

Pakistan erupts in violence as Imran faces imminent arrest

LAHORE, MARCH 14

Protests broke out in several cities across Pakistan Tuesday after Imran Khan asked his supporters to "come out" for real freedom and continue the struggle even if he is killed or arrested, amid clashes between the police and his party workers who gathered outside his residence here to foil his arrest.

Khan's video message was released by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on social media as police arrived at his Zaman Park residence to arrest him in the Toshakhana case. Police fired tear gas and used water cannons to disperse Khan's supporters, who reportedly hurled stones at policemen, resulting in injuries.

"If something happens to me and I am sent to jail or if I am killed, you have to prove that you will struggle without Imran Khan and not accept the slavery of these thieves and of the one person who has been making decisions for the country," 70-year-old Khan said in the video.

Soon after his speech, protests broke out in Islamabad, Peshawar, Karachi, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Vehari, Peshawar, Quetta, and Mianwali. Khan has been in the crosshairs for buying gifts, including an expensive Graff wristwatch he had received as the premier at a discounted price from the state depository called Toshakhana and selling them for profit.



Supporters of ex-Pak PM Imran Khan throw stones during clashes with police in Lahore on Tuesday. AP/PTI

TV footage showed police slowly approaching the Zaman Park residence of Khan behind an armoured vehicle that was dispersing his supporters with a water cannon. Khan's supporters pelted stones at policemen. The Islamabad police said that five of its officials had been injured after stones were pelted from the roof of Zaman Park. "Despite the pelting of stones, police refrained from taking extreme measures," Islamabad police said on Twitter.

PTI leader Shireen Mazari shared a video in which tear gas could be seen entering Khan's residence.

Intermittent tear gas shelling is ongoing

at Zaman Park as police is currently camped out at a security barrier outside the neighbourhood. Khan's supporters, however, have laid siege to the path leading to his residence. PTI's deputy leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi earlier said that the party leadership is ready to find out a "possible way out" to avert bloodshed.

Khan's party moved the Islamabad High Court against the arrest warrants issued in the Toshakhana case. Islamabad High Court Chief Justice Aamer Farooq fixed the hearing for Wednesday while rejecting the party's request to conduct the hearing today. **PTI**

Facebook fires 10,000 more staff

NEW YORK, MARCH 14

Facebook's parent company Meta announced on Tuesday it will fire another 10,000 people, implementing a second round of jobs cuts after it slashed 11,000 positions in November last year, to improve its financial performance in a "difficult environment". Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg said in a post that overall "we expect to reduce our team size by around 10,000 people and to close around 5,000 additional open roles that we haven't yet hired."

In November 2022, the firm let go of 11,000 staff members.

The company has said that in its "Year of Efficiency", the company aims to make itself "a better technology company and to improve our financial performance in a difficult environment so we can execute our long-term vision." Since January 2022, the tech industry has laid off hundreds of thousands of workers, including thousands of Indian IT professionals.

Outlining the "timeline" of its restructuring going forward, Zuckerberg said over the next couple of months, organisation leaders will announce restructuring plans focused on flattening "our orgs, cancelling lower priority projects, and reducing our hiring rates."

"With less hiring, I've made the difficult decision to further reduce the size of our recruiting team. We will let recruiting team members know tomorrow whether they're impacted. We expect to announce restructurings and layoffs in our tech groups in late April, and then our business groups

FACEBOOK'S PARENT COMPANY META ANNOUNCED ON TUESDAY IT WILL FIRE ANOTHER 10,000 PEOPLE

in late May," Zuckerberg said.

"In a small number of cases, it may take through the end of the year to complete these changes. Our timelines for international teams will also look different, and local leaders will follow up with more details," he said.

He added that "In our Year of Efficiency, we will make our organisation flatter by removing multiple layers of management. As part of this, we will ask many managers to become individual contributors. We'll also have individual contributors report into almost every level, not just the bottom so information flow between people doing the work and management will be faster."

He said that for most of the company's history, it saw rapid revenue growth year after year and had the resources to invest in many new products.

"But last year was a humbling wake-up call. The world economy changed, competitive pressures grew, and our growth slowed considerably. We scaled back budgets, shrunk our real estate footprint, and made the difficult decision to lay off 13 per cent of our workforce."

Noting that at this point, "we should prepare ourselves for the possibility that this new economic reality will continue for many years", he said. **PTI**



Lawrence Bishnoi claims to be nationalist in 'live' interview

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, MARCH 14

Claiming himself to be a patriot and a nationalist who can do anything for the country, dreaded gangster Lawrence Bishnoi in an interview claimed that he did not have any prior knowledge about the murder of popular Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala.

In a sensational development Bishnoi's interview was aired "live" by a private television news channel today. The interview ran for one full hour. Inquiries however revealed that the interview in all probability was recorded earlier and shown as "live" as is the standard practice of television channels and web portals.

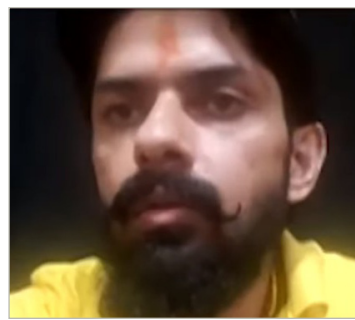
However, when, where and how the

interview was recorded is still a mystery. Bishnoi is currently lodged in high security Bathinda jail where jammers are installed and there is no mobile frequency. He is facing several charges under cases of heinous crimes including that of the murder of Sidhu Moosewala.

During the course of interview Bishnoi claimed ignorance about the assassination of Moosewala, but suggested that his boys

may have avenged the killing of their three friends including Vicky Midukhera.

While denying any role in threats being issued to Moosewala's father, Bishnoi did not show any remorse over his killing. At the same time, he said, he had nothing to do with his father. He even suggested that Moosewala's father wanted to fight elections and was hence raking up the



issue about threats to his life.

The gangster denied any links with Khalistanis saying he was a true nationalist and could do anything for the nation.

Bishnoi, in another bold assertion even hinted that popular film star Salman Khan was still on their target, as he had not apologized to the Bishnoi community for killing the black buck, which is held sacred by the community.

WHILE DENYING ANY ROLE IN THREATS BEING ISSUED TO MOOSEWALA'S FATHER, BISHNOI DID NOT SHOW ANY REMORSE OVER HIS KILLING

He said he had nourished this grievance against Khan from childhood. He said, if he apologised to the community in a temple, he would forgive him (Khan).

He appeared to be reconciled to his fate, saying he had spent nine years in jail after being charged with attempt to murder. He also admitted to having sent his brother abroad on a fake passport.

During the course of the interview it was being suggested as if it was being done through video-conferencing. However, those familiar with visual

media suggested that the interview was very much recorded properly with proper background and flawless recording.

Newspaper reports quoted the jail department denying that the interview was conducted while Bishnoi was lodged in the Bathinda jail. "Rumours are doing rounds that the interview was recorded from inside the Bathinda Jail. This is to clarify that the rumours are baseless and that this video is neither from Bathinda Jail where the prisoner is currently confined nor from any other jail in Punjab".

The statement added, "it is further clarified that this prisoner is at present confined in the High Security Zone of Bathinda jail where strict surveillance is kept over his activities 24x7".

Congress legislator Sukhpal Singh Khaira has sought an inquiry asking how such a gangster could be interviewed in such detail by a television channel

PUNJAB

Punjabi University financial crisis

State govt to give Rs 30 cr grant per month

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
PATIALA, MARCH 14

The Punjab government will give Rs 30 crore per month (Rs 360 crore annually) as government grant to the cash-strapped Punjabi University, Patiala.

University officials said the decision was conveyed during Vice-Chancellor Professor Arvind's meeting with Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema. Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Principal Secretary (Finance) and Principal Secretary (Higher Education) were also present in the meeting held on Monday.

On March 10, when the Bhagwant Mann-led AAP government had pre-

WHEN THE BHAGWANT MANN-LED AAP GOVERNMENT HAD PRESENTED ITS FIRST STATE BUDGET, THE UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES HAD RAISED A QUESTION OVER THE CURTAILING OF THE UNIVERSITY BUDGET

sented its first state budget, the university authorities had raised a question over the curtailment of the university budget, and claimed that it was difficult to run the cash-strapped university.



Punjabi University Vice-Chancellor Prof Arvind during a meeting with Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Tuesday.

Neglect of varsity AAP's anti-Punjab agenda: SAD

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH MARCH 14

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sardar Sukhbir Singh Badal today blasted the AAP government in Punjab for slashing the annual budgetary grant of the Punjabi University Patiala from Rs 200 crore to Rs 164 crore instead of increasing it as required by the varsity. The AAP "drama party" is now trying to defuse the outrage against its decision by making yet another false promise to revise the allocation," he asserted.

The university is already under a debt of Rs 150 crore and is not in a position to pay salaries on time. Badal asked the govt to accept VC Professor Arvind's plea for increasing the budget of the university from Rs 164 crore to Rs 360 crore.

Badal also rubbished as "another fake commitment" the belated promise of the state government to revise the allocation. "If the government has agreed to revise the allocation within days of presenting the budget, what had stopped it from including these in the original budgetary allocations in the first place?," he questioned.

Badal said that the utterly shabby treatment meted out to an academic edifice which symbolised the commitment of Punjabis to their language, culture and their religious legacy.

NSUI stages protest against state govt

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
PATIALA, MARCH 14

The members of the Punjab NSUI took to the streets on Tuesday to beg commuters for funds to symbolise the dire need for funding in their university. They stood at a busy intersection holding up signs that read "Please Help Fund Our Education" and "Education is Our Future." NSUI leaders said they were forced to take this step because of the chronic cut in the funding of the university by the government. The members received a mixed response from commuters, with some offering donations while others criticising the government for failing to give



adequately funds to the university. The students thanked those who donated and promised to use the funds judiciously.

"We believe this is a direct result of the government's failure to prioritise education and invest in the youth which is the future of Punjab," said NSUI president Isherpreet Singh Sidhu.

He demanded that the state government must take immediate action to provide adequate funding to Punjabi University and all other universities across Punjab.

Sidhu also pointed out that they were aware that begging for funds was not a sustainable solution to the problem, but they wanted to use this symbolic gesture to send a clear message; they will never

abandon their university even if the government does.

"The lack of funding has had a drastic impact on the university. It has resulted in the reduction of course offerings, inadequate resources, and understaffed departments. It has also limited the opportunities available to students, including scholarships, research funding, and internships," said Sidhu.

He added that the NSUI will continue to ferociously advocate for adequate funding and stand up for the rights of the students. "We will work tirelessly to ensure that our university remains a world-class institution that provides students with the education they deserve," he said.

G-20 Summit

Punjab Police conduct raids at 300 hideouts of gangsters

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, MARCH 14

In view of the forthcoming G-20 meeting at Amritsar, Punjab Police conducted a special cordon and search operation (CASO) under which raids were conducted at locations and hideouts related with the foreign based gangsters as well as their associates.

The CASO was conducted on directions of Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav in all the 28 police districts with an aim to make Punjab a safe and secure.

Giving more details about the operation, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Law and Order Arpit Shukla said that CPs/SSPs were directed to personally monitor these raids and make sufficient numbers of police teams so that raids could be carried out simultaneously. The raids were planned after the questioning of recently arrested gangsters and criminals, he added.

Around 100 parties of Punjab police, involving over 1,000 police personnel, were deployed to conduct these raids at suspected places and hideouts of foreign based gangsters, he said, adding that over 300 houses and other shelters were thoroughly checked by the Police teams.

ADGP Shukla said that police teams have conducted thorough searches at the houses and other premises, and also collected data from mobile phones and other electronic devices, which will be sent for forensic examinations. He said that several persons have also been detained for further verification and incriminating material has been seized from their possession, which is being further examined.

He said that the police teams also checked arms licences and questioned people about the sourcing of ammunition, besides, gathering travel details of foreign-based family members, bank transactions from abroad, and western union and property details for further examination.

PM security breach

Punjab govt to send action taken report to Centre

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 14

The Punjab government will soon send an action taken report to the Centre over a security breach during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state in January last year, a top official here said on Tuesday.

The action being contemplated is based on the findings submitted by a Supreme Court-appointed committee which probed the security breach during Modi's visit.

The Centre had recently sent a missive to the state regarding the matter.

"We have received the report of the committee (court-appointed), which has held some officers responsible for the lapses in security. We will soon send the action taken report (to the Centre) in this regard," Chief Secretary V K Janjua told reporters here.

Asked whether nine state police officials, including a former DGP, have been

reportedly indicted in the report and if action will be taken against all, the chief secretary said, "Whatever action is deemed as per law will be taken".

Asked whether charge sheets will be filed against these officials, Janjua said, "Whatever action under the law has to be taken will be taken".

The file will go to the chief minister for his approval before action is initiated, he said in response to a question.

To another question, he said punishments to the erring officials can include stopping increments, demotion and in worse case dismissal if they are still in service.

