Raashii Khanna, who's charmed everyone with her performance in the recently released web series Farzi, is on cloud nine! The actress has been flooded with rave reviews for her performance in the series, where she is seen alongside Shahid Kapoor and Vijay Sethupathi.

While basking in the glory of all the love and appreciation coming her way, Raashii was in for a pleasant surprise when IMDB released their list of Popular Indian Celebrities, trending globally. Raashii has topped that list and

grabbed the number one spot. Raashii has raced ahead of superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Vijay Sethupathi, actress Regina Cassandra and YRF head-honcho Aditya Chopra and become the most popular Indian celebrity trending globally for the week of 20th February to 26th February, 2023.

Sharing her excitement on social media about the same, Raashii got on Instagram and re-posted IMDB's post and added, "Is this a dream???"

Meanwhile, on the work front, Raashii will next be seen in Yodha alongside Sidharth Malhotra.

JoJo to make Broadway debut in 'Moulin Rouge'

Singer JoJo is making her Broadway debut as Satine in 'Moulin Rouge! The Musical'. She will take the stage on April 11 at Broadway's Al Hirschfeld Theatre for a 14-week limited engagement that runs through July 16, reports 'Variety'.

"When I first saw this musical I fell instantly head over heels in love. I watched from the edge of my seat, hanging onto every word of every song," JoJo wrote on Twitter.

"This show is a full-on feast for the senses and the opportunity to play Satine feels like the culmination of so many dreams. I cannot believe I get to join this phenomenal cast and company!!!! You guys blow me away!!!!"

JoJo, whose full name is Joanna Levesque, will star opposite Derek Klena as he returns to the production as Christian. Set in 1900s France, the story follows a charming young composer who goes to Paris and falls in love with a cabaret actor named Satine, who is the star of the Moulin Rouge. Broadway favourite

Aaron Tveit, who is currently reprising his Tony-winning role of Christian, and Ashley Loren, who is playing Satine, will be leaving the show on April 9. JoJo became famous as a teenager when her breakout hit 'Leave (Get Out)' made her the youngest-ever solo artist to have a debut No. 1 single. The 32-year-old singer put out her fourth studio album 'Good to Know' in 2020 and in the same year, she won a Grammy for her song 'Say So' with PJ Morton. On screen, she's appeared in 'Aquamarine' and the road-trip comedy 'RV' opposite Robin Williams. 'Moulin Rouge! The Musical' is the stage version of Baz Luhrmann's 2001 film. It opened on Broadway in 2019, starring Tveit and Karen Olvino in the lead roles, and eventually swept at the Tony Awards with 14 nominations and 10 wins. Alex Timbers directed the jukebox musical, which features songs by Elton John, Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Tina Turner, Madonna and dozens more.



Here is what got Ishaan Dhawan interested in playing Dhruv for Tara

'Zindagi Mere Ghar Aana' actor Ishaan Dhawan is currently seen playing the role of a neurosurgeon, Dhruv in the show 'Dhruv Tara'. He shared what inspired him to take up the project and how much he relates to his character.

Sharing his interest being part of this unique love story, he said: "The show introduces a fascinating concept, in which a girl from the past travels through a time portal to the present day and finds love with a person living in the present. While Dhruv is a witty and charming doctor living a simple life in the 17th century, Tara comes from a royal family in the opulent world of the 17th century. I was very impressed by the uniqueness of the story when I first read the script. I was blown away by the love that blossoms between people from two



stant connection between him and his on-screen personality.

The 'Gud Se Mitha Ishq' actor added: "I felt an instant connection with the character of Dhruv, and I knew that I had to play this role. Dhruv is a typical 21st-century boy who is a hardworking and diligent doctor and loves his family. Dhruv is charming and full of life, which are qualities that I can definitely relate to. I see a part of myself in Dhruv's character, but being part of a time-travel romance was an entirely new and thrilling experience for me."

There are several senior actors like Yash Tonk, Krishna Bharadwaj, and Narayani Shastri in the show and the actor said that it was a learning experience to work with such mature and established faces of the entertainment industry.

