

Tripura polls

Mainly violence free; Bru voters cast votes after many years

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

The Election Commission on Thursday said the Tripura assembly polls remained "largely violence-free", with Bru migrant voters being able to exercise their franchise for the first time in many years.

The tentative voter turnout was recorded at around 80 per cent. Final turnout figures will be known by Friday, it said.

No complaints have been received so far by the EC demanding repolling, EC officials said.

"There have been no reports of any major violence or attack on candidates or (polling) agents, intimidation of voters, throwing of bombs, repoll (or) damage to EVMs. As against 168 repolls in the state in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, today's polls in 60 assembly seats in Tripura have been largely peaceful with no (demand for) repoll reported so far," the poll panel said.

"Minor instances" of violence which were reported were promptly looked into by local teams, it said.

For the first time in many years, Bru migrant voters were able to exercise their franchise. Special efforts were made to



enrol voters from the Bru community. Some 14,055 eligible Brus were enrolled in the state in 12 locations. They cast their votes at these locations spread across four districts.

A 25-fold increase in seizures amounting to Rs 44.67 crore was recorded this time as against the 2018 assembly elections, when the figure stood at Rs 1.79 crore.

Increased seizures were witnessed under all heads -- cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals and freebies.

The EC referred to a statement of Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar that violence before, during and after elections is left only in a few states and there is no place for poll violence in a democracy. PTI



SOULMATES: Actor Swara Bhasker announced on Thursday that she has tied the knot with Samajwadi Party leader Fahad Ahmad.

Cricketer Prithvi Shaw assaulted by 'fans'; 8 booked

MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 16

Indian cricketer Prithvi Shaw was allegedly manhandled and his car attacked with a baseball bat outside a luxury hotel at Santacruz in Mumbai following an argument with a woman social media influencer and her male friend after the player refused to click selfies with her, police officials said on Thursday.

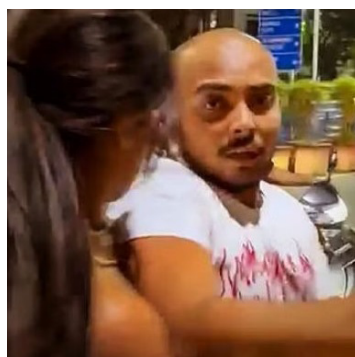
The incident took place in the early hours of Wednesday, they said, adding that the social media influencer, Sapna Gill, was arrested in this connection on Thursday evening, while her friend Shobhit Thakur and six others were booked on the charge of rioting and extortion.

Gill's lawyer accused Shaw of being

drunk and alleged that the cricketer assaulted the influencer with a wooden bat in a "misuse of power and position", while the police said that Gill and Thakur were in an inebriated condition at the time of the incident. A video of the incident has gone viral on social media, which shows Shaw being manhandled. Shaw had gone to the hotel located near the domestic airport at Santacruz for dinner with his businessman friend when the sequence of events unfolded, an official said.

A complaint in this connection was lodged by Shaw's friend and flatmate Ashish Yadav, who runs a cafe. Yadav has been staying with Shaw at Bandra since the last three years, he said.

As per the complaint, Thakur and Gill approached Shaw for a selfie at the hotel. Initially, the cricketer allowed them to do



so. But they insisted on clicking more selfies with him, a demand that Shaw turned down. After that, Gill and Thakur started arguing and misbehaving with the cricketer, the official said.

The complaint said that both of them

(Gill and Thakur) were in an inebriated condition, he added. On seeing this, the manager of the hotel intervened and asked the duo, who were demanding selfies with Shaw, to vacate the premises, he said.

After this incident, Shaw and Yadav had dinner at the hotel. But while they were stepping out of the place along with their friend, they saw Thakur holding a baseball bat in hand. After they sat in their car, the accused attacked the windshield of the vehicle with the baseball bat. Shaw was also manhandled by Gill. Sensing more trouble, the cricketer was shifted to another car while Yadav and others drove his vehicle to Oshiwara, he said.

Yadav saw three motorcycles and a white-coloured car chasing their vehicle. Around 4 am, those following him attacked his car when it was taking a U-turn near

a petrol pump on Link Road. Thakur, who was one of them, broke the rear windshield of the car with the baseball bat. The six persons on motorcycles along with Gill and Thakur, who were in the car, abused Yadav and those accompanying him. After that, Yadav took the car to Oshiwara police station. The eight accused also followed them there. Gill started arguing and threatened Yadav to pay Rs 50,000 to settle the matter or else she would lodge a false police complaint against them, the police official said. After that, Yadav lodged a complaint against the accused. Based on his complaint, the Oshiwara police registered a case against the eight accused under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 148 (rioting), 384 (extortion), 506 (criminal intimidation) and others, he said. PTI

PUNJAB

Public harassment in RTA offices won't be tolerated: Bhullar

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 16

Taking a serious note of complaints of harassment being faced by people in some of the RTA offices, Punjab Transport Minister Laljit Singh Bhullar, on Thursday, warned such employees to stop such practices at once. Reiterating that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann-led government is committed to provide government services to the people in a smooth, hassle-free and transparent manner, the Cabinet Minister said that no official, who harasses the people, will be spared at any cost as this is the government of common people.



Bhullar asked Principal Secretary Transport Vikas Garg to immediately consider the complaints of people visiting for their work in the RTA offices and take appropriate departmental action against erring employees.

Similarly, the Cabinet Minister also instructed State Transport Commissioner Monish Kumar to make surprise visit and inspect RTA offices.

Informing that he had received many complaints of people being harassed in RTA offices, the Cabinet Minister categorically reprimanded such officials to improve their working. The Transport Minister said that providing people a hassle-free and corruption-free administration is the topmost priority of the Mann government.

VB nabs Bathinda Rural MLA's PA

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH FEBRUARY 16

The Punjab Vigilance Bureau, in keeping with the zero-tolerance policy against corruption adopted by the state government, on Thursday nabbed Rashim Garg, alleged to be the personal assistant of MLA of Aam Aadmi Party from Bathinda rural, red-handed while accepting a bribe of Rs 4 lakh.

Disclosing this here today, a spokesperson of the Vigilance Bureau said Rashim Garg, a resident of Samana, Patiala district, has been arrested on the basis of a complaint made by Pritpal Kumar, husband of Seema Rani, Sarpanch of village Ghuda, block Sangat, Bathinda district.

AAP MLA Amit Rattan denied that Garg was his PA

"I have no relationship with Rashim Garg. She is not my PA. Immediate action should be taken against those who indulge in corruption," said Rattan.

He appealed to the police administration for a fair investigation into the case.

He further added that the complainant approached the Bureau and alleged that the accused was demanding a bribe of Rs 5 lakh from his wife in exchange for releasing a government grant of Rs

25 lakh from BDPO Sangat to Gram Panchayat Ghuda, but they didn't want to pay bribe for this work. The complainant further informed that the accused has already taken Rs 50,000 as a bribe by compelling him and was demanding the remaining money.

After a preliminary investigation of the complaint, the Vigilance Bureau laid a trap and arrested the accused red-handed in the presence of two official witnesses while accepting a bribe of Rs 4 lakh as the second instalment from the complainant.

In this regard, a case has been registered against the accused at Vigilance Bureau Police Station, Bathinda, under the Prevention of Corruption Act and further investigation in this case is under progress.

2 armed men rob Rs 22 lakh from bank in Amritsar

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
AMRITSAR, FEBRUARY 16

In a case that has sent shock waves across Amritsar, two armed men robbed a bank situated in the high security zone of the city in broad daylight on Thursday.

The incident took place at around noon

at Punjab National Bank situated in Rani Masi Bagh area close to the offices of Deputy Commissioner of Police, Law and Order, and ADCP, Traffic.

According to the police, an armed robber, with his face covered, entered the bank and pointed a gun at the cashier while his accomplice waited outside on a two-wheeler. He took

away Rs 22 lakh from the bank and fled with his accomplice within minutes of the incident.

The police said there was no guard at the bank at the time of the incident.

DCP (Investigation) Mukhwinder Singh Bhullar said they were trying to identify the suspects from the CCTV footage.

Depletion of Ground Water

Will replicate Telangana model: CM

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY 16

Taking a major leap forward for checking the depleting ground water table in the state, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann today announced to explore the feasibility to replicate Telangana model for the conservation of this precious natural resource and recharging the water table in the state.

The Chief Minister, who along with the officers of the Irrigation department, analysed the Telangana model of water conservation here, said that it is a revolutionary model that is aimed at recharging the water table holistically. He said that the Telangana government has constructed small dams in the villages for conserving the ground water across the state. Mann said that as a result of this the ground water level has increased upto two metres in the villages.



The Chief Minister said that need of the hour is to channelise canal water in Punjab for saving the ground water for the coming generations. He said that the sole motive of examining this model is to check the depletion of ground water level for the sake of future generations. Mann also took an insightful view of new techniques about saving rapidly

decreasing ground water during his visit to dams and lauded this new and unique way to save the water on one hand and to increase the level of ground water on the other.

The Chief Minister pointed out that Telangana has transformed its entire irrigation system by raising the groundwater level with the help of this multi-

pronged strategy. He said that the efforts include restoration of Minor Irrigation Tanks (MIT), linking of other major and medium projects with MI tanks and construction of artificial recharge structures such as check dams, percolation tanks, recharge shafts and others.

Mann added that precious groundwater resources must be optimally used for the welfare and prosperity of our farmers adding that the viability of this system will be explored in the state in consultation with experts of Telangana.

The Chief Minister said that due to over exploitation of the groundwater in the state, the water table is swiftly depleting across Punjab. He bemoaned that more than 78% of our 150 blocks are in extreme dark zones due to depletion of the groundwater table.