However, he said everyone will be given a hearing to defend themselves.

To a question, he said the lapses on part of the erring officials have been elaborated in the report.

On January 5, 2022, Prime Minister Modi's convoy was stranded on a flyover due to a blockade by protesters in

Ferozpur after which he returned from Punjab without attending any event, including a rally.

Punjab's Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema told reporters that action will be taken against the erring officials in the matter.

Targeting the Congress, Cheema also said the then Charanjit Singh Channi-led Congress government had failed in ensuring security of the prime minister.

The BJP had also targeted the previous Congress government in Punjab over the incident and after the apex court-appointed committee gave its report last year, many party leaders had accused the Channi government of playing with the prime minister's security.

The top court on January 12 last year had appointed the committee to probe the breach, saying these questions cannot be left to "one-sided inquiries" as they needed "judicially trained independent minds" to investigate. **PTI**

PUNJAB

3 die in Ludhiana factory fire

LUDHIANA, MARCH 14

Three persons died and two others were critical after a fire broke out in a hosiery factory here on Tuesday, police said. While two persons died of asphyxiation, the third was charred to death, they added.

The fire incident took place in Ram Nagar locality of civil lines, police said. It took more than three hours for the fire department personnel to bring the flames under control, they said, adding nine fire tenders of the Ludhiana municipal fire brigade were rushed to the site to control the blaze.

Flames and smoke were visible from a long distance for some time. Two persons lost their lives due to asphyxiation, Commissioner of Police,



Ludhiana, Mandeep Singh Sidhu said.

He said the deceased were employees of the factory. Station House Officer of police station-8 Inspector Vijay Kumar said one person was charred to death due to the fire. Kumar, who along with other officials was present at the site to oversee the rescue operation, said firefighters noticed some workers inside the factory and evacuated them.

They were rushed to a private hospital where two of them were declared brought dead, he said. Two others were struggling for life, hospital authorities said. Raw material and goods lying in the factory were gutted. Cracks also appeared in the building due to the fire.

Officials said preliminary investigation revealed that an electric short-circuit could have caused the fire.

Ex-Cong MLA Vaid booked under Excise Act by VB

LUDHIANA, MARCH 14

Punjab Vigilance Bureau registered a case under the Excise Act against former Congress MLA Kuldeep Singh Vaid on Tuesday after liquor bottles more than the permissible limit were recovered from his house, officials said.

Ludhiana Range Senior Superintendent of Police (VB) Ravinder Pal Singh Sandhu said 73 bottles of imported liquor were found during a raid at Vaid's house.

Vaid had a licence to keep some bottles but the recovery was beyond the permissible limit, he said.

Seven liquor bottles meant for sale only in Chandigarh were also found there, the official said, adding that the case has been registered at the civil lines police station.

Meanwhile, a technical team of the vigilance bureau from Chandigarh continued their investigation against Vaid in a disproportionate assets case for the second day on Tuesday.

The technical team was verifying the documents and valuation of a multi-storied complex of the bureaucrat-turned-politician on Pakhowal road.

Vaid, who represented the Gill assembly segment here in the previous Vidhan Sabha, served as the deputy commissioner of Moga and as additional chief administrator at Greater Ludhiana Development Authority. He also served as Ludhiana's district transport officer.

He was also appointed chairman of the Punjab State Warehousing Corporation when Charanjit Singh Channi was the chief minister of Punjab. PTI

Jauramajra starts Punjab tour

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, MARCH 14

The Punjab Government is boosting the horticulture and food processing sectors in order to make horticulture, a profitable venture, bring in crop diversification and increase farmers' income. This would lead to employment avenues at doorsteps for the youth. This was disclosed by Horticulture and Food Processing Minister Chetan Singh Jauramajra while visiting an exhibition of flowers at village Niyamatpura in Malerkotla District.

The minister said that a sum of Rs 253 crore has been provisioned in the budget of 2023-24 (FY) for encouraging horticulture and 5 horticulture estates are being developed at Ludhiana, Gurdaspur, Patiala, Bathinda and Faridkot at a cost of Rs 40 crore. Under the agriculture infrastructure fund scheme chalked out for business projects related to horticulture, Rs 2500 crore worth projects have been received.

In order to financially help the people engaged in flower cultivation besides boosting the seed production, making good the deficiency of storage labourers, sowing and harvesting of the seeds, an assistance of Rs 35000 per hectare is being given in respect of 2.5 acres land holding.

TTE held for urinating on woman passenger in Akal Takht Express

AMRITSAR, MARCH 14

After cases of drunk flyers urinating on co-passengers, an off-duty train ticket examiner has been accused of relieving himself on a woman on the Kolkata-Amritsar Akal Takht Express. The alleged incident occurred on the night of March 13.

Munna Kumar, the accused train ticket examiner (TTE), has been arrested, a Government Railway Police (GRP) official said on Tuesday. He was said to be under the influence of alcohol. A resident of Begusarai in Bihar,

the accused was posted as a TTE in Saharanpur, the official said.

Kumar was not on duty at the time of the alleged incident.

Navratna Gautam, the GRP inspector in Lucknow, told PTI that according to the complaint lodged by the passenger, he and his wife were travelling from Kiul in Bihar to Amritsar.

On the night of March 13, Kumar allegedly urinated on his wife's head, he said. Kumar was arrested from Charbagh station after a complaint was lodged with the GRP (Charbagh Lucknow), Gautam said.

He added that a probe will be conducted to ascertain if the accused was drunk at the time of the alleged incident.

Last week, an inebriated student allegedly urinated while asleep in his seat on an American Airlines flight. It somehow leaked and fell on a fellow passenger, who complained to the flight crew.

On November 26, a man identified as Shankar Mishra allegedly urinated in a drunken state on an elderly woman on a New York-Delhi Air India flight. In another case, a man allegedly urinated on the blanket of a female co-passenger on a Paris-Delhi flight on Dec 6. PTI

NCSC panel seeks report on suicide by MBBS intern

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, MARCH 14

Taking a strong note of the suicide by an MBBS intern at a hostel of Sri Guru Ram Das Medical College in Amritsar, Punjab, after being upset over alleged casteist remarks by teachers, the National Commission for

Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has issued a notice to the district administration and sought an action-taken report on priority.

As per information by the NCSC from media reports, the victim's mother alleged that her daughter was upset over casteist remarks being passed by the college teachers who used to say that they would not let her become a doctor.

Taking action, on Monday the NCSC Commission, on the orders of its Chairman Vijay Sampla, asked the Divisional Commissioner (Jalandhar Division), Inspector General of Police (Border Range), Deputy Commissioner (Amritsar) and the Commissioner of Police to investigate the matter and to submit the report immediately, through post or email, based

on the facts and information on the action taken on the allegation or the matter.

Sampla cautioned the officers that if the action-taken report is not received, the commission might exercise the powers of the civil court conferred on it under Article 338 of the Constitution and issue a summons for personal appearance before the commission in Delhi.

8,100 arms licences recommended for suspension, cancellation

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 14

Recommendation has been given for suspension or cancellation of 8,100 arms licences in Punjab, a top state police official said on Tuesday. More than 800 of these have already been cancelled, the official added.

"We are reviewing the licences, of which 8,100 have been recommended for cancellation and suspension. Of these, over 800 have already been cancelled and nearly 1,460 have been suspended. All licences are being reviewed. The

process is in pipeline and it is an ongoing process," Inspector General of Police (headquarters) Sukhchain Singh Gill told reporters here.

Asked whether recommendation has also been given for arms licences cancellation or suspension of any aides of Waris Punjab Dhe chief and radical Amritpal Singh, Gill said, "I don't have specific knowledge, but the review is part of exercise to review all licences. All licences are being reviewed and wherever violations are coming to fore, these are being cancelled or suspended."

Last month, Amritpal and his supporters, some of them brandishing swords and guns, broke through barricades and barged into the Ajnala police station on the outskirts of the Amritsar city, clashed with police for the release of one of Amritpal's aide.

Responding to another question, he said 170 FIRs have so far been registered for glorification of weapons in the state. Punjab has a total of 3.73 lakh arms licences with Gurdaspur leading a list of districts in the state, the state assembly was informed on Saturday.

The state government has cancelled 813 arms licences and of them, 89 belonged to persons who were having criminal background, it was informed.

According to a reply to an unstarred question on details of arms licences in Punjab in the state assembly, there are a total of 3,73,053 arms licences in the state. Gurdaspur district had maximum 40,789 licences of weapons, followed by 29,353 in Bathinda, 28,340 in Patiala, 26,756 in Moga, 23,201 in Amritsar (Rural) and 21,432 in Ferozepur, accord-

ing to the reply.

The maximum number of arms licences were cancelled in 235 in Mohali, followed by 199 in Pathankot, 87 in Ludhiana (rural) and 84 in Faridkot, as per the reply. All 27 arms licences cancelled in Amritsar were held by persons having criminal background, according to the reply.

Notably, the Aam Aadmi Party government in November last year had banned public display of firearms and songs promoting a gun culture and violence. PTI

PDP chief hits back at LG, makes veiled attack on NC

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
RAJOURI, MARCH 14

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday hit back at Lt Governor Manoj Sinha over his remarks that previous governments in Jammu and Kashmir provided jobs to terrorists and their families, saying this "is not our tradition" but giving employment to "hooligans" might have been a custom in Uttar Pradesh.

"LG sahab has come from Uttar Pradesh and was probably speaking about his experience there. There might have been a tradition to provide jobs to mafia and hooligans in Uttar Pradesh but that is not our tradition," the former chief minister said in Rajouri when asked by reporters about his statement at a function in Jammu on Monday.

Mehbooba also attacked the BJP, alleging it has created a fear psychosis in Jammu and Kashmir by making random arrests and is using the same policy in the rest of the country to silence the voice of the Opposition.

In a veiled attack on the National Conference (NC), the Congress and the PDP, Lt Governor (LG) Sinha on Monday had said previous governments had provided jobs to terrorists and their family members, while his administra-



Mehbooba visits terror-hit Dhangri

JAMMU: PDP president and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday visited Dhangri village of Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, where terrorists killed seven villagers and injured 14 others early this year.

The former J and K chief minister expressed condolences to the families of the victims and shared their grief, a PDP spokesperson said.

tion has made the recruitment process transparent to ensure jobs are given to meritorious students only.

"What can they say who provided jobs to terrorists and their family members? They have no right to speak against the recruitment process when they have made one lakh back door appointments.

The time has gone when the jobs were selling in shops," the LG had said.

Earlier addressing a public meeting in Rajouri, Mehbooba claimed that "Jammu and Kashmir is going through a very difficult phase and people are frightened to speak on any issue".

The government in 2019 had abrogated the article, which granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and bifurcated in into union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Defending her party's alliance with the BJP in 2014, Mehbooba said PDP patron and former chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed took the difficult decision in view of the people's mandate to the BJP in Jammu in the 2014 assembly elections.

"It was not the PDP which brought the BJP to power in J&K...The fact is that we implemented the party's (PDP) agenda and did not allow the BJP to run its agenda," she said.

"Our efforts kept Article 370 safe and after the fall of the government, the BJP abrogated Article 370 which came like an earthquake, and its aftershocks are still rattling J&K in the form of various laws like property tax," Mehbooba said and added that the PDP did not allow the BJP to "bulldoze houses".

'Selling' MBBS seats in Pakistan; ED searches at 10 places in Kashmir

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR, MARCH 14

The Enforcement Directorate has carried out searches at 10 places across four districts in the Kashmir valley as part of its ongoing probe against conspirators involved in arranging admissions for money in various courses, including MBBS in Pakistan, to fund terror activities, an official said.

The ED's Srinagar Zonal office carried out the search recently under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) at 10 locations in Srinagar, Budgam, Kupwara and Anantnag districts, the official said.

He said the raids were conducted in respect of an investigation relating to the involvement of conspirators who were hand-in-glove with some educational consultancies and manipulating or arranging admission of J-K students in various professional courses, including MBBS in Pakistan-based colleges, institutions and universities.

The official said the ED initiated probe on the basis of the FIR registered under various sections of UA(P) Act and the Indian Penal Code, and chargesheet filed by counter-intelligence Kashmir, Srinagar,

against various accused for their involvement in accumulating funds for terror activities on the pretext of admission of J-K students in various professional courses in Pakistan-based institutions.

"PMLA investigation has also revealed that many times, these admissions are actually part of the Technical Assistance Programme (TAP) and are offered to foreign students either free or at nominal charges on an annual basis.

"However, hefty charges were being levied on the students and the extra money so earned, was ploughed into supporting terrorism in myriad ways on the instructions of Pakistan-based handlers as well as those sitting in Jammu and Kashmir," the official said.

As of now, the official said proceeds of crime to the tune of about Rs 1 crore have been determined and six people have been identified who had been admitted to various institutions in Pakistan by such elements.