CROSSWORD

574



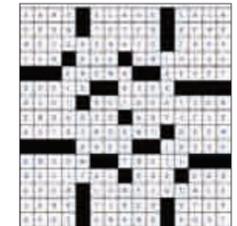
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- Other
- Baldwin and Guinness
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- Lawn tumbler
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- Bar drinks
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- Delicate fabric
- Obstruct
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- Alleviate
- Narrow opening
- Plenty (2 wds.)

SOLUTION 573



NZ rally to 202-3 after follow-on in 2nd test

Wellington, Feb 26 (AP):

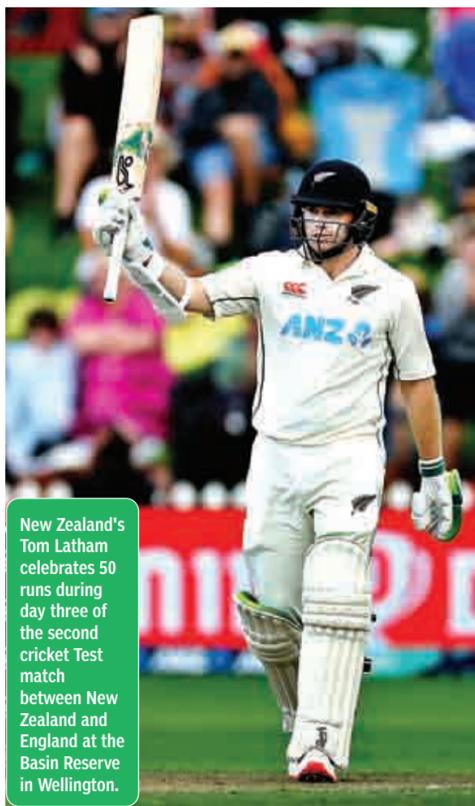
Tim Southee sounded the rallying cry and Tom Latham and Devon Conway answered the call as New Zealand fought back after following on Sunday on the third day of the second cricket test against England.

New Zealand trailed by 226 on the first innings and by stumps was 202-3, only 24 runs in deficit. At the close, Kane Williamson was 25 and Henry Nicholls 18, having seen New Zealand through most of the last session.

Southee battered 73 runs from 49 balls with five fours and six sixes in the morning to show the first spark of defiance before New Zealand was dismissed for 209 in its first innings in reply to England's 435-8.

Latham and Conway then combined in a 149-run opening partnership which wiped out all but 77 runs of the deficit.

Stokes may be taken to task for enforcing the follow-on, a tactic that is increasingly rare in cricket. His bowlers already had bowled 53.2 overs in the New Zealand first innings in which the England quicks James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Ollie Robinson had shared 36.2



New Zealand's Tom Latham celebrates 50 runs during day three of the second cricket Test match between New Zealand and England at the Basin Reserve in Wellington.

overs. But Stokes likely had no other choice on a pitch which has lost most of its sting and likely will be ideal for batting on the

final day. The English bowlers, Broad especially, frequently beat the bat in the early stages of the New Zealand

second innings. But Latham and Conway showed application which recently has been missing from New Zealand's top order. New Zealand's best opening partnership in the three previous innings in the series was 14: Sunday's stand is now the highest second innings opening partnership ever at the Basin Reserve.

Latham grafted his way to his 26th test half-century from 124 and Conway was slightly quicker, reaching his seventh 50 from 121 balls. On reaching 45, Latham became the seventh New Zealander to score 5,000 test runs.

But Conway was out for 61, caught by Ollie Pope at short leg from the bowling of Jack Leach, and Latham followed soon after for 83, trapped lbw by Joe Root.

Williamson hung on for more than two hours until stumps and faced 81 ball to make 25. He now needs only three runs on Monday to overtake Ross Taylor as New Zealand's leading run-scorer in tests. England took the second new ball with 10 minutes remaining in the day's play and it was shared by Ollie Robinson and Leach to keep James Anderson and Stuart Broad fresh for the first session on Monday when the test likely will be decided.