However, Mann expressed hope that through such revolutionary methods Punjab will be able to recharge its groundwater very soon.

Malout-Muktsar Sahib road construction to start soon

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 16

The construction work of Malout-Sri Muktsar Sahib road will start soon, Cabinet Minister Dr Baljit Kaur said today.

Approval for the construction of Malout-Sri Muktsar Sahib road from National Highway 354 has been received from the Government of India, she said.

"Approval has been received today



from the Regional Empowered Committee of the Forest Department regarding the felling of trees on the road construction site," Dr Baljit informed.

The minister informed that the road construction work will be completed within the stipulated period of 18 months after its commencement.

Dr Baljit Kaur said that development works are being conducted in the state to raise the standard of living of the people so that the people can get the benefit of basic facilities. The construction of Malout-Sri Muktsar Sahib road will greatly benefit the residents of the area as they have been demanding it for a long time.

She said that the promises made by the Aam Aadmi Party during the elections are being fulfilled one by one.

Village youth killed by his friends in Phillaur

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
PHAGWARA, FEBRUARY 16

An altercation over a mobile phone turned tragic when a village youth was killed by his three friends.

The incident happened at Buraj Hussan village near Phillaur late on Wednesday night.

The deceased has been identified as Raman Kumar.

Phillaur DSP Jagdish Raj said the accused were identified as Gurpreet Singh Gopi, Lovepreet Singh Khatti and Davinder Singh, residents of the same village.

According to police, Gopi refused to return Raman's phone and an altercation ensued which quickly turned ugly and the three accused killed Raman with a sharp-edged weapon.

All three accused are at large. Raids are being conducted to nab them.

Police have registered a case. The body was handed over to the family after the post-mortem at Civil Hospital, Phillaur, said the DSP.

PUNJAB

AAP creating constitutional crisis in state: Congress

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 16

Amid the row between Punjab Chief Minister and the Governor, Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa on Thursday accused the Bhagwant Mann's Aam Aadmi Party of trying to create a "constitutional crisis" in Punjab by questioning the governor's authority.

Addressing the media here on Thursday, Bajwa said Punjab is heading for "anarchy" with the state CM and governor at loggerheads.

"Why is he the chief minister? Because the governor swore him in. Had the governor not sworn him in, do you think he could have become the CM on his own?"

"After a year, you say who is he? He is the constitutional head of the state. Tomorrow somebody will challenge the honourable President of India also," said the leader of the opposition in Punjab.

"He (the CM) is not above the law. He is taking Punjab through a very dangerous route unfortunately because of lack of experience or maybe the national leadership of the AAP is longing for a fight with the constitutional authorities," Bajwa, an MLA from Qadian, alleged.

"Is it the well-planned politics of the party high command? Because the same system they adopted in Delhi and now is the same here," he said, referring to the ongoing squabble between the Lieutenant Governor and the AAP government in Delhi.



Guv-CM row

Earlier this week, a row erupted between Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit and Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann after the former asked Mann about the process of selecting 36 government school principals for a training seminar held recently in Singapore. Mann said he was not answerable to a Centre-appointed governor and went on to question Centre's criteria for appointing governors.

Bajwa alleged that the AAP does not have any solutions to the problems of the people, so they create a problem to show people they are the victims.

"Now he (Mann) is saying he does not consider him the constitutional head. I want to ask him now who will give approval for convening the upcoming (budget) session," he asked.

Bajwa said that during the previous governments, irrespective of the parties in power in the state and at the Centre, the chief ministers had always maintained good relations with the governors.

Under Article 167 of the Constitution, the governor can seek any information relating to the administration of affairs

of the state and the state government has to comply, he said.

AAP govt must clarify stand: Warring

Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring asked the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab to clarify its position on the questions and charges levelled by Governor Banwarilal Purohit in his letter to the Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

"The Aam Aadmi Party and its government cannot twist the matter by simply saying that these are all state subjects", Warring said, adding, "even if these are state subjects, these need to be answered and clarified".

He said, there is no reason or logic questioning the qualification of the Governor, when he is constitutionally appointed. The same constitution was drafted by Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar, whose picture the AAP government has displayed in all offices, he pointed out.

PCC president agreed that the Chief Minister is answerable to people of Punjab and not to anyone else. Since the Governor has raised these issues, it will be in the fitness of things that the government should answer these, Warring observed, adding, there is no constitutional impropriety visible on part of the Governor.

"Why import this sort of Delhi model of taking unnecessary confrontation with the Governor without any rhyme or rea-

son?" Warring asked, adding that Punjab can do better without adopting "this particular" type of Delhi model. "In fact, Punjab can do without any other model by sticking to its own model," he remarked.

The PCC president also referred to the Union Health Ministry withholding grants from the National Health Mission for the reason of rebranding the existing health facilities in Punjab as "Aam Aadmi Clinics".

"When Punjab is already reeling under such severe financial strain, can we afford unnecessary confrontation with the centre and end up losing grants?" Warring asked, while urging the Chief Minister to rethink his strategy in the interest of the state.

AAP hits back

The Aam Aadmi Party hit back at Bajwa, saying his "anti-Punjab" stand has once again been exposed.

AAP chief spokesperson Malvinder Singh Kang said that on one hand the national leaders of the Congress talk about strengthening the federal structure, and on the other hand, Bajwa is "favouring" the governor.

"Perhaps, he has forgotten that the BJP misused the office of the Governor and toppled the Congress governments in Arunachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka or did not allow the government to form despite having a majority," Kang alleged.

ADGP reviews security arrangements ahead of Hola Mohalla

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
ANANDPUR SAHIB, FEBRUARY 16

To ensure foolproof arrangements for the upcoming festival of Hola Mohalla, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Law and Order Arpit Shukla on Thursday reviewed security arrangements at Sri Anandpur Sahib in order to ensure peaceful celebrations.

The three-day long annual Sikh festival Hola Mohalla will be held at Sri Anandpur Sahib from March 6-8.

Chairing a coordination meeting with Inspector General of Police (IGP) Rupnagar Range Gurpreet Singh Bhullar, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rupnagar Preeti Yadav and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rupnagar Vivek Sheel Soni, ADGP Arpit Shukla directed that foolproof arrangements should be made

to facilitate lakhs of devotees from across the globe, who will gather to pay obeisance at the birth place of Khalsa Panth.

He directed the IGP and SSP to make a meticulous plan for traffic diversion, parking of vehicles, security arrangements, boarding, lodging so that pilgrims do not face any inconvenience.

The ADGP said that this time drones will be deployed to monitor smooth flow of public and to keep vigil on anti-social elements. He said that big screens will be installed at the prominent points for displaying important information for public and help desks will be set up to assist devotees as well as for lost and found properties.

The festival of Hola Mohalla is a symbol of the 'Chardhikala' of the Punjabis in general and the Sikh community in particular.

AAP stalling Bandi Singhs' release: Sukhbir

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SHAHKOT, FEBRUARY 16

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was stalling the release of Bandi Singhs, Gurmeet Singh Engineer and Bhai Devenderpal Singh Bhullar.

Talking to newsmen here, the SAD president said the AAP government in Punjab had come in the way of the premature release of Gurmeet Singh Engineer, who had recently been let out on parole after 27 years in prison. He said that since Engineer was incarcerated in the Burail jail, Chandigarh, the UT administration had written to the Patiala district magistrate seeking the latter's report on the premature release application.

"The AAP government in its report said Gurmeet Singh Engineer was a man of evil mind who was an expert in bomb



making and that there was a probability of his involvement in terrorist activities if released," Badal said.

He added that earlier the AAP government in Delhi had rejected the release application of Prof Devenderpal Singh Bhullar four times. "Both actions show that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is against the release of the Bandi Singhs and will go to any extent to hurt the sentiments of the Sikh community."

Badal also announced that Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee President Harjinder Singh Dhami will

launch the extension of signature campaign drive seeking the release of the Bandi Singhs in villages of the state on February 18 from Attari. He appealed to SAD workers as well as Punjabis at large to support this cause, saying the Sikh detainees were being incarcerated in prison even after completion of their life sentences.

The SAD president also interacted with potato growers of the region on this occasion. He said the growers disclosed that traders did not visit the state from outside due to the prevailing gangster and extortion culture. He said due to this potato prices had dipped to an all-time low of Rs 250 per quintal which was lower than the cost of production.

Asking chief minister Bhagwant Mann to act immediately and save the potato growers, he said Markfed and Punjab Agro should be pressed into service and told to buy the potato crop to ensure remunerative returns to farmers.

J&K

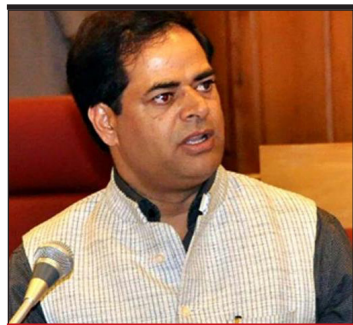
Amid demolition chaos, Cong demands statehood, Assembly polls in J&K

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 16

Amid demolition drive chaos across both the regions of UT which has kept politicians of all hues busy for over two weeks, Congress today asserted on need to hold Assembly polls at the earliest.

Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Vikar Rasool Wani on Thursday said the Centre should immediately restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and hold Assembly polls here. He also accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Centre of creating "dictatorship" in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We demand immediate restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and holding of Assembly polls," Wani told reporters at the PCC headquarters here.



We demand immediate restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and holding of Assembly polls

Vikar Rasool Wani
PCC president

The PCC chief, however, said National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah has "rightly said that they (government) have no intention of restoring statehood" to the Union Territory.