"During the course of search operations, documents related to immovable properties and highly incriminating material, including digital devices related to the scam, have been recovered and seized," the official said, adding further investigation is in progress.

Budgam murder

Congress demands exemplary punishment for accused

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SRINAGAR MARCH 14

Jammu and Kashmir Congress on Tuesday condemned the killing of a woman in Budgam district and demanded exemplary punishment to the accused.

The "shameful" incident has shook the conscience of the society and it should work as a wake up call, the JKPCCC said in a statement.

The remarks came after a woman was murdered in Soibugh area of the central Kashmir district and her body cut into several parts which were hid at different locations.

Police has already arrested a person in connection with the murder.

Expressing deep shock and anguish over the gruesome killing of the woman in Soibugh area, the Congress termed the incident a black spot on the society's face.

Though there was a massive outcry as expected against this heinous crime, the society needs to take collective efforts to

EXPRESSING DEEP SHOCK AND ANGUISH OVER THE GRUESOME KILLING OF THE WOMAN IN SOIBUG AREA, THE CONGRESS TERMED THE INCIDENT A BLACK SPOT ON THE SOCIETY'S FACE

contain the crime, it said.

Besides, the administration, especially J-K Police, must keep a vigil over such activities and contain these with iron hands, the statement said.

JKPCCC appealed to the people to wake up before crime engulfs the entire society leading to the ugliest situation.

The party extended deepest condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for their courage to bear the loss.

Kashmiriyat was a symbol of humanity and services, but, unfortunately it has received serious setbacks due to some handful of black sheep roaming in the society, the JKPCCC said.

Govt nod for amendment of Pharmacy Act

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
JAMMU, MARCH 14

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Tuesday gave its nod for the amendment of the Pharmacy Act, a move which will benefit medical assistant-trained persons and other qualified people to safeguard their future and provide them better career prospects in the field of medicine, an official spokesman said.

The Administrative Council (AC), which met here under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, gave its assent for amendment in Section 32-C of the Pharmacy Act, 1948 (Central Act)-Introduction of draft Bill, he said.

He said the decision aims for amendment in Section 32-C, inserted in Pharmacy Act, 1948 (Central Act) through an Adaptation Order under S.O No: 3465(E), dated October 5, 2020.

"The instant proposal is for amend-

ment in the existing Section 32-C of the Pharmacy Act, 1948 (Central Act) to the effect that notwithstanding anything contained in Section 32, any person whose name has been entered in the register of pharmacists maintained under the Jammu and Kashmir Pharmacy Act, 2011 (1955 AD) or possesses qualification medical assistant prescribed under the said Act shall be deemed to have been entered in the register of pharmacists prepared.

JK receives Rs 1,547 cr investment in 2022-23: MoS Home

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

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Rai said the government expects investments to further increase in the next five years in various important sectors like manufacturing, services, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, agro-



based industry, and tourism, including film and medical.

During 2022-23 till January, a record investment of Rs 1,547.87 crore has been

received by the Union Territory and this investment during the current financial year is the highest ever compared to any of the previous financial years, he said replying to a written question.

The minister said Jammu and Kashmir had received investment of Rs 376.76 crore in 2021-22, Rs 412.74 crore in 2020-21, Rs 296.64 crore in 2019-20, Rs 590.97 crore in 2018-19 and Rs 840.55 crore in 2017-18.

He said the government of Jammu and Kashmir has already received investment proposals worth Rs 64,058 crore.

REGION

JK receives Rs 1,547 cr investment in 2022-23: MoS Home

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HP Assembly's budget session starts on stormy note; BJP stages walkout

SHIMLA, MARCH 14

The budget session of the Himachal Pradesh Assembly started on a stormy note on Tuesday as the opposition BJP staged a walkout, demanding the release of the last instalment of the MLA Local Area Development (LAD) fund for which nine legislators of the saffron party had given an adjournment motion.

Pandemonium prevailed in the House as the members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the ruling Congress were involved in heated exchanges. The legislators of the saffron party subsequently walked out of the House, shouting "vidhayak nidhi jari karo".

Immediately after the obituary references to former state minister Mansa Ram, Vipin Parmar of the BJP urged the chair to admit the adjournment motion to discuss the release of the MLA LAD funds.

Industries and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan said

INDUSTRIES AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS MINISTER HARSHWARDHAN CHAUHAN SAID THE ADJOURNMENT NOTICE WAS GIVEN IN THE MORNING AND IS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

the adjournment notice was given in the morning and is under consideration.

Intervening in the matter, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri said Rule 67 is for raising very important issues but the BJP MLAs have given the notice in their own interest.

He said the current government inherited a debt liability of Rs 75,000 crore, of which loans worth Rs 27,000 crore were raised during the tenure of the previous government, besides the liabilities of Rs 11,000 crore pertaining to the payment of arrears to employees.

Agnihotri said despite the financial

crunch, the Congress would fulfil its 10 guarantees given to the people of the state in the run-up to the Assembly polls.

Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur said it was a matter of prestige for the MLAs and added that the chief minister, who used to talk about the MLAs' rights earlier, has changed his stance now.

Recalling that the Congress government in Himachal Pradesh had opened 21 colleges ahead of the 2017 Assembly polls, the former chief minister said the state's loan liability rose from Rs 27,000 crore to Rs 48,000 crore during the Congress regime from 2012 to 2017.

Chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said 920 institutions were opened by the BJP government at the end of its term, without any budget provision and staff.

Not satisfied with the chief minister's reply, the BJP members staged a walkout.

Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania said the issue is also listed among the starred questions and rejected the motion. **PTI**

Haryana govt to set up six veterinary polyclinics for cattle

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 14

The Haryana government will set up six veterinary polyclinics to care for and protect cattle in 'gaushalas', Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has said.

"Cows hold religious significance in our culture. In religious texts, the cow has been given the status of the mother," Khattar said on Monday at the closing ceremony of the Haryana Livestock Exhibition - 2023 in Charkhi Dadri where one of the proposed polyclinics will come up.

Apart from increasing the budget for 'Haryana Gau Seva Aayog' to Rs 400 crore from Rs 40 crore for the 2023-24 financial year, the state government is making dedicated efforts to protect cattle, the chief minister said. According to a government statement, the Khattar also visited the exhibition. Animal Husbandry and Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister JP Dalal and the BJP's state unit chief Om Prakash Dhankhar were present on the occasion. Khattar said during his address that a new 'Sanjhi Dairy' project has been envisaged in the state budget. Under this project, a shed will be built on panchayat land for cattle owners who do not have enough space to keep their animals. **PTI**

Himachal CM presents final supplementary budget of Rs 13,141.07 cr

SHIMLA, MARCH 14

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Tuesday sought approval for an additional Rs 13,141.07 crore expenditure as he presented the first and final instalment of Supplementary demands for grants in Vidhan Sabha for 2022-23.

The supplementary demands include a provision of Rs 6,004.63 crore for repayment of Ways and Means - Advance /Overdraft and Rs 1,260.65 crore for pensions and other retirement benefits.

Of the total demands, Rs 11,707.68 crore is under State Schemes, Rs 1,433.39 crore under Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Rs 551.48 crore is earmarked for power subsidy, Rs 444.03 crore for construction of hospitals, purchase of medical equipment and HIMCARE Yojana and Rs 435.08 crore for construction of senior secondary schools and colleges buildings and payment of salary.

Besides, Rs 289.38 crore was proposed for assistance to Himachal Road Transport Corporation, Rs 284.79 crore for Mukhya Mantri Sukh Aashray Kosh, construction of Sukh Aashray Bhawan and Social Security Pension, Rs 279.06 crore for water supply and sanitation, Rs 226.51 crore for relief on account natural calam-



ity, Rs 209.33 crore for Mukhya Mantri Swavlamban Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Gatishakti Yojna, Optical Cable Fibre Network and digital expansion or government departments under state schemes.

Further, Rs 208.42 crore was proposed for crop insurance, crop diversification project, pending liabilities and Horticulture Development project, Rs 156.91 crore for grants to rural local bodies, the salary of staff or Zila Parishad and grants under 15th Finance Commission, Rs 154.71 crore for roads and bridges, Rs 128.71 crore for rail projects, Rs 108.70 crore for the skill development project, Rs 106.08 crore for construction and maintenance of government buildings, rest houses, circuit houses and hostels. **PTI**

Five arrested with narcotic substances in HP's Bilaspur

BILASPUR, MARCH 14

Police have arrested five people here and recovered huge quantities of narcotic substances from them, officials said on Tuesday.

A team of Anti-Narcotics Task Force, Kullu recovered 148 grams of chitta from a youth from Uttar Pradesh, they said He was travelling in a Volvo bus from Delhi to Manali when the team intercepted the bus at Swarghat barrier and arrested him, they said.

In a separate case, the police recovered 165 grams of charas from three people near Chhadoland area. **PTI**

Sukhu arrives in Alto car to attend budget session

SHIMLA, MARCH 14

As a commoner, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu once again displayed his simplicity, as he reached Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha in his Alto car from Oak Over to attend his first budget session of the assembly, here today.

When being asked by the media, the Chief Minister said that he used his Alto car after becoming MLA for the first time, and he was using this car to visit Vidhan Sabha, since then, as an MLA. "It reminds me of my old days," said the Chief Minister after he reached

Vidhan Sabha for his first budget session in this treasured possession.

Education Minister, Rohit Thakur and MLA Lahaul-Spiti also accompanied him on this occasion.

The Chief Minister was welcomed by Deputy Chief Minister, Mukesh Agnihotri and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Harshwardhan Chauhan at Vidhan Sabha. This was not the first time that people had witnessed the simplicity of the Chief Minister, as he was seen on morning walks numerous times at the Mall Road like an ordinary man even meeting people without any VVIP protocol. **PTI**

Devotees throng temple in HP's Deotsidh for annual chaitra fair

HAMIRPUR, MARCH 14

About seventy thousand devotees thronged the Baba Balak Nath temple in Himachal Pradesh's Deotsidh on Tuesday on the first day of a month-long 'chaitra' fair.

Deputy Commissioner Hamirpur, Debasweta Banik offered puja at the temple and also unfurled the Red flag of the Babaji in presence of thousands

of devotees. She was accompanied by SPAkriti Sharma and the temple priest Rajendra Giri. Chanting religious hymns, thousands of devotees offered food grains, cash and ghee at the temple and paid their obeisance. Women along with the Deputy Commissioner and the District Police Chief paid their respects from a platform raised for them and men were allowed to go inside the holy cave to offer prayers. **PTI**

Two killed as bike rams into car in Shimla

SHIMLA, MARCH 14

Two people were killed when their motorcycle collided with a car here, police said on Tuesday. The accident took place near Rampur College gate on Monday night, they said. The deceased were identified as Satpal (23) a resident of Rampur and Aaryan (18) who hails from Kumarsein, police said. **PTI**

OPINION

The Express India NEWS

Rahul's London remarks

The parliament has been disrupted continuously for two days over what Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said in London a week ago. Gandhi did make some avoidable remarks about the functioning of various democratic institutions in the country. No matter how much defence the Congress party and its leaders are trying to present, the matter of the fact is that Rahul's remarks in London were unwanted. Let us not forget that Rahul was not talking to people in London just as an opposition leader or merely the representative of the grand old party of the country, he was actually representing India.

It is unfortunate that the country's politics has got so much polarized that not only the ruling party and the opposition cannot see eye to eye with each other, they can go to any extent in letting each other down. Rahul may have wanted to "expose" the government, its failures and what he suggested, "authoritarian" way of functioning, thus "endangering democracy", but he ended up creating a perception across the country that he spoke against India. There is a thin line dividing the criticism of the ruling establishment with that of the country. Congress may be right that Rahul never meant to defame India, but the way he spoke in London did create an impression as if everything was going bad in India.

In strong contrast, Rahul's London remarks remind of 1990s India under the Prime Ministership of PV Narsimha Rao with veteran Bharatiya Janata Party leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee as the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. When Pakistan wanted to bring in a resolution in the United Nations Human Rights Commission against India on Kashmir, Rao chose Vajpayee to lead the Indian delegation to defend the country's case in the UNHRC. The delegation also included the then Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who later became the Prime Minister in 2004, Dr Farooq Abdullah and Salman Khurshid, who was then the Minister of State for External Affairs. They presented the country's case so strongly and effectively that Pakistan could not find enough support against India.