Mooney leads clinical Australia to sixth T20 World Cup title

Cape Town, Feb 26 (PTI):

Beth Mooney struck a fine unbeaten half-century to beat South Africa by 19 runs to lift the sixth T20 World Cup trophies in the final of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here on Sunday. It was a thrilling finale where Laura Wolvaardt managed to put Australia under pressure a bit but in the end the might Aussies once again emerged as the champion side. A dominant show from one of the most dominant teams in the history of the game. Australia managed to score 46 in their last five overs. They conceded only 39. Once again terrific death bowling. But it was also about how they bowled in the first half to keep South Africa in check.

Earlier Mooney remained unbeaten on 74 off 53 balls during which she struck nine boundaries and one hit over the fence.

Electing to bat, Australia lost Alyssa Healy (18) early, caught at covers by Nadine De Klerk off the bowling of Marizanne Kapp (2/35) in the fifth over.

Then Ashleigh Gardner (29 off 21) joined hands with Mooney and the pair's 46 runs for the second wicket stabilised the innings before the former



was brilliantly caught at long-off by South Africa skipper Sune Luus off the bowling of left-arm spinner Chloe-Lesleigh Tryon.

But Mooney went about her business in blistering fashion and dispatched the bad deliveries to the fence to keep the scoreboard ticking.

Grace Harris tried to up the scoring rate but was cleaned up by left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba in the 14th over as the batter went for a wild heave over the square-leg boundary.

Next in, skipper Meg

Lanning showed intent from the word go, scoring her first runs from a boundary through the point region before being brilliantly caught by Tyrone Kapp. Mooney, however, remained unperturbed as she kept consolidating the Australia innings, picking up boundaries with ease.

Even as Mooney held one end up, wickets kept tumbling at the other side as Australia tried to find boundaries towards the end of the innings.

South Africa brilliantly

pulled things back towards the end of the innings by picking up wickets at regular intervals with Mooney remaining stranded at the other end.

South African pacer Shabnim Ismail (2/26) had a big role to play in restricting Australia to an achievable total, claiming the wickets of Ellyse Perry and Georgia Wareham off consecutive balls. She was on a rare hat-trick in the final over but Tahlia McGrath denied Ismail the feat, managing a single off the last delivery of the innings.

Chappell slams Australian sweep ploy

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

Former Australia captain Ian Chappell says employing the sweep shot is not the only way to survive against spinners on the Indian pitches, where good footwork is a must for success.

Australia's predetermined sweep ploy to tackle Indian spinners failed miserably as the hosts retained the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after taking a 2-0 lead in the four-match series.

"Sweeping regularly is not the answer to playing good spin bowling, and anyone who says so is talking through his hat," Chappell wrote in his column for ESPNcricinfo.com.

"The odd player is very good at sweeping and should utilise the shot, but for the majority there are better ways. Any good spin bowler who makes the ball bounce is likely to expose the dangers in sweeping constantly." Australia prepared on special scarified pitches in Sydney and



chose not to play a single tour game in India for the gruelling month-long series.

"You don't discover how to play good spin bowling later in life on a scarified Australian pitch just prior to a vital tour of India.

"You have to learn good footwork -- coming three paces out of your crease or retreating quickly onto the back foot -- at a young age," he wrote. The Australian legend feels Pat Cummins and Co. erred in forming their batting strategy in the build up to the series.

"It should have been obvious in Australia's build-up what kinds of batting strategies needed to be used in India.

"The most beneficial are to watch the ball closely, more so than in Australia, and that there is a fraction

more time than you think," he wrote.

"Selectors can be fooled into thinking that playing spin bowling well in Australia automatically means success will follow on Indian pitches.

"That isn't so but if the method in Australia is a sound one, selectors should assume it could lead to success in India. Once a batter understands about the extra time on slightly slower Indian pitches, he can work the ball into a gap to collect precious runs.

"Those runs, especially early in an innings, when survival is treacherous, can frustrate even the best spinners."

He also questioned Australia's team's selection in the first two Tests.

"Australia's selection on this tour has been awfully inconsistent and at times irrational. Getting selection right makes for an air of calm, which, along with effectively putting a stop to dressing-room tantrums, can aid team spirit," Chappell opined.