"The BJP has created dictatorship here. People are being harassed and intimidated in the name of bulldozers or the Public Safety Act. Anyone who

raises his voice is threatened with arrest," he alleged.

Wani said while Jammu and Kashmir is already reeling under acute unemployment, the government is adding to the woes of people through demolitions and evictions under the garb of retrieving state land.

"For example, in Ramban, the administration has sealed 60 shops. It means

120 people have lost their livelihood. Today, Jammu and Kashmir is number one in unemployment.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir are being pushed into poverty. They are bringing down the price of horticulture produce, which has forced some growers to throw their apples into the river or they did not pick the fruit at all. The grower says the price has been lowered to such an extent that the production cost is much more than the returns," the Congress leader said.

Later, Wani welcomed several leaders and workers from the BJP, the People's Conference and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) into the Congress party.

"For the last five-six months, a large number of leaders and workers are joining the Congress. After Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, we have received a flood of requests from people to be inducted into the party," he said.

Senior leader Harsh Dev Singh quits AAP

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16

In less than one year of association with the party, senior leader Harsh Dev Singh on Thursday resigned as the chairman of its Jammu and Kashmir unit and quit the party's primary membership, citing personal reasons.

Singh had joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi on May 7, 2022 in the presence of senior party leaders. He was the chairman of the J-K National Panthers Party before that.



In his letter of resignation to AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, Singh said, "Due to some personal reasons, I can no longer continue in the Aam Aadmi Party and am therefore quitting the same with immediate effect."

"This communicate as such, be treated as my resignation from J&K chairmanship of the party as well as from primary membership of AAP," the three-term MLA said. Singh joining the AAP last year was seen as a major boost to the Kejriwal-led party's expansion plans in Jammu and Kashmir.

Ex- DGP M M Khajooria passes away at 91

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16

Former Jammu and Kashmir DGP M M Khajooria, the first police officer in the Union territory to be inducted into the Indian Police Service, died here Wednesday night following a brief illness, officials said.

He was 91. He is survived by three daughters, six grandchildren and a great-granddaughter. His demise has been widely mourned by people in different walks of life.



Incumbent J-K DGP Dilbag Singh and all ranks of the police expressed grief over the demise of Khajooria.

Khajooria, who was born on June 11, 1931, had spearheaded a number of movements, including the agitation for free education up to postgraduate level in Jammu and Kashmir, they said.

He joined the J-K police service in 1954 and was the first police officer in the erstwhile state to be inducted into the Indian Police Service (IPS), they said.

Khajooria was Jammu and Kashmir's second DGP and served the post from January 16, 1985 to May 25, 1986.

KP employees stage overnight sit-in outside BJP office

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16

Kashmiri Pandit employees protesting over pending salaries and relocation to Jammu staged an overnight sit-in outside the BJP office here and refused to budge till their demands are met.

The Kashmiri Pandit employees have been on protest for the past 287 days after their colleagues were killed by terrorists in the valley.

They have alleged that while terrorists are out to target and kill them in Kashmir, LG administration is starving their families by stopping salaries for the past 8 months, and not releasing it even on their biggest festival Maha Shivratri.

"We have been on round the clock protest in front of the BJP office here. We are seeking release of months-long salaries. We will not move out from here till the order to release our salaries is given," a protesting

employee Ashwani Pandita told reporters here.

"Even on Maha Shivratri, we are denied our salaries," he said.

The Kashmiri Pandit employees are seeking written assurance from the Lieutenant Governor administration about their safety and security during their duty in Kashmir.

A female protester who is sitting on protest with her minor child said that LG administration is starving their families by stopping salaries.

Infiltration bid foiled along LoC, one ultra killed

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 16

The Army on Thursday foiled an infiltration bid along the Line of Control (LoC) in Tangdhar sector of Jammu and Kashmir, killing one terrorist.

"Indian Army eliminated an infiltration attempt in forward areas of Tangdhar sector on the night of 15/16 February 2023, thereby preventing efforts of Pakistan to destabilise peace and tranquillity in Kashmir valley and successfully maintaining higher moral ascendancy over the enemy along the Line of



Control," a defence spokesman said here.

Giving details, the spokesman said troops deployed in an anti-infiltration grid detected movement of three terrorists across the LoC while they were approaching the LoC fence.

"On being challenged at close proximity to the post, an intense firefight ensued between the terrorists and alert troops, resulting in successful elimination of one terrorist, while grievously injuring the other. The injured terrorist managed

to flee to PoJK, along with the third terrorist, taking advantage of darkness," he added.

The spokesman said a search operation was launched in the morning following which a body was recovered.

An AK series rifle, one light automatic weapon, six magazines, two grenades and large quantity of war-like stores was also recovered.

"Continued infiltration bids along the LoC are an uncanny reminder of Pakistan's efforts to orchestrate terrorism in Kashmir valley and disrupt peace and harmony, while putting on the facade of ceasefire understanding," he added.

3 held for threatening journalists in Sgr

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 16

Three men were arrested on Thursday for allegedly threatening journalists and making "anti-national" statements during a press conference in the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, police here said. The arrested men have been identified as Suhail Khan, Nadeem Shafi Rather, and Umar Majeed Wani, Srinagar Police said.

"They were self-styled leaders and had threatened and intimidated media persons, gave anti-national byte yesterday in a press conference," police said in a tweet.

They have been booked at Kothibagh Police Station under relevant sections of law and are being interrogated, police said.

REGION

24x7 DD news channel dedicated to HP launched

SHIMLA, FEBRUARY 16

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Thursday launched a 24X7 Door-darshan news channel dedicated to Himachal Pradesh and said it will go a long way in highlighting the state's culture and achievements of its people.

He said extensive preparations, including setting up studios with ultra-modern equipment, were made for the new channel -- DD News Himachal.

"The 24-hour DD channel for Himachal will go a long way in highlighting the religious places, folk culture, promoting tourism and adventure sports, the role of freedom fighters and soldiers who sacrificed their lives and achievements of Himachalis in various fields," Thakur said.

"There has been some delay in launching the 24-hour channel as we made all preparations and set up studios with



ultramodern equipment, created digital walls and linked them with DTH to expand coverage," he said.

There is no dearth of talent in the state but the achievements of local residents are not adequately highlighted, the minister said, adding that this channel will open new vistas for giving wide exposure to the Himachali talent.

Lauding the sacrifices of soldiers from Himachal Pradesh, he said they converted 'Dev Bhoomi' into 'Veer Bhoomi'.

Thakur suggested that a programme on the lines of 'Chitrahaar', a popular DD show on Hindi film songs, should be started on the newly launched channel to promote Himachali folk music.

When the culture of Punjab has carved

out a niche for the state, then why not Himachal, he asked.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the launch of a 24X7 DD channel for Himachal Pradesh was made possible as Thakur, who also hails from the state, is the Information and Broadcasting Minister.

"The state government is committed to the development of the state by rising above political ideologies and will ensure that the benefits of state and central schemes reach the last person," he said.

Prasar Bharati CEO Gaurav Dwivedi said Shimla DD was started in 1995 with a 30-minute news bulletin which was later extended to four hours and today, it is a 24X7 channel dedicated to Himachal.

The new channel will also create employment opportunities for the people of the state as news anchors and camerapersons will be appointed, he said. **PTI**

Cold conditions prevail in region

CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 16

Cold weather continued to persist in Haryana and Punjab on Thursday even as minimum temperatures hovered above normal at many places in both the states.

Chandigarh, the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana, recorded a low of 11.6 degrees Celsius, three degrees above normal.

In Haryana, Ambala's minimum settled at 12.8 degrees Celsius, three degrees above normal while Hisar's low was 10.2 degrees Celsius. Karnal, Narnaul, Rohtak, Bhiwani and Sirsa recorded their minimum temperatures at 9.4, 10, 10.8, 10.6 and 8.2 degrees Celsius respectively.

Ludhiana in Punjab recorded a minimum of 9.2 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal while Amritsar's minimum was 10.2 degrees Celsius, three degrees above normal, according to a report of the Meteorological Department here.

Patiala's minimum was 10.6 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal while Pathankot's low was 10.7 degrees Celsius.

Bathinda, Faridkot and Gurdaspur registered their respective minimum temperatures at 8.2, 10 and 8.5 degrees Celsius. **PTI**

'Have spoken to HP CM on ending Adani cement truckers' deadlock'

SHIMLA, FEBRUARY 16

Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Thursday said he has spoken to Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu for an early settlement to the dispute between the Adani Group-owned cement plants in Bilaspur and Solan districts and truck unions.

The cement plants at Barmana (Bilaspur district) and Darlaghat (Solan district) have closed operations due to a dispute over freight charges, and operators engaged in the carriage of cement and clinkers are on the roads.

"Truck operators are our family members. We will find a solution as the situation is serious due to closure of two cement plants, which has caused losses to truck operators and the state," the Union information and broadcasting minister said after meeting here with unions representing truckers engaged with the cement plants.

Himachal Pradesh Public Works Minister Vikramaditya Singh, state BJP chief Suresh Kashyap and BJP MLA from Sri Nainadevi, Randhir Sharma, were also present at the meeting.

"I had talks with Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Shkhu and his cabinet ministers for early an settlement of the matter, and the attitude of the state government was positive," the Union minister said.

The deadlock has affected the livelihood of thousands of people and "we want that the problem is sorted out at the earliest" and trucks are back on the roads, Thakur said, adding that there should be no politics over the issue.

Industry Minister Harshvardhan Chauhan had earlier said due to closure of the twin plants, the state is incurring a loss of Rs 2 crore a day.