Imagine the situation now. If any such thing happens today against India, the opposition parties and their leaders for sure will never support the government. Rather, there is likelihood of their going against the country as that would embarrass the government back home. It happened in the case of the Hindenburg report on Adani Group and also in the BBC documentary. Just because the opposition wanted to embarrass the government, it sought to defend and justify both the BBC documentary as well as the Hindenburg report. Rahul Gandhi, knowingly or unknowingly, ended up justifying the both during his London sojourn. No matter how much justification and defence his party may present, the very fact that his statements need to be defended should be reason enough for the Congress leader to introspect. After all, he is being seen as a challenger to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Punjab agriculture needs paradigm shift



BY
DR PAUL SINGH
SIDHU

For the 2022 assembly election, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) projected 'Delhi Model' of governance as a cure for all ills inflicting Punjab. Without going into merits or demerits of extending 'Mohalla Clinics and Delhi Schools' from resource-rich city-state to debt-ridden Punjab, the AAP Govt did not have a template for addressing complex bottlenecks hindering farm sector growth. After one year in office, the AAP Government's agriculture record is, on balance, mixed.

HIGH TURNOVER OF DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONERS: The starting point for any new government's intentions is appointments to key positions. Financial Commissioner Development (FCD)—Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary/Administrative Secretary Agriculture in present parlance—is the chief administrator of agriculture-related departments. In the heydays of Punjab agriculture, FCD was next to Chief Secretary (CS). Punjab was respected for intertwining proactive policy formulation with strong coordination across departments for prompt execution. Almost all FCDs till 1990 became Chief Secretaries of Punjab or Agriculture Secretary, in the Government of India. One of husband-wife-FCDs was elevated as Cabinet Secretary and the other as Principal Secretary to Prime Minister.

The AAP Government has had five FCDs in one year. Not casting any doubt on his commitment, one incumbent was not even ranked as Principal Secretary. What kind of stable agriculture policy formulation and implementation ecosystem can one expect from such high turnover? None of the incumbents was allowed to have a grip on the sector.

SMOOTH PROCUREMENT OF WHEAT AND PADDY: The AAP Govt. deserves appreciation for proactive surveillance during wheat procurement in 2022, preventing recycling of old and damaged stock. Enthusiasm for the same approach in paddy procurement disappeared as MLAs and ministers were away to Gujarat. Wheat and paddy procurement is an area where the Govt. should have adopted 'Delhi Model' for lowering procurement costs and improving efficiency by creating stiff competition among service providers.

The Govt. voted to power on an anti-corruption stance should clean the Augean stables as there were reports of rent seeking, leakage, or quality deterioration at every step from unloading of farm produce in the Mandi to loading of wheat and rice on railway wagons. Punjab has become infamous for supplying poor quality food grains. Food scarcity era legacy that procurement should be completed within 24 hours irrespective of conformity to quality parameters merits rethink. Future of Punjab agriculture lies in improving quality instead of singular focus on yield maximisation.

MOONG PROCUREMENT MUDDLE: Consistent with AAP's focus on generating social media trolls, procurement of summer moong at

guaranteed minimum support price (MSP) was hurriedly announced with much fanfare. Kinks in half-baked policy included: (i) announcement in first week of May, forgetting that sowing should have been completed by mid-April, (ii) state-wide roll-out of minuscule acreage instead of restricting to areas of comparative advantage, (iii) inadequate fleshing out of procurement modalities, (iv) dubious claim of water saving, and (v) lack of required funds. Less than 12 per cent marketable surplus conformed to relaxed Fair Average Quality specifications. Even the entire quantity for which NAFED was to provide funds could not be procured.

On the positive side, the procurement agency MARKFED did a commendable job of preventing recycling of trader-purchased moong as farmer-produced. It also did not succumb to arm twisting by farm unions and misplaced media criticism to buy substandard moong. Poor quality was due to late sowing, use of defoliants to hasten maturity, harvesting with faulty combines, and inadequate attention to quality norms for approving new varieties.



The Express India NEWS

DIRECT SEEDED RICE (DSR) DID NOT TAKE OFF: Despite much publicity, farmers did not adopt cultivation of DSR for saving water and electricity. The main reasons are lingering doubts about the claimed benefits of DSR technology and provision of free power. Human nature is not to save anything which is for free. Early supply of electricity, necessary for DSR, became counter-productive by facilitating early transplanting. The Department of Agriculture figure of the large DSR area in 2021 should be taken with a pinch of salt.

LOAN DEFAULT BY MANDI BOARD: Bank loan repayment default by the once-cash-rich Punjab Mandi Board is an embarrassment for the debt trapped Govt. It will raise future borrowing costs and compromise maintenance of rural roads and Mandi infrastructure. The AAP Govt. inherited a loan of about Rs 2.82 lakh crores which will balloon to about Rs 3.47 lakh crores by 31 March 2024.

DRAGGING FISCALLY CONSTRAINED PAU IN CONTROVERSY Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), indispensable for invigorating agriculture, has been dragged into an avoidable controversy over appointment of Dr S S Gosal as Vice-Chancellor. Tussle between the Governor and the Chief Minister (CM) spells sorry state of affairs for the PAU and Punjab. Instead of finding common

ground through well-nuanced communication and dialogue away from media glare, confrontation between the Governor and the CM seems to have complicated the matter.

Plagued by shortage of funds, PAU is handicapped for undertaking worthwhile research. The scientists are dismayed as the salary revision due in 2016 did not materialise. Adhocism and manpower scarcity persisted since advertisement of critical positions was delayed. As a result of persistent follow up by Dr Gosal and his team, the Govt. has agreed on March 13 March to revise the salaries, fill vacant positions, and raise budgetary allocation by 19 per cent to Rs 475 crores in FY 2023–24. The Govt. needs to modify the rules of business to shorten the long tortuous communication channel between the Finance Department and the PAU, the way it was during the formative years of the University. It will go a long way in improving efficiency.

MARGINALISATION OF PUNJAB: By implementing enabling policies, developing agile organisational structures, and appointing competent persons to lead PAU and Agriculture-related Departments who rewarded merit and hard work, Punjab emerged as the national trendsetter in agriculture. By the 1970s, it became the breadbasket of the country. Like FCDs, many Directors of Agriculture till 1990 became Agriculture Commissioners, Govt. of India (GoI). Two Chairmen of Agriculture Prices Commission, one Member of Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Committee, one Chairman of Agricultural Scientists' Recruitment Board and several senior administrators of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) had worked at PAU. Engineers trained by American Harvey Slocum at Bhakra Dam assisted other states in constructing large dams.

Agriculture growth rate since 2005–06 is dismal 2 per cent, plummeting to near zero in 2021–22. You rarely find Punjabis in middle level positions in ICAR and Dept. of Agriculture, GoI. By resisting reforms, splurging scarce funds on unproductive freebies, and appointing mediocre men (with rare honourable exceptions) to key positions, successive Chief Ministers have 'sleepwalked' Punjab agriculture to marginalisation on the national scene. Golden era of Punjab agriculture from 1966 to 1985, spawned by path-breaking initiatives of Partap Singh Kairon and Lachhman Singh Gill and competent bureaucracy and technocracy, has been squandered away. The AAP Govt. has not done anything tangible to arrest the decline.

Salvation of Punjab lies in restoring the fiscal health of the State Govt. If the AAP Govt. is serious about restoring the past glory, it should constitute an expert group for improving tax collections, targeting subsidies to the needy, prioritising allocation to high pay-off public goods, and plugging massive leakage of expenditures.

On the back of a 23 per cent dip in wheat procurement last year, alarm bells are ringing about the vulnerability of Punjab's principal crops to increased frequency of weather extremes. Does Punjab have the human capital, fiscal resources, organisational agility, and political wisdom to mitigate harmful consequences of climate change, yesteryear policies and institutions? I leave it to your judgement.

(Paul Singh Sidhu, currently based in Singapore, has served as Senior Agriculturist in The World Bank and is a former Dean, Agriculture, Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana)

NATION

Govt, judiciary working as team: Rijiju

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The government and the Judiciary are working as a team but some "actors in the society" are trying to portray that there is a misunderstanding or conflict between the two, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said on Tuesday.

He also said he would not like to comment on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remarks that the democracy in the country is in danger, saying "his statements do not contain any concrete substance so it does not deserve that kind of response".

Speaking at the Lokmat National Conclave here, the minister rejected allegations that the government was using central agencies to target the Opposition.

"This is not correct. In BJP, corruption is not tolerated so there is no question



of bias. Zero tolerance towards corruption is the mantra of the Modi government," he said in response to a question.

When asked about the recent Supreme Court direction to set up a committee comprising the prime minister, the Chief Justice of India and Leader of the Opposition (Lok Sabha) to select chief election commissioner and election commissioner, he said as a minister he should not comment on judicial pronouncements.

"If I feel that there is encroachment,

I will raise at appropriate forum or initiate appropriate action," he said.

He said since Parliament is in session, he would not like to talk about "any intention of the government to bring legislation or any other action".

"But I can assure you that we will do our duty and due diligence are given for any action and we just don't take up any matter like that. We will only do when it is required and if corrective steps are necessary, we will do that," he asserted.

He said the supremacy of Parliament to legislate will not be compromised.

"We will not encroach upon the territory of other organs. But we will also not stop ourselves from taking corrective steps or right decisions as per the Constitution," Rijiju said.

The minister also noted that one has to identify what are the issues which are administrative in nature, and issues which are totally in the domain of the Judiciary.

Indian author's novel 'Pyre' longlisted for Booker Prize 2023

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
DELHI, MARCH 14

Indian author Perumal Murugan's Tamil novel 'Pyre' is among 13 books from across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America to make it to the longlist of the International Booker Prize 2023, announced by the Booker Prize Foundation here on Tuesday.

Murugan, 56, makes it to the prestigious list with his 2016 book "Pyre", translated from Tamil by Aniruddhan Vasudevan, becoming the first Tamil writer to make it to the longlist of 13 works.

"Pyre", tells the tale of an intercaste couple who elope, setting in motion a story of terrifying foreboding.

The coveted literary prize, won last year by Geetanjali Shree and translator Daisy Rockwell for the first-ever Hindi



novel 'Tomb of Sand', is awarded annually for a work of fiction written originally in any language, translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland.

The GBP 50,000 prize money is shared between the writer and translator of the winning work, which will be declared this year on May 23.

'Rahul should stop Cambridge cries, London lies'

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Tuesday said Rahul Gandhi should stop his "Cambridge cries and London lies" of democracy on decline and face the electorate in India, instead of seeking help from his "foreign friends".

Participating in the Lokmat National Conclave here, Thakur said that Gandhi has been critical of India on foreign soil after losing a series of elections where the BJP and its allies emerged victorious, trouncing the Congress.

"No matter how much help he (Gandhi) seeks from foreign friends, foreign newspapers and channels, foreign soil, foreigners can never dominate India. You have to vote here, not in England or America," the senior BJP leader said.

"Rahul Gandhi should stop Cambridge cries and London lies and come back to Parliament and apologise to Parliament," he said.

Gandhi's remarks alleging erosion of democratic values in India have led to a stand-off between the opposition and treasury benches in Parliament for two days, with the BJP demanding that the Congress leader should apologise.

The Budget Session of Parliament resumed on Monday after a month-long recess.

On Gandhi's claims that opposition leaders were not given adequate time to speak in Parliament, Thakur said the former Congress president's attendance in Lok Sabha was way below the average attendance of lawmakers.

Man impersonates Andhra CM, dupes retail chain of Rs 12 lakh

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
MUMBAI, MARCH 14

Mumbai police have arrested a 28-year-old man for allegedly duping a city-based electronics retail chain of Rs 12 lakh by impersonating Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, an official said on Tuesday.

Accused Nagraju Budumuru was recently taken into custody from the Srikakulam district in the southern state, nearly two months after a complaint was filed in the city, the official said.

Budumuru has cheated about 60 companies of nearly Rs 3 crore using the same method, he said.

In December last year, an employ-

BUDUMURU HAS CHEATED ABOUT 60 COMPANIES OF NEARLY RS 3 CRORE USING THE SAME METHOD, HE SAID.

ee from the managing director's office of the electronics seller received a call from a man claiming to be the personal assistant of the Andhra CM. The caller said the CM wanted to have a word with the MD, said the anti-cybercrime official.

The unsuspecting staffer shared the MD's mobile number. The accused then allegedly contacted the MD claiming to be Andhra CM and sought Rs 12 lakh from the electronics retail chain towards sponsor-

ship of the kit of a cricketer, the official said.

The accused also sent fake documents in the name of the Andhra Cricket Association and an email id claiming that it belongs to the cricketer and got the amount released, the official said.

After learning that they had been duped, the electronics seller filed a police complaint in January, prompting Mumbai police's cyber cell to launch a probe and subsequently track down the accused to Andhra's Srikakulam district bordering Odisha.

Police have also found that accused Budumuru faces at least 30 similar cases in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the official said, adding that they have recovered Rs 7.6 lakh from his bank accounts.

NIA files charge sheet against 2 in PFI case

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The National Investigation Agency has filed a charge sheet against two arrested members of the banned Popular Front of India in a case related to activities and agenda of violent extremism by the outfit being pursued in Rajasthan, an official said on Tuesday.

Mohammad Ashif alias "Asif" of Kota and Sadiq Sarraf of Baran in Rajasthan have been charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in a special court here on Monday, a spokesperson of the NIA said.