India U-17 football team loses 1-3 to Qatar

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

India U-17 men's football team suffered a 1-3 defeat to Qatar in the first of the two friendly matches at the Aspire Academy in Doha.

It was an even contest for the first hour of the match, with Ethan Dephina putting Qatar into an early lead, and Shashwat Panwar pulling one back for India on Saturday.

However, the hosts took the lead again in the second half through Khalid Alshaaibi, before Mohammed Elsidid scored in the dying minutes. Qatar started off on the front foot and immediately got the lead in the fifth minute, when Dekhayel Al-Hamad's cross was saved by India keeper Sahil, but Dephina got on the rebound and scored. India got a series of set-pieces around the quarter hour mark, with Mukul and Vanlalpeka Guite getting the best

chances, but both sent their efforts wide. It was on the half-hour mark that the Blue Colts found the back of the net through Shashwat, who nodded in a corner taken by Danny Meetei to draw India level.

As the two sides headed into the break on level terms, the second half began on a more cautious note from both ends. Vanlalpeka Guite had an effort collected by the opposition keeper, before Sahil made a couple of saves to keep India in the game.

However, Khalid Alshaaibi put Qatar into the lead on the 61st when he got his head onto the end of a cross by Tashin Jamshid.

While India surged ahead, looking for the equaliser, Qatar scored another goal to increase the margin of victory. Mohammed Elsidid had his shot blocked a couple of times, but managed to get onto the rebound and score from it.

Brutal and blunt: Shastri weighs in on KL Rahul situation

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

Former India coach Ravi Shastri is against the idea of picking a vice-captain in a home series as he feels it complicates the selection of the best XI when the deputy team leader is not in form.

Shastri also hinted that Shubman Gill should replace KL Rahul in the remaining two Tests of the Border Gavaskar Trophy against Australia.

There has been a lot of talk around India vice-captain Rahul's prolonged lean patch. The opener has scores of 22, 23, 10, 2, 20, 17 and 1 in his last seven innings.

With the young Gill waiting in the wings despite his stellar run across formats, the pressure is increasing on Rahul.

"The team management know his (Rahul's) form, they know his mental state. They know how they should be watching someone like Gill," Shastri said on the ICC Review podcast.



"I always had the belief (to) never appoint a vice-captain for India. I would rather go with best XI, and if captain has to leave the field, you'd zero in on a player that can take over at the time, simply because you can't need to create complications."

Rahul, who was the designated vice-captain for the first two Tests of the Border Gavaskar Trophy, has retained his place for the final two games but is no longer Rohit Sharma's deputy.

"If vice-captain doesn't perform, someone can take his place; at least the tag is not there. I'm being blunt

and brutal, I never like vice-captain in home condition. Overseas, it's different.

"Here, you want prime form, you want someone like Gill, who's red hot. He will challenge. He has to bang that door down and get into the side. Now, he's not the vice-captain, it has to be team management's decision," said Shastri.

The former India all-rounder said there is not dearth of talent in India and a player needs to be consistent to keep his place in team.

"They will have to see form, his state of mind. He's a tremendous player, but talent is only so much. You have to convert that into results and be consistent. "There's so much talent in India who is knocking the door. It's not just Rahul, there are many in middle-order and bowling lineup as well, there is a lot of depth." Shastri said a break can do a world of good for a player who is struggling with form.

Medvedev beats Murray to win Doha on debut



Doha, Feb 26 (AP):

Daniil Medvedev won the Qatar Open on debut when he defeated Andy Murray 6-4, 6-4 in a final matchup of former No. 1s.

Medvedev converted fast starts in each set. He reached 4-1 in the first and 3-1 in the second.

Murray fought back but Medvedev stifled him and earned his 17th singles title.

"Sometimes we were playing bad, then suddenly both of us were playing

amazing," Medvedev said. "I'm happy to win."

Medvedev also won in Rotterdam last weekend and his winning streak is at nine matches.

After playing in a record fifth Doha final, Murray said, "It was fantastic to be back in a final here again and against an incredible player. Daniil is one of my favorite players to watch and one of the best players on the tour. It's great for me to get that opportunity to play against someone of his level in a final again."