There are about 6,500 trucks attached to the cement plants and the grounding of trucks has hit the livelihood of several families. **PTI**



Outgoing HP Governor given warm send-off

SHIMLA, FEBRUARY 16

"Taking the wealth of love from Himachal Pradesh," outgoing governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar said on Thursday at his farewell here.

Arlekar has recently been appointed the governor of Bihar, while former minister of state for finance Shiv Pratap Shukla will take his place in the hill state.

"I got a lot of cooperation and respect here, for which I will always be indebted to the people of Himachal," Arlekar said.

Himachal Pradesh is not only the land of the gods but also of love, he said, adding that the experience he gained in the state would be useful in discharging his new responsibilities.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri and his cabinet colleagues, Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur, public representatives and other senior officers of the state government and prominent personalities from all walks of life gave Arlekar a warm send off.

Earlier, Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur and various dignitaries called on the governor and conveyed their best wishes.

A farewell function for the outgoing governor was organised at the Raj Bhavan on Wednesday as well. **PTI**



Adolescent girls to be examined in anaemia free campaign

HAMIRPUR, FEBRUARY 16

Steps are being taken to make Himachal's Hamirpur district anaemia-free as girl students aged between 11 to 19 years will be examined in the second phase of the 'Anaemia Mukta Abhiyan', officials said.

In the first phase, 38,612 children in the age group six months to 10 years were screened in the district during October 2022 under the campaign, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Jitendra Sanjata said.

Of these, 88 children were found to be suffering from severe anaemia and 8,704 children were suffering from moderate anaemia. These children are being given necessary medicines by the Health Department, he said. In order to complete this campaign in a planned manner in the Hamirpur district, a district-level task

force meeting was organised on Thursday under the chairmanship of ADC.

In the second phase of this campaign, under the National Child Health Program, mobile health teams will examine the students in government and private educational institutions of the state and the nodal officers will enter it on Google Sheets through the 'Mukhya Mantri Swavalamban Yojana' (MMSY) app. The campaign will be continuously monitored through this app, Sanjata said.

The ADC directed the officials of the Women and Child Development Department and the Education Department to upload the data of all the children screened during the first phase of the campaign on the app within a week.

He said that currently, there are about 45,168 students in the age group of 11-19 years in government and private schools of the district. **PTI**

OPINION

The Express India
NEWS

BBC Income Tax survey

The Income Tax department is currently carrying out a 'tax survey' about the operations and financial transactions of the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) in India. Income Tax surveys are a routine process anywhere in the world, particularly when the entity being surveyed is reported to have made huge profits. The corporate entities are used to such surveys. There is really nothing to cry wolf about such routine processes of government departments. Just because the survey is being carried about the functioning of a media behemoth like the BBC should not mean it is being done out of any vindictiveness.

BBC is a profit making entity, which is in the business of news. Last year it posted a record income of \$6.4 billion. This income has been generated from the operations across the world including India. When a business corporation, even if it is in the business of news, operates in a country, it is bound by the rules of that country. If the Income Tax department of the country has decided to carry out a survey, why attribute motives to a routine process?

The opposition parties in the country have already "condemned" the move, alleging that the BJP government at the centre, under which the Income Tax department comes, was acting in vengeance after the BBC produced a controversial movie on Gujarat riots, thereby implicating the Prime Minister. The movie's broadcast was banned in India. Let the Income Tax department do its work and come out with the facts. That the BBC produced a controversial movie with doubtful credibility and compromised facts should not come as a defence for it and should not mean it gets immunity from the law just because people will interpret it as a vindictive act.

The BBC record, even in the United Kingdom, is not very sacrosanct. The BBC's Chairman, Richard Sharp is accused of having arranged a loan worth eight lakh pounds for Boris Johnson, while he was the Prime Minister and Sharp was lobbying to become the BBC Chairman. Sharp was appointed the Chairman a little later, after arranging the "loan" for Johnson. Questions are being raised as to what for did Johnson need the loan that Sharp "arranged".

However, in the polarized polity in India, all such things end up in the background amidst the cacophony of sharp and severe political rivalries. The opposition parties are out to defend the BBC against the central government. The opposition parties in India have made it a rule to oppose everything that the government does, irrespective of the truth and reality. While in the UK opposition Labour Party is seeking parliamentary probe into allegations against its chairman having allegedly "bribed" his way to Chairmanship, in India, the opposition parties are stoutly defending it, as it suits their purpose to oppose and embarrass the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi may not be a great Prime Minister, but that does not mean everything he does, he does it wrong, as the opposition will try to make everyone believe.

113th Corps Day Corps of Signals 15 Feb: Post 1947



BY MAJ GEN
HARVIJAY SINGH
(RETD, SM)

1947-48 Jammu and Kashmir Operations
At the start of the operations, all that was available was an Infantry Brigade Signal Section (10-12 personnel with a few Radio Sets). There were no permanent line communications in existence between India and the State of Jammu and Kashmir, only a civil aviation wireless link functioning between Srinagar airfield and Delhi. After a few days of commencement of the operations, an Army wireless link was established.

In the theatre of operations itself, the brigade signal section had to bear a tremendous load till a Divisional Signal Regiment was made available two months later. As the scale and tempo of operations escalated, the strength of the Army increased considerably, but the strength of Signals did not show a corresponding rise – adequate amount of equipment was simply not available. The few signal units were burdened with twice their normal wartime load; they however worked hard to keep the dispersed troops in the Kashmir Valley and Jammu District through.

A notable achievement was the award of Vir Chakra to Captain HS Bains, OC 50 Para Brigade Signal Section; first gallantry award won by Signals after Independence. A very innovative soldier, Bains was flown to the beleaguered garrison of Poonch where he set up communications with practically no stores at his disposal. Since no field cable was available, he dug up the cables being used for local power supply and used them to provide permanent line (PL) communications to picquets. He later participated in many operations of the 50 Para Brigade in the Jammu Theatre.

1962 Sino-India War

Like the rest of the Indian Army, the Corps was extremely deficient in equipment and manpower. The demands placed on 4 Divisional Signal Regiment, the only regiment in NEFA were truly extraordinary. It was saddled with the responsibility of providing communications not only for its own division but also the corps headquarters. In addition, it had to look after the tactical headquarters of Eastern Command and XXXIII Corps, as well as that of the Inspector General Assam Rifles (IGAR) in Tezpur.

Like for the rest of the Army, post the 1962 war shortcomings were quickly analyzed and remedial measures taken on a 'war footing'. Equipment shortages were soon made up, capabilities of brigade signal sections were upgraded by converting them into Brigade Signal Companies. To look after communications in the rear areas, Communication Zone Signal Regiments were raised. The task of building permanent line routes in borders areas was taken up. Signalman DC Dillan was awarded the Vir Chakra during this war.



MOST OF THE RADIO OUTSTATIONS HAD NETTED BEFORE LEAVING THE BASE; GROUPED LATER AND NETTED IN HARBOUR WITHOUT RADIATING. THIS KEPT THE ENEMY GUESSING ABOUT THE INTENTIONS OF THE ATTACKING UNITS

1965 Indo Pak War

For the Corps of Signals, the 1965 War is of special significance. In all previous operations, the equipment available to the Corps was similar to what had been used during World War II. Some new equipment had been procured and provided enhanced mobility to the formations.

In most of the operations, strict wireless silence was observed with control sets kept on listening watch. Most of the radio outstations had netted before leaving the base; grouped later and netted

in harbour without radiating. This kept the enemy guessing about the intentions of the attacking units.

It however kept the linemen on their toes, who, once again rose to the occasion and laid and repaired lines in face of the enemy. L/Hav (Lineman) KG George deployed in the Wagah sector in Pakistan kept laying lines with his section despite heavy shelling and an enemy attack in progress. George displayed courage and devotion to duty of a high order, he was awarded the Vir Chakra.

1971 Indo Pak War

The Corps of Signals played a stellar role in this war famously known as the 'Liberation War'; Liberation of Bangladesh. Unlike the previous wars, the time available for preparation and the improvement in the quality of signal equipment

was aplenty; Signals plans were made six months in advance. Improvements of communication infrastructure, import and indigenous production of critical signal equipment and raising of new units were implemented well before the actual operations.

Operations in Bangladesh were characterized by speedy advance across wide rivers, bypassing enemy opposition, use of heliborne forces and exploitation of tactical opportunities as they arose. Such flexibility and speed was possible only due to reliable communication at every stage of the war.

The most significant factor was the availability of radio relay, which became the backbone of communications. The rapid rate of advance of formations precluded laying of lines. Though radio functioned well, it could obviously not replicate lines, especially for telephone conversations. This is where radio relay proved its worth.

Two Signals Officers (Brigadiers KS Gowrishankar and HS Kler) commanding brigades were awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. Captain PK Ghosh who infiltrated into East Pakistan, contacted Mukti Bahini and used their help to prepare a dropping zone at Tangail for the air drop by the 2 PARA was awarded the Vir Chakra.

The Corps Today

Corps of Signals is the most forward-looking arm of the Indian Army. It has a pan India Strategic Backbone (OFC, Microwave and Satellites) capable of handling large volumes of data and extends right upto the countries borders and even beyond. Its Tactical Communications is designed to build up into the enemy territory rapidly using Wireless and Satellite Communications. The Corps has Electronic Warfare and Signal Intelligence elements which have the ability to monitor enemy communications and dominate the electromagnetic spectrum including anti drone measures. Its equipment profile is completely indigenous and state of the art.

The Corps remains dedicated to its motto of 'Teevra Chaukas' and ethos of 'Through'.

NATION

Tharoor 'rules out' contesting possible CWC polls

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Thursday virtually ruled out contesting the CWC polls if the party decides to hold them, saying he is not considering any further elections after having fought the AICC presidential polls and it is "for others to step forward".