This was the first charge sheet filed by the federal agency in the case which was initially registered on September 19 last year at NIA headquarters, New Delhi.

5 killed, 9 hurt as car rams into SUV

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
FIROZABAD, MARCH 14

Five people were killed and nine others injured when a speeding car rammed into a parked SUV on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway in Nasirpur on Tuesday, police said.

Superintendent of Police (Rural) Ranvijay Singh said the people in the SUV, who were on their way to Jaipur from Gorakhpur, had got down to relieve

themselves when the car rammed into their vehicle around 9.30 am.

The occupants of the car were returning to Delhi after attending a marriage in Ambedkar Nagar in Uttar Pradesh, police said.

Four passengers of the SUV and one in the other car were killed, while seven others in the SUV and two in the other vehicle were injured and are undergoing treatment, Singh, who visited the spot, said.



The car hit the SUV as its occupants were on their way to board it and ran over four them before overturning, an eyewitness claimed.

Those killed were identified as Babulal (40), Nemichand (43), Kailash (38), Rakesh (37) and Mithlesh Gupta (35), who was travelling in the car. Their bodies were sent for postmortem, he added.

Traffic movement on the expressway is going on, said Singh.

NATION

First anniversary of second term

Yogi govt to hold press meets across UP

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
LUCKNOW, MARCH 14

The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh will mark the first anniversary of its second term on March 25 by organising press meets across the state and highlighting its achievements over the past six years, a senior official said here on Tuesday.

The government and the BJP have already started preparations to celebrate the day.

In Lucknow, CM Adityanath will hold a press conference. He will be accompanied by both his deputies Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, and BJP state president Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary, state general secretary (organisation) Dharampal Singh and other party functionaries, the official said.

Adityanath will present the achievements of his government's six years before the people. He will also provide information about the investment-friendly environment created in the state due to the improved law and order and the opportunities for employment and self-employment, according to an official statement.

Press meets will also be organised in the districts under the leadership of the in-charge ministers. Local MPs, MLAs, district panchayat presidents and legislative council members will be present at these events.

Kejriwal sounds poll bugle in MP

Says country should have 'educated' PM

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
BHOPAL, MARCH 14

Sounding the poll bugle in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal took swipes at Narendra Modi over the arrests of his colleagues and said the country needed an "educated prime minister".

Speaking at a 'Jansabha' gathering here, he promised free electricity, education and health facilities if his party came to power in the BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh where Assembly elections are due by year-end.

He was accompanied by Delhi Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

"People of Madhya Pradesh have given enough opportunities to both the Congress and BJP which ruled the state for 45 and 30 years, respectively. Just give a chance to AAP, and as in Delhi and Punjab, we will provide free electricity, education and health facilities to the people of the state," Kejriwal said.

He then referred to his party colleague and former Delhi education minister Manish Sisodia's arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation in an alleged corruption case.

"The day the Prime Minister sent Manish Sisodia to jail, I felt it is absolutely necessary to have an educated prime minister in the country to under-



stand the importance of education," he said.

Taking a jibe at Modi over his appeal to beat plates during the COVID-19 crisis (to express solidarity with health workers), Kejriwal further said, "If the prime minister is less educated, someone comes to him and advises him to make people beat plates to shoo away coronavirus. He made people do that, but did coronavirus flee? Therefore, it is necessary for the prime minister to be educated," he said.

Criticizing the prime minister further over the arrests of Sisodia and Delhi health minister Satyendra Jain, Kejriwal said the two had transformed the educa-

tion and health sectors in the national capital.

But the prime minister did not like it as it was against private players' interests, he alleged.

Modi will not put behind bars corrupt politicians belonging to the BJP, the AAP leader claimed.

A learned prime minister has the knowledge of economy, technology and science, he said.

In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP will come to power even if people voted for the Congress, Kejriwal said, in apparent reference to the fall of the Congress government in 2020 after a group of MLAs defected.

15 Cong MLAs suspended in U'khand for 'unruly behaviour'

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
GAIRSAIN (UTTARAKHAND), MARCH 14

Fifteen Congress MLAs were suspended from Uttarakhand Assembly for a day on Tuesday after they created a ruckus over Speaker Ritu Khanduri's decision to turn down a breach of privilege motion moved by them.

Miffed by the Speaker's decision, opposition MLAs charged towards her chair and created a pandemonium in the House pushing Assembly's secretary in-charge Hem Chandra Pant and forcing him to leave his seat.

Congress MLAs Adesh Chauhan and Furkan Ahmad climbed the assembly secretary's table, tore the Assembly rule book and shouted slogans against the government.

"This is not done," the Speaker said.

When the Speaker's repeated appeals to the Congress MLAs to calm down and go back to their seats went unheard, she suspended for a day all legislators involved in the ruckus and adjourned the house till 3 pm.

Congress member Adesh Chauhan had brought a breach of privilege motion against Udhham Singh Nagar SSP which the Speaker turned down on the basis of a report submitted to her by the state government.

She also said the matter is sub-judice.

Omicron, sub-lineages dominant SARS-CoV-2 variants in India: Govt

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

Omicron and its sub-lineages are the dominant SARS-CoV-2 variants in India, the government informed Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

During the last four months, more than 1900 Omicron sub-variants have been detected among the samples analysed by the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) across the country, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar said in a written reply.

Given the emergence of variants of COVID-19 virus with variable transmissibility and their possible health implications, INSACOG network laboratories conducts whole genome sequencing of samples for detection of mutant variants of the virus.

In light of increasing trajectory of



COVID-19 cases noted in China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand and Japan, an additional requirement of pre-departure testing and uploading of negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test reports and self-health declaration form on Air Suvidha portal was made mandatory in the past for travellers coming from or transiting via these countries, Pawar said.

CBI condoles demise of former director

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The CBI has condoled the death of its former director, K Vijaya Rama Rao, who had served the agency as its 14th chief for three years from 1993-1996.

Rao, who had served as a minister in undivided Andhra Pradesh, died at a private hospital in Hyderabad on Monday night due to brain-related health issues. He was 85. "The officers and all ranks of Central Bureau of Investigation deeply mourn the sad demise of Shri K. Vijaya Rama Rao, former Director, CBI and pray to the Almighty to provide the family strength, succour and fortitude to bear with this tragedy," a CBI statement said. His three years tenure saw the CBI probing important cases such as the demolition of the Babri mosque, the assassination of Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh, the Purulia arms drop case, and the Jain Hawala case, among others, it said.

Criticism against Rahul Gandhi

Personal attack 'well orchestrated': Pitroda

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

Amid a political storm over Rahul Gandhi's "democracy under attack" remarks in the UK, Indian Overseas Congress chief Sam Pitroda on Tuesday said the former party president never invited any foreign countries for help and was being subjected to a "well-orchestrated" personal attack based on "lies and misinformation".

Gandhi's remarks in the UK have rocked Parliament with both Houses of Parliament failing to transact any significant business during the first two days of the second half of the Budget Session. A battery of senior Union ministers have led the charge against Gandhi, demanding an apology, while the Congress has countered

it with its JPC probe demand on the Adani issue.

Pitroda, who heads the Indian Overseas Congress and was present for Gandhi's interactions during his UK visit, mounted a strong defence of the comments in a series of tweets.

"Please, stop promoting and propagating lies about what Rahul Gandhi said in London. Were you there? Did you see the video? Do you really know what he said? In what context? What was the main message?" "For clarification please, note that Rahul Gandhi basically said the following: 1. Indian Democracy is Global Public Good. 2. The state of democracy in India is of concern. 3. It is an Indian problem, and we will deal with it," Pitroda said.

Gandhi never invited any foreign countries to help, he asserted.

NATION

Rahul Gandhi should speak more responsibly: Hosabale

SAYS RSS WITH CENTRE ON 'SAME SEX MARRIAGE'

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
SAMALKHA, MAR 14

RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale on Tuesday said that Rahul Gandhi should speak more responsibly and see the reality of the Sangh's acceptance in society, after the Congress leader repeatedly targeted the organisation in his speeches.

Hosabale also said that the RSS agrees with the Centre's view on same-sex marriage, adding that a marriage can take place only between two people from opposite genders.

Asked about Gandhi's recent remarks against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Hosabale said he must be doing this for his "political agenda" but RSS does not work in the political field and he has no competition with the Sangh.

"As a political party leader, he should speak more responsibly and see the reality" of Sangh's expansion and acceptance in society, Hosabale said at a press conference on the last day of RSS's 'Akhil

Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha' here.

Responding to questions on Gandhi's remarks in the UK, the RSS leader said, "Those who converted India into a jail have no right to comment on democracy in the country." "Thousands of people including me were put behind the bars during Emergency. They (Congress) are yet to apologise for this. The country will ask them if they have a moral right to talk about democracy," he said.

If there is no democracy in the country, how are elections being held and Parliament functioning in the country, he asked.

"His party also won in one or two elections," Hosabale pointed out.

Speaking in UK recently, Gandhi had alleged that the structures of Indian democracy are under "brutal attack" and BJP and RSS have captured almost all institutions. He has often accused the Sangh of fanning hate and creating divisions in society.

The RSS leader said the national education policy was framed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi regime after

getting feedback from the grassroots levels including panchayats "unlike under the Congress-led UPA regime when policies were framed by the National Advisory Committee".

"People of the country and world are watching. They all know what is the truth. Perhaps he also knows," he said, adding time will give the Congress leader a befitting reply.

On the issue of same-sex marriage, the RSS general secretary said Sangh's view is the same as that of the Union government.

"According to Hindu philosophy, marriage is a 'Sanskara'. It is neither an instrument for an engagement nor a contract. Married couples fulfil the ideals of Grihastha Ashram. It is there for millions of years," he said, adding, "living together is a different thing." The Centre has recently opposed in the Supreme Court a batch of pleas seeking legal validation of same-sex marriage, saying it would cause complete havoc with the delicate balance of personal laws and accepted societal values.

Postal department not liable for delay, loss of article: NCDRC

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) said that the Indian Post Office Act provided immunity to the postal department from any liability for loss, delay or damage to any postal article during its transmission.

The only exception to the rule is the case where the Central government undertakes liability in expressed terms, and in the case of delay of domestic speed post articles, the speed post charges paid by customers are refundable, the NCDRC said while dismissing a revision petition.

The NCDRC was hearing a revision petition filed by Yogesh Kumar of Haryana, who had moved the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Faridabad, claiming a company sent him a holiday package for Agra by speed post on December 24, 2014, which was to be delivered within 24 hours to 48 hours.

But, the post was delivered only on January 6, 2015, because of which Kumar could not enjoy the tour and suffered a financial loss of Rs 30,000, following which he moved the district consumer commission.

The district commission in December 2015 directed the postal department to pay Kumar Rs 9,760 in lieu of the amount spent by him on booking the package tour and Rs 2,200 on account of mental tension and harassment besides Rs 1,100 towards litigation expenses.

Against the order, the superintendent of the Indian Postal Department in Faridabad filed an appeal before the Haryana State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission at Panchkula.

Allowing the appeal, the state commission directed the postal authorities concerned to pay Rs 500 to Kumar as lumpsum compensation in addition to Rs 78 as sanctioned by the department.

Against the state commission's order, Kumar had moved the NCDRC.

Satish Kaushik death

Farmhouse owner, estranged wife quizzed by Delhi Police

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

Delhi Police on Tuesday questioned the owner of the farmhouse, where Satish Kaushik attended a party a day before his death, and his estranged wife after she alleged that her husband "was planning to get rid" of the actor-filmmaker, officials said.

Kaushik (66) died after suffering a heart attack while he was on his way to a Gurugram hospital in the early hours of Thursday. He felt dizzy late on Wednesday night and was taken to the Fortis Hospital in Gurugram, where he was declared "brought dead on arrival," they said.

While the farmhouse owner was questioned for around three-and-a-half hours, his estranged wife was quizzed separately for nearly three hours.

The farmhouse owner joined the inquiry at 1 pm in the southwest district's Kapashera police station and was questioned regarding the sequence of events that led to Kaushik's death, police said.

"He came around 1 pm and the questioning ended at 4.30 pm. During questioning, he told police that Kaushik had come to celebrate Holi with them and stayed at his farmhouse," a senior



officer said.

"He said he knew the actor for over 30 years and they were family friends. He (Kaushik) was doing fine at the Holi party but hours later, he complained about pain following which he was rushed to the hospital," the officer said.

The farmhouse owner was present when Kaushik complained about sudden pain in his chest, he said.

When asked about allegations levelled by his estranged wife, he termed them "baseless", the officer said, adding that he will be called for questioning again in the coming days.

Meanwhile, the farmhouse owner's wife was questioned at the office of her advocate in connection with her complaint.

Omar taunts ex-Guv Malik over security downgrading

Srinagar, March 14

“What goes around comes around", National Conference leader Omar Abdullah said on Tuesday in response to claims of former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik that his security has been downgraded.