Alcaraz and Norrie advance to Rio Open final

Rio de Janeiro, Feb 26 (AP):

Top seeds Carlos Alcaraz and Cameron Norrie won semifinal matches to set up their second straight final at the Rio Open.

Alcaraz worked hard to beat Nicolas Jarry 6-7 (2), 7-5, 6-0 on Saturday. Hours earlier, Cameron Norrie topped Bernabe Zapata Miralles 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (3). They will meet in Sunday's title match.

The top-seeded players in the clay court tournament also clashed last weekend in the final of the Argentina Open, which the Alcaraz won in straight sets.

Alcaraz dropped only his second set in the Rio Open tournament against Jarry.

The 19-year-old Spaniard was in trouble with the Chilean's effective service in the first two sets, but showed he had more energy in the third.

Alcaraz blanked Jarry in the final set with a dominant performance.



Norrie will play his third final of the year. He needed 2 1/2 hours to beat Zapata Miralles. In the deciding set, Norrie saved a break point in the fifth game, broke the Spaniard in the sixth but was forced to a tiebreak. His stronger first service made the difference.

"I tried to finish the points a little bit too early. I was a bit overconfident," Norrie said. Asked what he needs to do differently from the finals in Buenos Aires and Auckland, which he lost to Alcaraz and Richard Gasquet, Norrie said: "I have to play better in the big moments." Norrie currently leads the tour in wins in 2023, with 17 victories and three losses.

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz returns the ball during the ATP 500 Rio Open singles tennis semifinal match against Chile's Nicolas Jarry at the Jockey Club in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Krejciikova beats Swiatek to lift Dubai title

Dubai, Feb 26 (AP):

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek was upset by Barbara Krejciikova 6-4, 6-2 in the final of the Dubai Championships.

Krejciikova closed the tournament by beating the top three players in the WTA rankings: No. 3 Jessica Pegula in the quarterfinals, No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka in the semifinals, then Swiatek. No. 8 Daria Kasatkina was also overcome in the second round.

The Czech is the fifth woman in the Open era to beat the world's top three at the same event.

"It's a big achievement and I think it's going to give me a lot of confidence that I can play with the best ones," Krejciikova said.

The former French Open champion dominated the final, breaking Swiatek five times. The Pole earned two breaks back in the first set, but Krejciikova then played out a love break and held to love for the set.



In the second, she broke for 2-1 and 5-2 and easily held serve to win her sixth singles title.

"I showed my best tennis this week," Krejciikova said. "I was able to play my tennis but also hold the nerves."

Her previous title was in October, when she beat Swiatek for the first time in the Ostrava final.

"When you play with Iga, you have to suffer, otherwise you're not going to win because she's everywhere," she said. "She plays great shots. She likes to play long rallies. So you have to suffer. I don't mind that."

'Maha govt spending money extravagantly'

■ Ignoring key issues

Mumbai, Feb 26 (PTI):

Senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Ajit Pawar on Sunday accused the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government of spending money in an "extravagant" manner while ignoring the key issues being faced by common people and farmers. The Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly was speaking to reporters here on the eve of the Budget session of the state legislature.

**Ajit Pawar**

"The state government is extravagantly spending crores of rupees to show their smiling faces, instead of solving the woes of the common man. We have decided to boycott the invitation for high tea. Instead, we will meet the new Governor of

Maharashtra, Ramesh Bais, and share our concerns with him," the former deputy chief minister said. "The state government announced aid for different purposes in the past some months, but that assistance is yet to reach the affected people or beneficiaries of schemes. I have noticed this during my recent visits to different places across Maharashtra," he said.

Inflation is going up, due to which the cost of production has increased for farmers. However, the agricultural produce is not getting a good price in the market, Pawar said.

DEVOTION AND FAITH

**Devotees perform 'Kanalattam' during Valiyaparambath temple festival, in Kozhikode, Sunday.**

RAHUL ON JAISHANKAR'S CHINA REMARKS

'Not nationalism but cowardice'

Nava Raipur (CG), Feb 26 (PTI):

In a scathing attack on External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said his recent remarks on China did not show nationalism but cowardice and that these were in line with V D Savarkar's ideology of "bowing before the strong". Addressing the 85th plenary session of the Congress here, Gandhi also claimed that his party leaders and workers were "satyagrahis" while the BJP and RSS people were "satta grahis" (power seekers).