In an exclusive interview, on the Congress' upcoming plenary session in Chhattisgarh's Raipur, Tharoor said the convention comes at an "inflection point" in the party's history as it is being held after the presidential polls and the Bharat Jodo Yatra, and ahead of the 2024 elections.

The Lok Sabha MP from Thiruvananthapuram said the plenary could not have come at a more opportune time and gives the party members an opportunity to focus on what "we have gained and what faces the party in terms of challenges for the future".

Asked if it was essential for the party to have polls for the Congress Working Committee (CWC) at the party's plenary session and if he had raised this issue with the party leadership, Tharoor said, "I had made the point that elections are healthy for the party and participated in



one election myself and now that I have lost, I don't think it is my business to tell the party leadership what to do. Let them take the steps that they judge are appropriate."

He stressed the majority view in the All India Congress Committee (AICC)

is the view that will prevail.

"I am fairly confident that if a majority of the delegates want an election they will hold one and if the majority feels that they would rather not rock the boat at this time and just move ahead, then that too will be a possible option," the

former Union minister said.

"I just feel that by having contested once, making my point and not winning the majority, or not even coming close to the majority of delegates, I have in a sense forfeited the right demanding the same thing," he said.

Tharoor said that he was "stepping back a little bit" from the demand of CWC polls, asserting that he was doing so not because he was withdrawing his words but because he had made his point and it was now for those who won the presidential polls and are in-charge of the party's fortunes to decide on it in consultation with the majority of the delegates.

Tharoor said that his own view very simply is that as far as the principle is concerned he had demonstrated during the presidential elections that polls can have a very useful contribution in galvanising the party.

However, he said, if the majority of the party prefers otherwise then it was not his place to substitute his wishes and preferences for the wishes of the majority.

Asked whether he would contest the CWC polls, Tharoor said, "At this point, I am not considering any further elections. I have done my bit, I have made my point. I think it is for others to step forward if they feel that is the way forward."

G20 summit

2023 significant for Delhi Police in view of security implications: Shah

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday asserted that 2023 will be a significant year for the Delhi Police as the force will have to stay alert for the upcoming G20 summit to be attended by international dignitaries from across the world.

Speaking at the 76th Raising Day parade of the Delhi Police, he also paid tributes to ASI Shambhu Dayal, who was stabbed to death by a snatcher in west Delhi's Mayapuri last month. "I pay tribute to ASI Shambhu Dayal whose supreme sacrifice brought tears to everyone's eyes," he said. Dayal (57) was stabbed multiple times by a man he nabbed for allegedly snatching a mobile phone in Mayapuri. Dayal fought for his life for four days, but succumbed to injuries on January 8.

The home minister also inaugurated Delhi Police's 'mPassport Seva' initiative.

"People living in Delhi will no longer have to worry about their passports as they will now get police clearance within five days as against the earlier 15 days," he said.

20-fold increase in seizures in Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland: EC

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

Seizures totalling over Rs 147 crore have been recorded so far in Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland, marking a 20-fold increase in recovery of drugs, liquor and cash meant to induce voters in the run up to the polls, the Election Commission said on Thursday.

While polls were held today in Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland will have assembly elections on February 27.

A special inter-agency team constituted to control illegal drugs resulted in Rs 14.12 crore worth of ganja cultivation being destroyed in Tripura. "The recorded seizures in the three states mark a significant increase with over 20 times increase in seizures as compared to assembly elections in 2018," the poll panel said. During visits to the poll-going states in January, the Election Commission had exhaustively reviewed the preparations with central and state enforcement agencies, the poll panel pointed out.

While announcing the poll schedule, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv

Kumar had stressed on increased vigil and zero tolerance on distribution of inducements during electoral process.

Due to coordinated efforts of enforcement agencies, extensive monitoring, marking of expenditure sensitive constituencies and adequate deployment of field teams, "the results are encouraging" with the three states witnessing seizures of Rs 147.84 crore after announcement of elections which surpasses the seizures made in entire duration of enforcement of Model Code of Conduct in assembly elections, 2018 which was all of Rs 7.24 crore, the EC said.

"Big operations include seizure of 3.52 kg of heroin in Dhalai district amounting 10.58 crore made by police. Seizures of heroin were also reported from East Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya (2.447 Kg) and from Chumoukedima district in Nagaland (2.27 kg), done by Directorate of Revenue Intelligence," it noted.

Similar actions are being taken in the other two poll-going states and the seizures of drugs and psychotropic substances constitute 58 per cent of total seizures reported from the three states.

On failure to appear before it in 2017 case, court issues arrest warrant against Hardik Patel

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SURENDRANAGAR, FEBRUARY 16

A court in Gujarat's Surendranagar district has issued an arrest warrant against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Hardik Patel for failing to appear before it in a 2017 case in which he is accused of violating a government order.

Patel had made a political speech in violation of a government order at a village in the district ahead of the 2017 Gujarat Assembly elections.

Additional chief judicial magistrate D D Shah at Dhrangadhra issued the arrest warrant against Patel for failure to appear the court.

Through its order dated February 2, the court directed the Dhrangadhra taluka police station officer in Surendranagar district to arrest Patel and produce him before the court without fail. The order was received by the police station on February 11, an official confirmed.



A first information report (FIR) was registered at Dhrangadhra taluka police station on January 12, 2018 after Patel and a co-accused Kaushik Patel were found to have violated the condition of the permission granted to them to organise a meeting at Haripar village in the district.

As per the FIR, the duo had sought permission to organise a meeting at the village on November 26, 2017, ahead of the Assembly elections. While they were granted the permission, they alleg-

edly violated the notification issued by the additional district magistrate in a speech delivered during the meeting.

They were booked under sections 37 (3) and 135 of the Gujarat (Bombay) Police Act, 1951, dealing with punishment for disobeying government orders.

Notably, a court at Jamnagar had last week acquitted Patel in a similar case for making a political speech in violation of a government order at a rally at Dhutarpar village in November 2017.

At that time, Patel headed the Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS), a Patidar community organisation that organised state-wide agitation demanding reservation under OBC quota for the youths. The agitation had turned violent.

Patel had joined the Congress in 2019, which he quit ahead of the December 2022 Gujarat polls and was subsequently elected as an MLA on a BJP ticket from Viramgam constituency of Ahmedabad. He faces more than two dozen cases, including two sedition cases, in Gujarat.

NATION

Adani issue

Cong insists on JPC probe, says any other panel amounts to 'exoneration'

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

The Congress on Thursday said a thorough investigation into the Adani issue is necessary, holding that any committee other than a JPC will be nothing but an "exercise in legitimisation and exoneration".

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said the proposal before the Supreme Court for setting up of a committee by the government can hardly ensure transparency.

The party also asked a set of three questions to the government as part of the 'Hum Adani Ke Hain Kaun' series, questioning why it was not initiating investigation into the alleged shell companies linked to the group.

RAMESH SAID GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE ALLEGATIONS, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE "LINK" BETWEEN ADANI AND THE RULING REGIME IS EXAMINED IN THE FULL LIGHT OF DAY BY ELECTED OFFICIALS ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PUBLIC.

As part of the series against the Adani group, the Congress would be holding press conferences in 23 major cities across the country on Friday to highlight the alleged scam involving the group.

He said it had directed the government to give its submissions in this regard by February 17.

"Where the allegations are of close, intertwined proximity between the ruling dispensation, the government of India and the Adani Group, the setting up of a committee with terms of reference

proposed by the Government of India can hardly carry any insignia or reassurance of independence or transparency," he said.

"If the prime minister and his government are to be held accountable, any committee other than a JPC will be nothing but an exercise in legitimisation and exoneration," he claimed.

Ramesh said given the nature of the allegations, it is imperative that the "link" between Adani and the ruling regime is examined in the full light of day by

elected officials accountable to the public.

"An evaluation of the regulatory and statutory regime by experts is in no manner equivalent to an investigation by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). Such a committee, however competently staffed, cannot be a substitute for a thorough investigation into the political-corporate nexus that has come to light in the last two weeks. It simply does not have the authority, resources, or jurisdiction to examine the issues that the Opposition has raised," he said asserting that a JPC probe on Adani issue is necessary.

He said in the past JPC reports have been crucial to prosecutions that have followed and have provided the bedrock for legislative changes to prevent similar manipulative practices, he claimed.

PM to address global business summit today

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address a global business summit on Friday, his office said.

The summit, Economic Times Global Business Summit 2023, is hosted annually by The Times Group, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement on Thursday.

The theme of the summit is "Resilience. Influence. Dominance". The two-day summit will be held on February 17-18, it said.

It will bring together thought leaders, policymakers, academicians and corporate heads on a common platform, seeking to provide solutions to key economic challenges, it said.

More than 200 business leaders will speak across 40 sessions at the summit.

12 cheetahs to be flown in from South Africa on Feb 18

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK NEW DELHI/BHOPAL, FEB 16

Twelve cheetahs -- five of them female -- will be flown in from South Africa on February 18, three years after India first mooted the idea.

A Madhya Pradesh government official told PTI that Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will release the cheetahs into their quarantine enclosures in the Kuno National Park, spread over 750 km in the state's Chambal region. Sources said Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia are expected to be present on the occasion, though confirmation of their presence is awaited.