Abdullah, a former J and K chief minister, accused Malik of "messaging" with the security of several politicians including his and his party colleagues. The NC vice president apparently referred to the developments post August 5, 2019, when Jammu and Kashmir was downgraded to a Union Territory and several politicians were detained for months. Malik was J-K's governor at that time.

"What goes around comes around, jaisa karoge vaisa bharoge. He messed with a lot of peoples' security, including mine and of my senior colleagues," Abdullah said on Twitter.

He was reacting to Mailk's claims that his security has been downgraded.

In an interview to a private TV news channel, Malik said his security was taken away because he spoke on the farmers' issue and the Centre's Agniveer scheme

WPI eases to over 2-yr low, food items remain costly

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The wholesale price-based inflation declined to over two-year low of 3.85 per cent in January on easing prices of manufactured items, fuel and power, even though food articles remained expensive.

This is the ninth straight month of decline in the rate of wholesale price-index (WPI) based inflation.

The WPI inflation was 4.73 per cent in January and 13.43 per cent in February, last year. "Decline in the rate of inflation in February 2023 is primarily contributed by fall in prices of crude petroleum & natural gas, non-food articles, food products, minerals, computer, electronic & optical products, chemicals & chemical products, electrical equipment and motor vehicles, trailers & semi-trailers," the commerce and industry ministry said on Tuesday.

The 3.85 per cent WPI inflation is the lowest since January 2021, when the rate of price rise on wholesale basis was 2.51 per cent. The decline in the rate of price rise was mainly due to a favourable base effect, economists said, adding that going forward, softening commodity prices would help ease WPI

THE 3.85 PER CENT WPI INFLATION IS THE LOWEST SINCE JANUARY 2021, WHEN THE RATE OF PRICE RISE ON WHOLESALE BASIS WAS 2.51 PER CENT.

inflation further. However, the future course of food inflation would depend on weather related conditions and timely monsoon. Although inflation in manufactured items softened, in the case of food articles it rose to 3.81 per cent in February, from 2.38 per cent in January. Inflation in pulses was 2.59 per cent, while in vegetables was (-)21.53 per cent. Inflation in oil seeds was (-)7.38 per cent in February 2023. Fuel and power basket inflation eased to 14.82 per cent, from 15.15 per cent in the preceding month. In manufactured products it was 1.94 per cent, against 2.99 per cent in January. The deceleration in WPI comes in line with the dip in retail inflation, data of which was released on Monday. Consumer price index based retail inflation declined to 6.44 per cent in February from 6.52 per cent in January.

SPECIAL

Understanding rift between JCOs and officers over OROP



COL CHARANJIT SINGH KHERA (RETD)

Some retired Junior Commissioned Officers are sitting at Jantar Mantar alleging that they have not got any benefits of the One Rank One Pension and all benefits have been pocketed by the officers.

Writer examines the matter in detail: JCOs who are not benefited by OROP – II are agitating at Jantar Mantar leveling all kinds of allegations that Officers have cornered all the benefits of OROP-II. There is a need to understand how far this allegation is correct. Firstly, officers serving or retired have no role to play in manipulating the tables of OROP-II. Secondly, it is not true that all officers are benefitted. There is no increase in pension in OROP-II for lieutenants and captains who are SL officers, RCOs and SCO officers. Since they got their commission at a very late age, they retire with less commissioned service hence do not get promoted to higher ranks.

Fixation of Pension in OROP

The policy letter dated 07 Nov 2015 on OROP clearly explains that the fixation of pension of Pre-July 2014 pensioners is done taking Average pension of those retired in the same rank, same length of service and same group X or Y (for JCOs) retired in the calendar year 2013. For example, if a Subedar retired in May 2004 with 30 years of service in Group Y will get the same Average pension of Subedars / MCPOs-II / Warrant Officers with the same length of service of 30 years and of the same Group Y. It is very important to note that Pre-July 2014 Subedars will get benefit only if they meet the following conditions in OROP-I w.e.f. Jul 2014.

(a) Subedar / MCPO-II / WO with 30 years' service and of Y Gp should have retired in calendar year 2013.

(b) If not retired, then pension of Subedar / MCPO-II / WO retired with lesser length of service (say 28 years) of Y gp will be taken as the pension for pre-July 2014 Subedars / MCPO-II / WOs of 30 years' service. This is to ensure no Subedar of longer length of service gets a lesser pension than a Subedar of lesser length of service actually retired in calendar year 2013.

(c) It is also ensured for the same length of service higher ranked pensioners get higher pension. Say if a Subedar with 28 years' service is fixed pension same or more than Nb Sub with same length of service. This is to ensure higher ranked pensioners cannot get less pension than a lesser ranked pensioner.

(d) **Concept of Average Pension.** In



case two or more Subedars / MCPOs-II / WOs with service of 30 years and group of retired in calendar year 2013, then the average pension which is 50% of (maximum pension + minimum pension) is fixed as pension of all pre-July 2014 Subedars / MCPOs-II / WOs.

(e) **Below Average Hiked to Average.** In case there are Subedars / MCPOs-II / WO whose pension is less than Average retired in calendar year 2013, then their pension is equated with Average pension. Such Subedars / MCPOs-II / WOs retired in the calendar year get financial benefit.

(f) **Above Average Pension is Protected** If there are Subedars / MCPOs-II / War Widows who drew higher pension and retired in calendar year 2013 will continue to get their higher pension as pension earned by longer service in the same rank of Subedar cannot be reduced. Such a higher pension than Average is protected.

3. Why Some Pre Jul 2019 Pensioners do not get Arrears in OROP-II? The Pre-July 2019 Subedars / MCPOs / WOs drew higher pension than what is the average pension of those who retired in calendar year 2018 in OROP-II. The reasons for this are as under:-

(a) Enhancement of Pension Twice for Pre-2006 JCOs / OR. The pension of Pre-2006 JCOs / OR in the period of Jan 2006 to Jun 2014 has been enhanced twice to bridge the gap in pension between Pre-6th CPC and post-6th CPC pensioners. First time it was enhanced in 2009 and second time it was further enhanced in 2012.

(b) Equivalization of Pension between Pre-6th CPC JCOs / OR and Post-6th CPC JCOs / OR. The pension of Pre-2006 JCOs / OR were made almost equal to the pension drawn by those retired in calendar year 2013. That is why they felt OROP-I from Jul 2014 was not beneficial. They are blaming 6th CPC for fixing a lesser pension. This is not true. Having got two

hikes in pensions in 2009 and 2012, the JCOs / OR cannot blame 6th CPC. Moreover, the pay and thus pensions are fixed by CPC based on the grade pay and equivalence between civilian employees and armed forces employees. It cannot be said only JCOs / OR were fixed lesser pay and hence pension by 6th CPC.

(c) **Officers Did not Get any Hike from Jan 2006 to 2013.** Another myth propagated is Officers got higher pension in OROP-I. There was no revision of pension for Officers between Jan 2006 and Jun 2014. Hence the pension of Officers retired in calendar year 2013

JCOS WHO ARE NOT BENEFITED BY OROP – II ARE AGITATING AT JANTAR MANTAR LEVELING ALL KINDS OF ALLEGATIONS THAT OFFICERS HAVE CORNERED ALL THE BENEFITS OF OROP-II. THERE IS A NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW FAR THIS ALLEGATION IS CORRECT

was higher and the same was given to Pre-July 2014 retired officers.

(d) **Different Fitment Factor for Officers & JCOs / OR.** Another myth being propagated is officers are given higher fitment factor by 7th CPC of 2.82 whereas JCOs / OR are given fitment factor of 2.57. All are given the same fitment factor whether one is an officer or JCO / OR. Even the Central Govt civilian employees whether they are Officers or subordinates were given the same fitment factor of 2.57.

(d) **Benefit of Average Pension** Not Given to Those pensioners Retired in the period Jul 2014 to Dec 2015. Those who retired in the OROP period till Jun 2014

were given the benefit of lesser pension than Average pension being hiked to the level of Average pension. Thus, many such JCOs / OR till 30 Jun 2014 got financial benefit as their lesser pension due to lesser number of increments was hiked to the level of Average pension. But the same benefit is not given to those who retired in the period of Jul 2014 to Dec 2015. The pension of such retired personnel in the period Jul 2014 to Dec 2015 in 7th CPC got fixed at Pension in Dec 2015 (lesser than OROP beneficiaries) x 2.57. Thus, such Post Jul 2014 to Dec 2015 pensioners got lesser pension w.e.f. Jan 2016. The OROP beneficiaries having got their pension same as Average pension got higher pension in 7th CPC which came to Pension in Dec 2015 (Average pension of OROP-I) x 2.57. Thus, most of the JCOs got much higher pension in Jan 2016 compared to the pension of those retired in calendar year 2018.

(e) **Average pension of those retired in calendar year 2018 is Lesser than Pre-2016 Pensioners.** Those who retired in calendar 2018 were in service in 2014 and their pay was much lesser till 2015. Even when their pay got enhanced by 2.57 fitment factor of 7th CPC and with increments @ 3% per year, the pay hence pension in calendar year 2018 is lesser than pension of those enjoyed benefit of OROP-I.

(f) **PCDA (Pensions) in Reply to RTI Query.** PCDA (Pensions) Prayagraj in reply to queries filed under RTI Act 2007 informed that the Pre-July 2019 pensioners will be eligible for benefit of OROP-III due from Jul 2024.

(g) **Pension cannot be Reduced.** It has been clarified both in the letter of Min of Def (ESW) dated 20 Jan 2023 and Circular 666 of PCDA (Pensions) Prayagraj that if the pension of those retired prior to Jul 2019 is higher than that given in pension tables of OROP-II, the pension will not be fixed to the disadvantage of the pensioner. They will

continue to draw their higher pension. Therefore, it is a myth to say that the pension of JCOs has been reduced. Pension once fixed cannot be reduced.

(h) **Everyone Should Get a Higher Pension.** OROP is not same as Central Pay Commission where every employee of Central Govt gets an increase in pay hence pension by a fitment factor of say 2.8 or 2.9 in 8th CPC. OROP envisages the pension of those earlier retirees being less shall be equated with pensioners retired later whose pension is generally higher due to increase in pay by Central Pay commission. In a few cases, the JCOs might be drawing higher pension though retired much earlier than the current retirees. In such cases, such JCOs may get higher pension only in the next OROP.

Demand for equal MSP

The MSP is military service pay to compensate for harsh working conditions in the Armed Forces compared to civilian Central Govt employees. Even the British used to give higher pay to Armed Forces personnel for this very reason. That extra pay was converted as MSP by later Central Pay Commissions. Hence the MSP or extra pay prior to Aug 1947 was based on the rank. Officers used to draw higher Extra pay compared to JCOs / OR. Pay cannot be the same for all. The same formula of different pay is given to Officers and subordinates in Central Civilian employees.

Demand of Same Disability Element for All

The disability element is not fixed by Min of Def. It is fixed on the recommendation of the Central Pay Commission. The rule is the same for both Armed Forces personnel and Civilian Central Govt employees. For 100% disability, the disability element is 30% of Last Reckonable Emoluments. Therefore, the disability element of a Maj Gen is higher than Lt Col. Similarly, the disability element of Sub Maj is higher than Havildar. The Armed Forces cannot have different rules of disability.

Same benefit irrespective of rank

The gallantry award monthly monetary allowance is the same whether it is won by an Officer or a JCO or a NCO or a Sepoy. Constant Attendant Allowance is same for any disabled soldier who suffers 100% disability whether the disabled soldier is an Officer or a JCO or a NCO or a Sepoy.

Any Veteran needs any further clarification on above facts can consult other Ex-Servicemen Organization like IESL, IESM or TSEWA

(Writer is President cum Gen Secy of All India Ex-Servicemen Sanjha Morcha and Dir(Hony) Veterans Association Ontario and member of Indo-Can Veteran Association)

WORLD

US, UK, Aus join forces against China in Indo Pacific

WASHINGTON/BEIJING, MARCH 14

The US, UK and Australia have unveiled details of their plan to create a new fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines, aimed at countering China's growing assertiveness in the strategic Indo-Pacific and ensuring that the region remains "free and open." Under the Aukus ambitious agreement, Australia will first receive at least three nuclear-powered submarines from the US.

The announcement was made after US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese attended a summit meeting in San Diego on Monday and asserted that the move is to keep the Indo-Pacific region "free and open."

"With the support and approval of the Congress, beginning in the early 2030s, the United States will sell three Virginia-class submarines to Australia with the potential to sell up to two more if needed, jumpstarting their undersea capability a decade earlier than many predicted," Biden said in the presence of Albanese and Sunak. As part of the announcement, the US has also pledged a total of USD 4.6 billion over the next few years to build its submarine construction capacity and to improve the maintenance of its Virginia-

THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE AFTER US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN, UK PRIME MINISTER RISHI SUNAK AND AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER ANTHONY ALBANESE ATTENDED A SUMMIT MEETING IN SAN DIEGO ON MONDAY AND ASSERTED THAT THE MOVE IS TO KEEP THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION "FREE AND OPEN."

class submarines. "This state-of-the-art conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine will work -- that will combine the UK submarine technology and design with the American technology," he said.