"I want to tell you something about the government's thinking. A few days ago, in an interview, a minister said that China's econ-

omy is bigger than India so how can we fight them. When the British ruled over us was their economy smaller than ours," Gandhi said, without naming Jaishankar. Does this mean that one doesn't take on anyone who is stronger and only takes on those who are weaker, he said.

"This is cowardice. It is (V D) Savarkar's ideology that if someone is stronger than you, bow before them. India's minister is stating that your economy is bigger than us so we cannot stand up to you. Is this nationalism? Is this patriotism?" the former Congress president said. "What kind of patriotism is this that you beat someone weaker than you and bow before the strong," Gandhi said.

Crossing rivers, trekking for hours election officials reach polling booths

Shillong, Feb 26 (PTI):

Election officials started reaching the booths across Meghalaya, trekking steep mountainous paths, crossing muddy rivers and walking for hours as the state prepares for the February 27 polls. A total of 3,419 polling teams have been deployed for the elections to the 59 assembly seats, Chief Electoral Officer FR Kharkongor told PTI.

"Total 974 teams left for their polling booths on Saturday. Till 9.30 pm, braving unfriendly terrains and water bodies, 893 polling

**Polling officials leave for their respective polling stations after collecting EVMs and other election equipment from a distribution centre, ahead of the Meghalaya Assembly elections, at Nongpoh in Ri Bhoi district, Sunday.**

teams reported that they reached their destinations," he said. The polling teams are trekking steep mountain paths, crossing muddy rivers, transcending difficult terrains -- in some areas through ropeways, to reach their destinations, he said.

Election officials had to row a boat to reach the Amlarem constituency's Kamsing polling station which has only 35 voters, Kharkongor said. Some teams even used traditional Khasi basket 'khoh' to carry the EVMs and other polling materials to ensure that "no voter is left behind," he said.

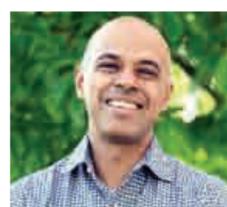
The election officials

sent to the Rongcheng polling station in Rongara Siju constituency in South Garo Hills had to trek for eight hours to reach. Some other teams also trekked for around four hours to reach their destination, he said.

The remaining 2,445 polling teams will be leaving for their booths on Sunday, a day before the voting, he added. The Meghalaya assembly has 60 seats, but polling for the Sohiong constituency in East Khasi Hills district was adjourned due to the death of UDP candidate HDR Lyngdoh. Of the total 3,419 booths, 640 have been identified as vulnerable.

'India's first national assessment regulator to bring uniformity across school boards'

New Delhi, Feb 26 (PTI):

**Amit Sevak**

India's first national assessment regulator PARAKH will bring the much-needed uniformity in assessment by more than 60 boards in the country, Educational Testing Service (ETS) CEO Amit Sevak has said. ETS, which conducts key tests such as TOEFL and GRE, has been chosen by the National Council for Education Research (NCERT) for setting up the regulatory platform.

The Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) will work on setting norms, standards and guidelines for student as-

essment and evaluation for all recognised school boards in the country. "PARAKH will be an independent organisation affiliated to the Education Ministry which will be looking into three major areas - large-scale assessment like the National Achievement Survey, school-based assessments and thirdly capacity building.

"The first step is to develop some norms and standardised guidelines for assessment including summative tests and constant new forms of assessing students," Sevak told PTI in an interview. Stressing upon the diversity in school education in India due to geographic differences and multiple languages, Sevak said PARAKH will bring in the "uniformity" in assessment across the 62 boards in 36 states and Union territories.

"Our vision is to be able to effectively measure the acquisition of skills at K12 level. Right now we are in the process of setting up a blueprint for PARAKH, an initial framework.... We

will have discussions around organisational forms, roles and responsibilities, eventually we will be talking about more specific details like location and so on," he said.

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