Under the ambitious Cheetah reintroduction programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had released the first batch of eight spotted felines including five females -- from Namibia into a quarantine enclosure at Kuno on his 72nd birthday on September 17 last year. "A C-17 globemaster of the Indian Air Force (IAF) took off from the Hindon airport at 6 am on Thursday to bring the 12 cheetahs from South Africa," National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) head S P Yadav told a press conference in New Delhi. The cheetahs will embark on the journey to Kuno from the O R Tambo International Airport in Gauteng on Friday evening. The transport aircraft will land at the Gwalior Air Force base



in Madhya Pradesh at 10 am on Saturday. The forward journey will be covered in the IAF's MI-17 helicopters, he said. "Chief Minister Chouhan and Union minister Yadav will release the cheetahs in the quarantine bomas at 11 am," Ramesh Gupta, Madhya Pradesh's head of forest force, told PTI in Bhopal.

The NTCA chief said 10 quarantine bomas have been created at Kuno for the 12 spotted felines.

"Based on the experience with the cheetahs from Namibia, we have improved the bomas. These are even better than those in Namibia and South Africa," he said. S P Yadav said that in South Africa, three of the cheetahs have been kept in Phinda quarantine boma in KwaZulu-Natal Province and nine in Rooiberg Quarantine boma in Limpopo Province. The eight Namibian cheetahs are now in hunting enclosures -- a six square km-area where they can interact with each other -- before being released into the wild.

Cong, BJP, get EC notice for poll day tweets

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

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

The Election Commission said the tweets are violative of election law as they were made in the 48 hour "silence period" which began on Tuesday evening. Voting for the 60-member Assembly in the state began at 7 am on Thursday. They have been given an opportunity "to take corrective action at the earliest". They have also been asked to explain their stands for the violation by 5 pm on Friday.

In its notice to Saikia, the Tripura CEO said, "... an appeal for vote in favour of BJP has been tweeted from your handle at 0950 hours on 16.02.2023. The tweet is in form of a photo containing following message: Unnato Tripura Sreshtho Tripura Vote for BJP." An identical notice to the Tripura BJP said an appeal for vote in favour of BJP was tweeted from BJP handle at 8 am on Thursday. "The tweet followed by a video clip is as under: For a safe and brighter future, vote for BJP", it said. The notice to the Tripura Congress noted that an appeal for votes in favour of INC (Indian National Congress) was tweeted from Tripura Congress' handle at 11.42 am on Thursday. "The tweet is as under: People of Tripura spontaneously casting vote for Congress. This time Congress will come," the notice said.

SC being used as 'tool' by anti-India forces: RSS-affiliated weekly

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

The Supreme Court is allegedly being used as a "tool" by anti-India forces, RSS-linked weekly Panchjanya has said while criticising the apex court for issuing notice to the Centre over pleas challenging its order to block social media links to the BBC documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

After efforts to "save" terrorists in the name of human rights, creating "hurdles" in India's growth in the name of environment, now it is being tried that forces against the country should have the right to do propaganda against it in India itself, an editorial in the latest

edition of the magazine said.

Citing the apex court notice to the Centre on the BBC documentary, the editorial alleged, the "Supreme Court was created for safeguarding the interests of our country but it is being used as a tool by the opponents of India in their efforts to clear their way."

The Supreme Court runs on taxpayers' money and works according to Indian law for the sake of the country, it noted. Dubbing the BBC documentary as a "propaganda" to defame India, the editorial said it is "false" and "based on fiction". The editorial also stated that all anti-national forces take advantage of the provisions of "our democracy, our generosity, and our civilisational standards," against us.

BJP broke alliance in Meghalaya to contest all seats: Shah

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK TURA, FEBRUARY 16

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the BJP broke its alliance with the NPP before the elections in Meghalaya so that it can contest all 60 assembly seats and emerge stronger. Addressing an election rally in the North Tura constituency, he appealed to the people to vote for the BJP, promising to end corruption in the state.

"Due to mismanagement and corruption in the state, in 2022-23, the deficit was Rs 1849 crore. It's a huge amount for a small state like Meghalaya. As per

an RBI report, Meghalaya is developing at the slowest pace in the country," he said. "Make BJP a strong party in the state and we will end corruption," he told the rally. The BJP, which was part of the NPP-led MDA government, is contesting all 60 seats in the February 27 elections.

"We broke alliance (with NPP) in Meghalaya so that the BJP can contest all the seats and emerge as a strong party," he said. Listing the development initiatives taken by the Centre for the region, he said the PM-DevINE scheme has been launched with a budget of Rs 6,000 crore.

WORLD

India privileged to partner with Fiji in nation-building: Jaishankar

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SUVA, FEBRUARY 16

India has been privileged to partner with Fiji in the nation-building efforts in the South Pacific country, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday, underlining that there have been "close and long-standing ties" shared between two countries through people-to-people linkages.

At a joint press event with Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka here, Jaishankar said that India and Fiji have signed and exchanged the visa waiver agreement.

"It will certainly be helpful in encouraging greater travel between our two countries," he said.

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

"We have been privileged to partner with Fiji in its nation-building efforts across various sectors, in working with it in capacity building; in areas like health, education, agriculture; we've



done projects in the Sugarcane industry; we've worked together in renewable energy; and I think today one part of our discussion looked at areas like IT and support for Medium and Small enterprises. So there is really a very very substantive bilateral agenda before us," he said.

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

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

"We agreed to work more closely towards strengthening our multilateral cooperation, working strongly in international organisations. We particularly focused on the Pacific region because again India sees Fiji as a very important partner in the Indo-Pacific."

"We hope to co-host the third Summit of the Forum for India Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) in the coming months and we would certainly value Fiji's presence and leadership on that occasion." "We have great old friends and there is no need to look for new friends. There are no really new friends in this region. We have been friends with India, and we have been friends with China. We'll continue our relationship," the Fijian prime minister said.

Rabuka also appreciated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian government for their incredible support in co-hosting the 12th World Hindi conference in Fiji.

Jaishankar is on a three-day visit to the South Pacific archipelago nation to attend the 12th World Hindi Conference currently being held here.

S Lanka returns to uninterrupted power supply at higher cost

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
COLOMBO, FEBRUARY 16

After a year of load-shedding, Sri Lankans will get continuous power from Thursday, albeit with a hike in tariff in line with the conditions set by the IMF.

The Sri Lankan government's move comes as the debt-hit country aims to secure a much-needed USD 2.9 billion tranche from the Washington-based global lender.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe has directed officials to ensure an uninterrupted power supply to customers after the tariff revision is implemented, a statement from the President's Media Division said. The state power entity said that the power cuts ranging from one to 14 hours from January last year would end on Thursday. A 66 per cent tariff hike would be in effect, the second in the last six months. A 70 per cent rate increase was introduced in August last year.

The government opted for a cost-reflective tariff plan as dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekara said. "This will be a giant step in securing the IMF facility," he said.

The island nation awaits the formal approval of the IMF for a USD 2.9 billion bailout package over four years as it aims to recover from its worst-ever economic crisis after announcing its first-ever default in April last year. The IMF has said that state energy entities Ceylon Electricity Board and the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation should not bank on the Treasury for cash injections to run their operations, Wijesekara said, adding that the exchequer had injected Rs 120 billion into the two institutions.

Imran Khan approaches Prez Alvi for probe against Gen Bajwa

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 16

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan has approached President Arif Alvi and demanded an inquiry against former Army chief Gen (retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa for repeatedly violating terms of his oath, including secretly taping conversations with him during his prime ministership.

In a letter to President Alvi dated February 14, Khan sought stringent action against Bajwa for the violations he had done while serving as Pakistan Army chief.

According to the contents of the letter shared by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, the former premier demanded a probe against Bajwa on four counts. The main grievance was based on Bajwa's alleged remarks published on February 9 in an Urdu column by columnist Javed Chaudhry.

In the letter, Khan wrote that Chaudhry in his column mentioned that the retired general admitted that "we considered Imran Khan dangerous to the country if he continued to stay in power" and urged Alvi to probe Bajwa who he referred to as "we".

"Who gave him (Bajwa) the power to decide that an elected prime minister (Khan) was supposedly a 'danger to the country if he continued to stay in



power," Khan asked, adding that it was a clear violation of Bajwa's oath as given in Third Schedule Article 244 of the Pakistani Constitution.

As per the oath, the officers of the armed forces are not allowed to interfere in politics.

Khan wrote that Bajwa also admitted that he interfered in the affairs of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the national anti-corruption watchdog, to get former finance minister Shaukat Tarin cleared of charges of sleaze.

Khan claimed that admission was also a "clear violation of the Constitutional oath because the Army itself is a department under the Ministry of Defence and civilian official autonomous institutions (NAB) do not come [under] military control".

The former premier wrote that another journalist, Aftab Iqbal, claimed in a YouTube vlog that "General Bajwa told him (Iqbal) in conversation that he had tapes of then-PM Imran Khan's conversations with him".

Like USSR, Communist China will end up on 'ash heap of history': Nikki

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHARLESTON (SOUTH CAROLINA),
FEBRUARY 16

Indian-origin Republican leader Nikki Haley has said that like the erstwhile Soviet Union, Communist China will also end up on the "ash heap of history," as she issued a stern warning to Beijing in her first

public appearance as a 2024 White House hopeful.

Haley, 51, is the two-term Governor of South Carolina and the former US Ambassador to the United Nations made the statement amidst the war of words between the US and China over the recent downing of a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon over American airspace.

2 killed, 6 injured in train blast in Pak

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
LAHORE, FEBRUARY 16

At least two people were killed and nine injured in a blast inside a passenger train in Pakistan's Punjab province on Thursday, according to media reports.

The explosion occurred inside the Jaffar Express when it was on its way to Rawalpindi from Quetta, officials said.

According to The Express Tribune newspaper, police sources said the blast happened inside the washroom of the passenger train when it reached Chichawatni, a district in the province.