The Indo-Pacific is a biogeographic region, comprising the Indian Ocean and the western and central Pacific Ocean, including the South China Sea. The US, India and several other world powers have been talking about the need to ensure a free, open and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's rising military manoeuvring in the region, vital to global trade. China claims nearly all of the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and

Vietnam all claim parts of it. Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea. For Australia, it is a major upgrade to the US ally's military capabilities. The country becomes just the second after the UK to receive Washington's latest nuclear propulsion technology. The submarines will be able to operate further and faster than Australia's existing diesel-engine fleet and it will also be able to carry out long-range strikes against enemies for the first time. Reacting to the announcement by the three countries, China strongly criticised the significant naval deal. "The latest joint statement issued by the US, the UK and Australia shows that the three countries, for their own geopolitical interests, have totally disregarded the concerns of the international community and gone further down the wrong and dangerous path," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

The US, the UK and Australia said they are committed to set the highest nuclear non-proliferation standard, this is nothing but a high-sounding rhetoric to deceive the world, he said. "In essence, it is a move to coerce the IAEA Secretariat into making safeguards exemption arrangements, which would seriously undermine the authority of the body. China is firmly opposed to this," Wang said in Beijing.

Pak Army declines election duty

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
ISLAMABAD, MARCH 14

Pakistan's Defence Ministry on Tuesday informed the election commission that the country's Army will not be available for election duty during the upcoming provincial elections in the wake of the worsening security situation in the country.

Elections in the Punjab province are scheduled to be held on April 30 while the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa governor proposed to hold elections in the province on May 28.

Defence Secretary Lt Gen (retd) Hamood Uz Zaman Khan led a team of his ministry in a meeting chaired by the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said in a press statement that the defence secretary along with Additional Secretary Maj Gen Khuram Sarfraz Khan briefed the CEC and ECP officials on the country's prevalent situation and the military's deployment.

"They said that the Army attaches importance to its basic duties, in which the security of the borders and the country is its first priority. They said that the Army is not available for election duty at this time due to the present situation in the country," the ECP press release read.

The defence secretary also said that finally, it would be the government's decision if it wanted to keep the military restricted to its primary duties or appointed it for secondary tasks such as election-related duties.



"They also clarified that in case of election duty, the Army can be deployed in quick reaction force mode but it is not possible to perform duty in static mode," according to the statement.

The defence ministry officials said that the current economic situation of the country was also affecting the Army.

Army personnel traditionally have played a key role in keeping the peace during elections.

However, the attacks by the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan rebels have increased in recent months, forcing the Army to make adjustments in its deployment of troops. Without Army troops, it may be difficult to maintain law and order during elections.

Pakistan has been witnessing a sharp rise in terror incidents for the last few months, which have taken the lives of several people, and as a result, the security forces have upped the ante against militants across the country.

ICAI critical of 'fragmented' approach to India funds

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
LONDON, MARCH 14

The UK government's independent aid watchdog on Tuesday delivered a strong critique of the country's "fragmented" approach to the development assistance for India over recent years, which amounts to GBP 2.3 billion between 2016 and 2021 and makes India a "substantial recipient" of bilateral aid. The Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI), which is tasked with the scrutiny of the UK government's official aid to countries, notes in its India Country Portfolio Review that it would be a surprise to many to see UK aid to India continuing at a high level despite a shift in the relationship in 2015 – in keeping with the Indian government's preference for a partnership of equals, rather than a traditional donor-recipient relationship.

UK minister's migration policy branded 'racist'

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
LONDON, MARCH 14

Britain's Indian-origin Home Secretary Suella Braverman is facing increasing pressure over the government's new plans to clamp down on illegal migration, with a former Home Office adviser branding the policy as "racist" and a former minister raising serious concerns in Parliament.

Nimco Ali, a one-time campaigner for the governing Conservative Party who left her job as a government adviser in December last year, told the 'Guardian' that Goan-origin Braverman was "the wrong person not just for the Conservative party but for the country" as she makes the Tories seem "cruel and heartless".

The child refugee from Somaliland was scathing in her criticism of the

government's failure to widen migration routes open to Ukrainians over the ongoing Russian conflict.

"As a former refugee of colour, if we can provide generous help to Ukrainians escaping war then I think we need to look at ensuring that we also provide routes to anyone escaping conflicts," Ali told the newspaper.

"If we can find room for a white child but not a black child, who are coming here in similar circumstances, it is racist. It is really painful if we believe that people can seek refuge if they come from Europe but not elsewhere. If we can provide safe and legal routes for Ukrainians, we should do it for other people as well," she said.

Ali, who is supportive of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, warned that he would not win the next general election with Braverman as his Home

Secretary as he is in danger of losing younger and floating voters.

"Suella Braverman wants the government to look tough but it will instead make us look cruel and heartless, which I don't think the PM is. I have a problem with her language. I believe that blaming lefty lawyers when they are challenging the law is dangerous. When she spoke about her dream of seeing a plane take off to Rwanda, it lacked compassion and understanding," said Ali, with reference to the government's migration pact with the African nation to house illegal migrants. Her criticism came as former Tory home secretary Theresa May raised several concerns in the House of Commons about the proposed new Illegal Migration Bill, which has been tabled in Parliament to tackle the issue of thousands of migrants arriving on UK shores illegally via small boats.

'Submarine deal violates NPT' China says AUKUS on 'dangerous' path

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
BEIJING, MARCH 14

China on Tuesday angrily denounced the nuclear-powered submarine deal announced by the US, UK and Australia, saying the pact violates the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the three countries are travelling "further down the dangerous and wrong path."

The announcement was made at a summit meeting attended by US President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his British counterpart Rishi Sunak in San Diego on Monday. Under the agreement, Australia will first receive at least three nuclear-powered submarines from the US.

ENTERTAINMENT

Samantha gushes over 'Shaakuntalam'

Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who has already wowed the audiences with her power-packed performances in season 2 of web series 'The Family Man' and Telugu action thriller film 'Yashoda', is all set for the release of her upcoming film 'Shaakuntalam'.

The actress recently watched the film and shared her review on social media with a picture of herself standing along with the team. She wrote: "And I finally watched the movie today! Gunashekar garu.. you have my heart. What a beautiful film! One of our greatest epics brought to life so endearingly! I can't wait for our family audiences to be swept away by the powerful emotions! And all you kids out there... you're going to love our magical world! Dil Raju garu and Neelima... thank you for this wonderful journey.#Shaakuntalam will forever be close to me!" Samantha is also gearing up for the highly anticipated Indian version of 'Citadel'. The actress is working hard on the action sequences and recently shot in Nainital for it. She is also working on her upcoming film 'Kushi' opposite Vijay Deverakonda.



Oscar Isaac to star in 'Helltown' adaptation

Hollywood star Oscar Isaac is in negotiations to headline and executive produce "Helltown" series, based on the book of the same name by Casey Sherman.

Ed Berger, the director, co-writer and producer of this year's Best International Film Oscar winner "All Quiet On the Western Front", is set to direct and executive produce "Helltown".

According to entertainment website Deadline, the eight-episode crime thriller is in development at Amazon Studios and Robert Downey Jr and Susan Downey's Team Downey.

Mohamad El Masri serves as writer, showrunner and executive producer.

"Helltown" revolves around Kurt Vonnegut (Isaac) before he was a renowned author and cultural lightning rod.

"In 1969 Kurt was a struggling novelist and car salesman living life with his wife and five children on Cape Cod. When two women disappear and are later discovered murdered underneath the sand dunes on the outskirts of Provincetown, Kurt becomes obsessed and embroiled in the chilling hunt for a serial killer and forms a dangerous bond with the prime suspect," the synopsis reads.

Berger's German film "All Quiet on the Western Front" earned nine Academy Award nominations and won four trophies -- Best International Feature film, Best Production Design, Best Music (Original Score) and Best Cinematography. PTI

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Jessica Alba put on 'masculine' persona to avoid Hollywood predators

Jessica Alba reveals she channelled her "masculine energy" to avoid Hollywood predators as she established her career.

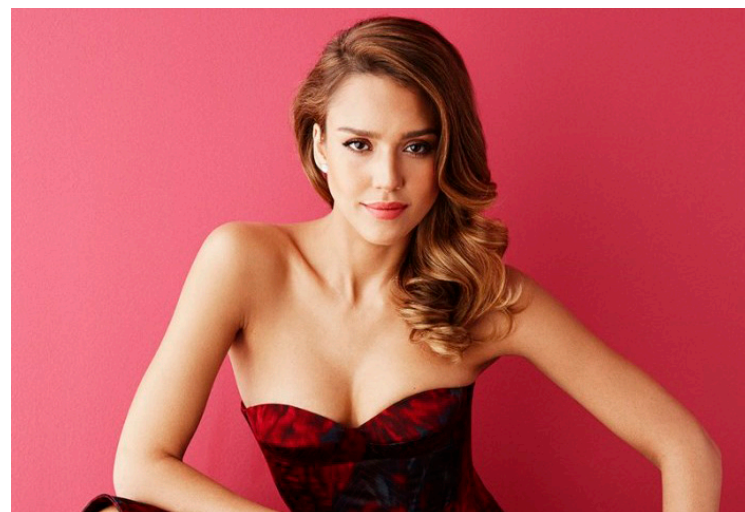
The 'Fantastic Four' alum appeared on the latest episode of HBO Max's 'Who's Talking to Chris Wallace?' The host spoke about Hollywood's infatuation with Alba's looks, asking, "Did that bother you, the degree to which you were objectified as a sex symbol?"

While Alba replied saying she doesn't "think that there's anything wrong" with

"owning your sexuality" and that she "understood it as a business decision and a strategy" at the time, she still was "nervous" because she had to go against her natural personality. "And how did you deal with that?" asked Wallace. "I was a warrior," the 'Sin City' star said. "I put up that energy. ... I was really tough, man."

Alba said she was "quite uncomfortable in my own skin" at the time, and that "it wasn't until I became a mom that I really started to even see myself as a woman or a sexual being or someone

who owned her power and her femininity." But before that, "I felt like I was very much having to put up this armour of masculine and masculine energy," said Alba. "So I wouldn't be preyed on, because there were a lot of predators in Hollywood from [the time I was] age 12 to 26." To that end goal of putting up a "warrior" front, she cursed "like a sailor," Alba recalled. "I think I tried to make myself as unavailable as possible, so that I wouldn't be taken advantage of," she told Wallace.



BUSINESS

Sensex sinks below 58k, Nifty tests 17,000 in 4th straight day of losses

MUMBAI, MARCH 14

Benchmark BSE Sensex declined nearly 340 points to close below the 58,000 level on Tuesday, marking its fourth straight day of losses as auto, IT and financial stocks wilted amid concerns over the fallout of failure of two US-based banks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 337.66 points or 0.58 per cent to settle at a new five month low of 57,900.19. During the session, it touched a high of 58,490.98 and a low of 57,721.16.

The broader NSE Nifty declined 111 points or 0.65 per cent to end at a five-month low of 17,043.30, with 38 of its scrips ending in the red.

Analysts said relentless foreign capital outflows, investors junking riskier assets and weakness in the rupee against the US dollar hit the market sentiment.

M&M was the biggest loser in the

THE BROADER NSE NIFTY DECLINED 111 POINTS OR 0.65 PER CENT TO END AT A FIVE-MONTH LOW OF 17,043.30, WITH 38 OF ITS SCRIPS ENDING IN THE RED.

Sensex pack, declining nearly 3 per cent, followed by TCS, Bajaj Finance, Wipro, Kotak Bank, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech and Tata Motors.

In contrast, Titan, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank and L&T were among the gainers, rising up to 0.93 per cent.

In the broader market, the BSE small-cap gauge fell 0.84 percent and the mid-cap index declined 0.46 per cent.

"Markets are dancing to the global tunes and we'll see the reaction to the US inflation in early trade on Wednesday.

Indications are in the favour of some breather after the recent slide but the upside seems capped too," Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

On March 12, US regulators closed Signature Bank, just two days after shutting Silicon Valley Bank, following mass withdrawals of customer deposits from these regional banks.

Moody's on Tuesday said that most Asia Pacific financial institutions are not exposed to the failed US banks and are not as susceptible to large losses from debt security holdings as Silicon Valley Bank was, Moody's said on Tuesday.

In Asian markets, Shanghai, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul ended with significant losses.