Confirming the injuries and casualties, Pakistan Railways spokesperson Babar Ali said the nature of the blast was yet to be determined, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Multan Deputy Superintendent Hammad Hasan said a team from the



counter-terrorism department has arrived at the spot and is collecting evidence.

"As soon as we get some information, we will share it with the media," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

"The Railways has not released any official statement regarding the attack. Police investigations are also underway,"

Hasan said.

The train service on the route has been suspended.

In January, at least eight people were injured on the same train after a blast in a bogie. The explosion damaged two bogies of the train as well as the railway track.

ENTERTAINMENT

Kirti Kulhari to return for 'Khichdi' sequel

Actor Kirti Kulhari is all set to return as Parminder in the sequel to her comedy movie "Khichdi: The Movie".

Kulhari had made her film debut with the 2010 movie, which was based on the popular television show of the same title. Since then, the actor has given critically-acclaimed performances in movies and shows such as "Pink", "Shaaitan", "Uri: The Surgical Strike", "Four More Shots Please!" and "Human".

In a statement, the 37-year-old actor said she is glad to return to the comedy franchise along with rest of the cast -- Supriya Pathak (Hansa), Jamnadas Majhetia (Himanshu), Anang Desai (Babuji) and Rajeev Mehta (Praful).

"'Khichdi 2' is finally happening and it's going to be a hilarious ride. I have so many memories from the first film, from shooting the song 'Chal Chal Bhonsle Market' with JD to doing all the crazy comedy scenes. I am so happy to return as Parminder in 'Khichdi 2' since this is where it all started for me," Kulhari said.

"I have realised over the years what a massive fan-following 'Khichdi' has, especially among kids and families. I am often asked why I don't do comedies anymore so it's lovely to return to the genre with this sequel. This 'Khichdi' will be tastier, spicier and funnier than before," she added.

The actor has already started shooting for the sequel. Besides "Khichdi 2", Kulhari will also be seen in her debut production "Nayeka". **PTI**



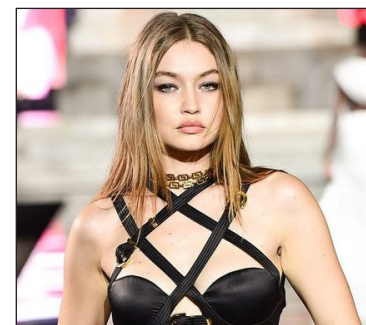
Swara Bhasker marries politician Fahad Ahmad

Actor Swara Bhasker on Thursday announced that she has tied the knot with politician Fahad Ahmad.

The "Veere Di Wedding" star shared the news on her social media accounts and also tagged Ahmad, who is the state president of Samajwadi Party's youth wing -- Samajwadi Yuvjan Sabha.

"Sometimes you search far & wide for something that was right next to you all along. We were looking for love, but we found friendship first. And then we found each other! Welcome to my heart @FahadZirarAhmad It's chaotic but it's yours!" Bhasker captioned a video featuring her husband.

Retweeting the 34-year-old actor's post, Ahmad, 31, wrote: "I never knew chaos can be so beautiful. Thank you for holding my hand love @ReallySwara." Bhasker was last seen in the buddy comedy film "Jahaan Chaar Yaar" (2022).



'Adjustment for life' Gigi on motherhood

An adjustment for life! That's motherhood for model Gigi Hadid. "Having a daughter, although it shifted my life to make me really want to feel more settled, has also really made me appreciate the chaos as well," the 27-year-old told ELLE for its March 2023 issue.

Hadid welcomed her daughter Khai Hadid Malik, with her now her ex-beau Zayn Malik, into the world in September of 2020 — the height of the worldwide pandemic.

"Being at shows and shoots and just being in the city again; being around friends [after] becoming a mom, with everyone also coming out of COVID—I have an appreciation for both sides of it," says Gigi, adding that the shift started even before she gave birth.

Admitting in the interview that the pregnancy itself changed her, Gigi said: "I got pregnant and I really started to think about what I wanted after, when the world opened back up."

"It kept coming back to just a more stabilized schedule where I'm not in a different country every week."

Gigi said she enjoys a close relationship with her daughter. "She obviously sees me in every state and way, and whether she knows it or not, I'm going through and learning through life with her."

Barry Keoghan to lead 'Billy The Kid'

Irish star Barry Keoghan will essay the role of Billy the Kid, the infamous outlaw of 19th century America, in a new feature film.

The movie will be directed by Bart Layton, who earlier worked with Keoghan on 2018 film "American Animals", reported entertainment news outlet Deadline. The project will reportedly lean into the Kid's Irish ancestry and complicated childhood.

Born in New York as Henry McCarty, he was orphaned at the age of 15 when his mother died and his stepfather abandoned him. His first arrest for robbery came a year later, and by the time he was 18, he was wanted for murder after an altercation in Arizona. His notoriety escalated from there, and he was 21 when



Sheriff Pat Garrett shot him to death. Keoghan, who lost his own mother

when he was just 12 years old and grew up in the foster system, said he read a lot

about Billy the Kid during his childhood.

"As we were digging into the project, there were so many things we discovered about his life," the 30-year-old actor told Deadline. Keoghan, currently nominated for an Oscar for his performance in Martin McDonagh's "The Banshees of Inisherin", said he wants to step outside of the legend that was built up by the papers and tackle the pressure he must have felt from those early days.

"He was running his whole life. I felt related to Billy in the sense of him being a mummy's boy, but obviously, I took a different path." "Nevertheless, there's a soul and a vulnerability to Billy that I think it's important to bring, to understand him as a real person rather than the myth that he has become," he added. **PTI**

BUSINESS

IOC contradicts Adani claim over LPG import through its port

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) on Thursday took to Twitter to clarify on its initial pact for hiring Adani Group's port at Gangavaram in Andhra Pradesh for LPG imports in addition to existing pacts with nearby ports, saying there is no take-or-pay agreement.

The statement, which came in response to TMC's Mahua Moitra raising a stink of a scam in hiring of the port facility without a tender, contradicted Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd's earning call presentation that said "MoU signed with IOCL for a take-or-pay contract at Gangavaram Port for building LPG handling facilities." Moitra, reacting to the news based on the statement in the presentation, tweeted: "Brazen theft". Tagging Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and CVC on Wednesday evening, Moitra said, "No tender. No CVC norms. Moving business from Vizag Port to Gangavaram. Skimming from coal, skimming from gas, now skimming from 'chula' in every household. Shame!".



IOC in an unusual move on Thursday sent out a series of tweets to clarify its position. "IOC has just signed a non-binding MoU with APSEZL till now," it said, adding that it floats no tenders for hiring of facilities at ports to import LPG -- a commodity that India is short of production. "There is no take-or-pay liability or any binding agreement, as of now," it said. APSEZL, the ports unit of the Adani Group, had revealed the plan while announcing the company's third quarter financial results on February 7.

Moitra's party is among the opposition parties which have been demanding a probe into allegations a US short seller has levelled against the Adani Group.

Hindenburg Research on January 24 accused the Adani Group of accounting fraud and stock manipulation, allegations that the conglomerate has denied as

IOC CONTRADICTS ADANI AFTER TMC'S MAHUA MOITRA RAISES STINK OF CORRUPTION IN LPG DEAL

"malicious", "baseless" and a "calculated attack on India".

Listed companies of the Adani Group lost over USD 125 billion in market value in the last three weeks. Stocks of most group firms were up on Thursday.

Replying to Moitra's tweet, IOC said it imports LPG at various ports, including Kandla, Mundra, Pipavav, Dahej (in Gujarat), Mumbai and Mangalore (in Karnataka) on West Coast and Haldia (in West Bengal), Vizag (in Andhra Pradesh) and Ennore (in Tamil Nadu) on the East. Two more import terminals are coming up at Kochi in Kerala and Paradip in Odisha. "These will be used in due course of time," IOC said.

"IOC enters into agreements with various ports on a regular basis to enhance capability to supply LPG across India. For hiring of LPG terminals, OMCs evaluate the infrastructure for

suitability for catering to the nearest market at a reasonable cost. No separate tender is invited," it said.

OMCs are Oil Marketing Companies. "LPG demand in the country is on a constant increase. There are 31.5 cr connections after the Ujjwala Scheme; up from 14 cr earlier. OMCs are constantly on the lookout for new port facilities which make commercial sense in Logistics," IOC said.

Providing detailing about the terminal hiring pacts on the east coast, the company said currently there are only two terminals near Vizag -- one by South Asia LPG (a joint venture of France's TotalEnergies and HPCL) and East India Petroleum Limited (a private company).

"SALPG charges Rs 1,050 and EIPL charges Rs 900 as charges with lower capacity vessel unloading capability," IOC said. "EIPL facility has no captive connectivity to be used on a continuous basis. IOC has just signed a non-binding MoU with APSEZ till now. APSEL has offered a price of Rs 1,050 for LPG import terminaling charges with facility of unloading of bigger vessels of refrigerated LPG directly," it added. **PTI**

Budget noted external challenges also: Sitharaman

HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY 16

The Union Budget 2023-'24 has been prepared keeping growth in focus and also external economic challenges such as fuel prices, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday.

In an interactive session on the Budget, she said the focus was on the common man and weaker sections and to ensure that their businesses are supported, their education is supported, the opportunities which are available for them to skill themselves are also given enough provision.

"The priority is to keep the growth momentum as it is and also to make sure

that the further support measures for sustaining growth... And be conscious of the fact that challenges which are extra-neous to India. External challenges will have to be kept in mind. We should be ready for any unpredictable events from outside of our border," she said when asked what the priorities were when the budget was given a final shape. **PTI**



Markets end marginally higher amid volatile trade

MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 16

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

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

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

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

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

From the Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra jumped 5.58 per cent, followed by Nestle, Tata Steel, NTPC, Tata Consultancy Services, Asian Paints, Wipro and Bajaj



Finserv.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance were among the major laggards.