However, European equity markets were trading on a mixed note in the afternoon trade. Major indices on Wall Street settled lower in the overnight trade. **PTI**

IMF treating Pakistan like a 'colony': Maryam Nawaz

LAHORE, MARCH 14

Pakistan is a "hostage" to the IMF which is treating the cash-strapped country like a "colony", senior leader of PML-N Maryam Nawaz has said while lambasting former prime minister Imran Khan for flouting the previous agreements with the global lender.

Pakistan's economy is in dire straits. The country is awaiting a much-needed USD 1.1 billion tranche of funding from the Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"The IMF is not ready to trust us. Pakistan is a hostage to the IMF and it is treating the country like a colony. Even if we try to come out of its clutches, we can't," Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N) leader Maryam said while addressing the youth and social media activists in Model Town here on Monday.

She castigated Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan for flouting the previous IMF agreement, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Because of this today we are begging for Rs 1 billion, the 49-year-old leader said. She drew the comparison of her father Nawaz Sharif's government with



that of Khan, saying the cricketer-turned-politician was "launched to destroy the country".

Maryam, who is the daughter of former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif, has launched several attacks on Khan for selling off gifts presented to him when he was the prime minister and has accused him of pushing Pakistan to the brink of default.

She also said Imran should be arrested. Why is he hiding behind the party workers? He again wants to become the prime minister. I ask what he has done that they (a reference to the establishment) make him prime minister again. Imran Khan tried to have the support of a few generals and judges. Now he is banking on the judiciary to return to power, she said. **PTI**

Vedanta Aluminium signs pact with Dalmia Cement to supply industrial wastes

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

Vedanta Aluminium on Tuesday said it has entered into a long-term pact with Dalmia Cement for supply of industrial wastes such as fly ash and spent pot lining for manufacturing low carbon cement. Under the pact, Vedanta's mega aluminium smelter at Jharsuguda, Odisha will supply around 20 rakes of fly ash every month for five years to Dalmia Cement's manufacturing units in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya, and Assam, and spent pot lining (SPL) for three years to the company's plant at Rajgangpur, Odisha.

Vedanta Aluminium is a preferred supplier of high-quality fly ash to some of the country's leading cement producers, fostering industrial collaboration for the production of low-carbon cement, the company said in a statement. "Strategic collaborations such as this will provide multiple benefits in terms of enhanced quality, sustainability and cost benefits to cement manufacturing, while helping us in gainful waste management. "Our waste-to-wealth initiatives are designed to develop thriving value-chains for converting our by-products into resources for complementary industries and is a significant step forward in our journey towards becoming a leader in sustainable development," Sunil Gupta, CEO of Vedanta Ltd - Jharsuguda, said. **PTI**

Mahindra unit in Bangladesh winds up operations, ceases to exist

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

Mahindra & Mahindra on Tuesday said its wholly-owned unit Mahindra Bangladesh Pvt Ltd has ceased to exist.

Mahindra Bangladesh Pvt Ltd (MBPL) convened the final extraordinary general meeting of its shareholders on March 14, 2023 and approved the final voluntary winding up, Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) said in a statement.

Hence, MBPL has been liquidated and has ceased to be in existence with



effect from March 14, 2023, it added.

MBPL had zero income from operations as on March 31, 2022.

The net worth of MBPL, as on March 31, 2022 stood at Rs 3.18 crore, constituting 0.01 per cent of the consolidated

net worth of the Mumbai-based auto major, M&M noted.

The shareholders of MBPL, at a meeting held on September 14, 2022, had passed a resolution proposing winding up of the unit and appointment of a liquidator for completing the process of winding up. Thereafter, MBPL did not undertake any business operations.

M&M had incorporated MBPL in 2019 to carry multiple activities, including distributing, research and development, of all kinds of passenger, transportation and utility vehicles. **PTI**

Rupee falls 26 paise to 82.49 against US dollar

MUMBAI, MARCH 14

The rupee declined by 26 paise to 82.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday amid stronger dollar, negative sentiment in the domestic equity market and unabated foreign fund outflows.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened lower at 82.27 against the dollar and traded between the range of 82.24 and 82.50 during intra-day. It finally settled at 82.49 (provisional) against the American currency.

This is the second consecutive day of decline in the Indian currency. On Monday, the rupee settled at 82.23 against the US dollar.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, attributed the fall in rupee to the spillover fears after the collapse of the Silicon Valley Bank in the US. "The Rupee fall continued as the Silicon Valley Bank in the US has spread concerns over the spillover fears after its collapse and in line with Asian peers. Rupee this time, fell below 82.48 levels which were last seen on 3rd March 23. "The ripple effect can keep the forex market into continued volatile sessions," he said and projected the range for rupee between 82.20-82.75 in further trades. **PTI**

Gold climbs Rs 480; silver zooms Rs 2,150

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

Gold prices climbed Rs 480 to Rs 57,380 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at Rs 56,900 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also zoomed Rs 2,150 to Rs 66,900 per kg. **PTI**

Udayshivakumar Infra's IPO to kick off on Mar 20

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The initial share sale of Udayshivakumar Infra Ltd is set to open for public subscription on March 20.

The three-day initial public offering (IPO) would conclude on March 23. The bidding for anchor investors would open on March 17, the red herring prospectus (RHP) filed with Sebi showed on Tuesday.

The IPO consists of fresh issue of

equity shares aggregating to Rs 66 crore. Proceeds of the issue will be used to fund incremental working capital requirements and general corporate purposes. "With the Nifty down by around 10 per cent from the peak and underperforming other markets in 2023, the sentiments have turned negative. This is not a favourable time for IPOs, however, attractively priced IPOs will attract investors," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. **PTI**

SPORT

Ahead of Tri-Nation event, Stimac announces provisional squad for camp

KOLKATA, MARCH 14

Indian football team coach Igor Stimac has announced a provisional 23-man squad for a camp that begins here on Wednesday, with Sunil Chhetri and Manvir Singh forming a potent duo upfront.

The Indian team will undergo a five-day camp in Kolkata, before travelling to Imphal, where they will play the Tri-Nation International Football Tournament, at the Khuman Lampak Stadium from March 22 to 28, with Myanmar and Krygyz Republic being the two opponents.

Out of the 23 called up in the squad, 14 will report to the camp on Wednesday, with the other nine (players from Bengaluru FC and ATK Mohun Bagan FC) joining on Match 19, one day after the ISL final.

Eleven players have also been named as the reserves, and will be called up for the camp only if the necessity arises. The final list of players for the Tri-Nation tournament will be announced after the completion of the ISL final.

Provisional squad:

Goalkeepers: Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Phurba Lachenpa Tempa, Amrinder Singh.

Defenders: Sandesh Jhingan, Roshan Singh, Anwar Ali, Akash Mishra, Chinglensana Konsham, Rahul Bheke, Mehtab Singh, Glan Martins.

Midfielders: Suresh Wangjam, Rohit Kumar, Anirudh Thapa, Brandon Fernandes, Yasir Mohammad, Ritwik Das, Jeakson Singh, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Bipin Singh.

Forwards: Manvir Singh, Sunil Chhetri, Sivasakthi Narayanan.

List of 11 reserves:

Goalkeepers: Vishal Kaith, Prabhsukhan Gill.

Defenders: Subhasish Bose, Pritam Kotal, Ashish Rai, Narender Gahlot.

Midfielders: Liston Colaco, Nikhil Poojary, Sahal Abdul Samad, Naorem Mahesh Singh. **PTI**

Prannoy makes winning start at All England Championships

BIRMINGHAM, MARCH 14

India's HS Prannoy survived some anxious moments before advancing to the second round of the All England Championships after registering a straight-game win over Chinese Taipei's Tzu Wei Wang in the men's singles competition here on Tuesday.

The World No. 9 Indian eked out a 21-19 22-20 win over Wang in the 49-minute opening round clash to take his overall tally to 5-3 over the Taiwanese.

The 30-year-old from Kerala will meet either third seeded Indonesian Anthony Sinisuka Ginting or Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen next.

Prannoy looked in good touch as he reeled off five points on the trot to zoom to a comfortable 11-4 lead. However, the Indian was guilty of missing the lines twice and also found the net, allowing Wang to cut down the deficit to three points at 11-14.

Prannoy managed to pull away to 18-12 with four straight points before Wang broke the run of points with an aggressive return after a fast-paced rally.

Wang then punished Prannoy for his



weak returns and moved to 16-19 with a deceptive net return. A backhand going wide and then another one going long from Prannoy brought Wang to 19-19.

Prannoy then unleashed a cross court smash to move to game point and then sent down another straight smash to close the game. The second game was a tightly fought battle from the word go as Wang opened up a 7-2 lead. Prannoy levelled the scores, only to miss the lines at his opponent's forehand corner twice.

He eventually brought down a booming smash to eke out a one point lead at the break. The two engaged in a slugfest next, moving neck and neck till 16-16.

Two venomous returns gave Prannoy a 19-17 lead but he once again squandered it as Wang made it 19-19. The Taiwanese went long next to hand over a match point to the Indian, who wasted it. However, a determined Prannoy ensured there were no last-minute hiccups as he rejoiced once Wang went to net. **PTI**

HC refuses to interfere with non-selection of 3 women boxers in World C'ship team

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday refused to interfere with the non-selection of three national champions Manju Rani, Shiksha Narwal and Poonam Poonia for the upcoming Women's World Boxing Championships.

Justice Prathiba M Singh said in view of the medal tally and evaluation forms of the players, no case for interference with the list of boxers selected to represent the country in the sporting event was made out and the petitioners shall continue to remain in the reserve list for the championship.

"The court notices that scope of interference in a writ petition is limited. The evaluation form has been perused by the court as also the medal tally. The present is not a case for interference under Article 226. The team which has been selected is permitted to go ahead and represent India," the judge said.

The championship is set to take place from March 15 to 31 in Delhi. **PTI**

DGC Open: Home stars Kapur, Bhullar lead Indian charge

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

Home stars Shiv Kapur and Gaganjeet Bhullar will spearhead Indian challenge in the second edition of DGC Open golf tournament beginning on Thursday.

The field of 138 players, from around 35 countries and including almost 50 Indians, has numerous players, who have won on the Asian Tour. Defending champion Thailand's Nitithorn Thippong will

be one of the star attractions in the tournament which has greater incentive this year as the prize purse has gone up from USD 500,000 to USD 750,000, a 50 per cent enhancement.

While the Thai duo of Nitithorn and Sodom Kaewkanjana, will head the foreign challenge, Kapur, a product of the Delhi Golf Club, Bhullar and Rashid Khan, will head the Indian challenge, that include some talented young stars. **PTI**

Singapore Smash 2023

Manika Batra loses both Women's Doubles, Mixed-Doubles

SINGAPORE, MARCH 14

Indian campaign ended at the Singapore Smash table tennis tournament after Manika Batra lost both her women's doubles and mixed doubles matches with her respective partners on Tuesday.

Manika and Sathiyam Gnanasekaran lost to Japan's world championships silver medallists duo of Hina Hayata and Tomokazu Harimoto in the mixed doubles quarterfinals to end their fine run in the tournament.

Manika-Sathiyam went down 2-3 (9-11 9-11 11-8 11-5 7-11) to their fourth-seeded opponents in a hard-fought last-eight stage match that lasted 52 minutes. The Indian duo were seeded sixth in the tournament.

Earlier, Manika and Sathiyam had defeated the Singapore pair of Jian Zeng and Chew Zhe Yu Clarence 3-1 (11-7, 12-10, 9-11, 11-3) in their round of 16 mixed doubles match. They had got a



first round bye.

In the women's doubles, Manika and Archana Kamath lost to Meng Chen and Yidi Wang of China 2-3 (2-11 6-11 15-13 12-10 6-11) in a hard-fought round of 16 match that lasted 42 minutes.

Earlier, Manika, Sathiyam and Sharath Kamal had lost their respective singles matches in the first round. In the men's doubles event, Harmeet Desai and Manav Thakkar were also ousted in the first round. **PTI**

Women Premier League

Mumbai Indian trounce Gujarat Giants

MUMBAI, MARCH 14

Mumbai Indians' juggernaut continued in the Women's Premier League here on Tuesday as the Harmanpreet Kaur-led team stormed to their fifth win in a row, crushing Gujarat Giants by 55 runs.

MI thus clinched a playoff berth with

three matches still remaining.

After making a thumping start to the inaugural WPL against Gujarat Giants with a massive 143-run win at the DY Patil Stadium, Mumbai Indians once again got the better of their opponents with a comprehensive all-round show at the Brabourne Stadium. Gujarat Giants, who stuttered to a fourth loss in five matches and remained on the penultimate

spot in the five-team points table, made 107/9 in 20 overs chasing 163 on a pitch that had something for all parties. In their previous meeting, Gujarat were bundled out for 64 in 15.1 overs in a chase of 208. Hayley Matthews made up for her failure with the bat to return with 4-0-24-3 while leg-spinner Amelia Kerr bagged 2/18 to fuel Mumbai's yet another impressive win in front of a partisan crowd. **PTI**