"The domestic market absorbed the buoyancy in the global market, led by IT stocks, while upstream oil companies gained as a result of the slash in windfall tax. After robust jobs data, strong retail sales numbers in the US showed proof of resilience in the US economy amidst concerns over elevated inflation numbers. However, the gains were capped by worries that a stronger economy would attract a tighter monetary policy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.93 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.90 per cent. **PTI**

GST Council to discuss setting up of appellate tribunals

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

The GST Council in its meeting on Saturday is likely to discuss setting up appellate tribunals and mechanism to curb tax evasion in pan masala and gutkha business, sources said.

The report of panel of ministers on Goods and Services Tax (GST) on online gaming and casinos may not come up for deliberation at the February 18 meeting of the GST Council, chaired by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising her state counterparts.

The items, which could not be discussed by the Council in its last meeting on December 17, 2022, would top the agenda of the 49th GST Council meeting on February 18, the sources said. The report of the Group of Ministers (GoM), headed by Odisha finance minister Niranjan Pujari, on checking tax evasion by pan masala and gutkha industry would be taken up for discussion.

The report of the GoM on Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunals (GSTATs) was set up in July last year under the chairmanship of Haryana deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala. **PTI**

CVC withdraws order banning retired staffers to probe graft

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has withdrawn its directive against engaging retired employees in investigating corruption cases, citing "misapprehension in certain quarters".

The probity watchdog had on January 13 asked public sector banks, insurance companies and central government departments not to engage retired employees in investigating corruption cases.

The assertion had come after it

was noticed that some organisations were appointing retired employees as investigating officers, contrary to its existing nearly two-decade-old directive in this regard. The CVC has now issued a fresh circular regarding withdrawal of last month's directive. "It has been brought to the Commission's notice that this circular has raised misapprehension in certain quarters regarding appointment of retired officials to conduct departmental inquiries. The matter has been examined and the above circular is withdrawn," it said in its latest order dated February 15. **PTI**

Gold falls Rs 50; Silver advances Rs 140

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

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

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

Silver, however, jumped Rs 140 to Rs 65,720 per kilogram. "Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 56,270 per 10 gram, down Rs 50 per 10 gram," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities. In the

overseas market, both gold and silver were trading higher at USD 1,840 per ounce and USD 21.69 per ounce. COMEX gold was trading higher in Asian trading hours on Thursday amid a slight pullback in the dollar index, said Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities.

"However, the metal could face headwinds in the next few sessions as recent upbeat data from the US reinforced expectations that the Fed will need to keep pushing interest rates higher to curb high inflation," he added. **PTI**

SPORT

ICC apologises over ranking glitch showing India on top

DUBAI, FEBRUARY 16

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has apologised for the technical glitch, which saw India displace Australia to attain the No.1 spot in the men's Test team rankings on Wednesday.

Hours after India had 'topped' the Test ranking, the ICC issued another updated list that showed Rohit Sharma's side back at No.2. It gave the impression that Rohit's team had briefly claimed the top spot following its innings and 132-run win over the Pat Cummins-led Australia in Nagpur. On Thursday, the game's global body admitted the error and said in a statement that the "ICC acknowledges, for a short period of time on February 15,



2023 that, due to a technical error, India were erroneously displayed as the No.1 Test team on the ICC website.

"We apologise for any inconvenience caused." "Australia remain on top of the ICC Test Team Rankings after the latest update following the conclusion of Zimbabwe's two-match series against West Indies." "Australia will head into the second Test against India in Delhi, starting on Friday, January 17, as the No.1-ranked team with 126 rating points, 11 above India's 115," the ICC statement added. "India are vying for a place in the final of the ICC World Test Championship 2021-23. Australia are also in contention for a place in the final of the marquee event, which will be played at The Oval in London from 7 to 11 June." **PTI**

Denial of Asia Cup hosting

An angry Afridi fumes at BCCI

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

Pakistan's former flamboyant all-rounder Shahid Afridi feels "even the ICC won't be able to do anything in front of the BCCI" as far as hosting the 2023 Asia Cup in his country is concerned.

The BCCI's refusal to play in Pakistan owing to the political tension between the neighbours has cast doubts over the tournament taking place across the border later this year.

The continental tourney is significant as it is scheduled just before the ODI World Cup, which India is hosting and Pakistan has threatened to boycott in a tit-for-tat riposte.

"I have no idea, will India visit Pakistan for the Asia Cup? Will we boycott the ODI World Cup in India? But we need to take a stand at some point or the other," Afridi told 'Samaa TV'. "In this case ICC's role becomes crucial, they should come forward, but let me say it even ICC won't be able to do anything in front of BCCI," he added.

Afridi, one of cricket's biggest entertainers of his time with his power-hitting abilities and quick leg-spinners, said the BCCI is flexing its muscles because it has made itself "that strong".

"If anyone is unable to stand on his own feet and then the decision to make such strong calls is not easy. They have to look at plenty of things.

India agar aankhe dikha raha hain (If India is flexing its muscles) or taking such strong stance, then they have made themselves that strong.

"So they are able to talk like this, otherwise they wouldn't have the courage. At the end it's about making yourself strong and then take decisions."

Afridi's remarks came following seasoned India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's take on the contentious issue. **PTI**

Ranji Final

Saurashtra edge over Bengal on day one

KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 16

Bengal's dream of winning a Ranji Trophy after more than three decades suffered a setback as left-arm Saurashtra pace duo of Jaydev Unadkat and Chetan Sakariya rattled the home team's top-order to bundle them out for a paltry 174 on the opening day of the summit clash here on Thursday.

It would have been more embarrassing for Bengal but spin all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed (69) and wicketkeeper Abhishek Porel (50) saved the hosts from the blushes with gritty half-centuries.

The duo showed the way for the top-order in a 101-run stand for the seventh wicket and batted close to four hours to frustrate Saurashtra. But they looked in a sense of urgency and took risks as Saurashtra wrapped up Bengal innings with left-arm spinner Dharmendrasingh Jadeja (2/19) scalping two wickets.

At close on day one, Saurashtra were 81 for 2, trailing Bengal by 93 runs.

In-form opener Harvik Desai (38), who has more than 600 runs this season, was at the crease with night watchman Sakariya (2). The duo survived some late charge by Bengal pace duo of Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar to bring the deficit under 100. With their leading run-getter of the season Aprit Vasavada (826 runs at 75.06) yet to come along with the prolific duo of Sheldon Jackson (529) and Chirag Jani (509), Saurashtra would definitely fancy a first innings



UNADKAT, SAKARIYA RATTLE BENGAL; HAND SAURASHTRA EDGE IN RANJI FINAL

lead. Bengal bowlers looked pedestrian at start but Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar took some purchase in the fag end of the day to dismiss Jay Gohil (6) and Vishvaraj Jadeja (25) respectively.

Making a comeback after being released from the Test side, Unadkat (3/44) produced a terrific opening spell of 5-2-7-2, while Sakariya (3/33) made the ball talk in initially to reduce Bengal to 17 for 4 inside 31 minutes.

Bengal lost half of their side at the score of 34 for 5 in one hour and 13 minutes with third seamer Chirag Jani (2/33) also making good use of the lively Eden surface. After winning a good toss on a green top, Unadkat along with fellow left-arm pacer Sakariya set the tone in the morning session, dismissing their top-four batters inside 17 runs. **PTI**

Top-order worries dog India ahead of second test today

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

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

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

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

Save skipper Rohit Sharma, who was regal in attack and classical in defence during his hundred on a slow turner in Nagpur, the others failed to get going in

the opener. Besides Rahul, the list of strugglers includes the peerless Virat Kohli and, to an extent, Pujara. Kohli is leaving no stone unturned to up the ante while facing the spinners. Round two of Kohli versus Nathan Lyon and Todd Murphy could be equally enticing.

Rahul and his woes

Time is running out for Rahul as Virat Kohli's heir apparent, Shubman Gill, is waiting in the wings despite being in prime form. Having wasted so many opportunities in his 46-Test career with a below par average of 34, it will be interesting to see what call is taken by the Indian team management if the 30-year-old Karnataka man endures another failure before the squad for the last two Tests is announced. **PTI**

Chetan Sharma's fate hangs in balance

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 16

Chetan Sharma's position as chairman of national selection committee has become untenable after his alleged 'loose talk' during a sting operation but the BCCI might give him a chance to defend himself before taking a final decision on his fate.

The immediate question doing the rounds in the BCCI is whether he would be allowed to attend the next selection committee meeting before the squad of the third and fourth Test against Australia is announced.

It is understood that Chetan being caught in a sting operation hasn't gone down too well with the top brass of the BCCI but the incident might have a far reaching impact on the relationship



between media on one hand and the Indian team and selectors on the other.

"No player or selector will be comfortable on sharing a cordial relationship even with well meaning journalists after this sting as the trust factor has been compromised," a senior BCCI source PTI on conditions of anonymity.

While Chetan's claims are mostly been taken as loose talk and stuff that was already known in cricket fraternity, he had certainly lost trust and respect of the players. "Chetan spoke a bit too much. None of the top India players talk to him. Have you seen him speak to Rahul Dravid, Virat Kohli or Rohit Sharma publicly in any training session. He would stand in one corner during T20 World Cup in Australia and no one bothered to speak to him," another BCCI source who was present in Australia said.

It has been learnt that Chetan might be given a chance to defend himself but whether he would be able to sit across the table with Rohit Sharma or Hardik Pandya is the question. The bigger question is whether the players would want to have any engagement with him. **PTI**