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NEW DELHI MONDAY 4 MARCH 2024



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WINDOWS



Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and Paula Hurd attend Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's pre-wedding bash in Jamnagar on Saturday. — PTI

PM will inaugurate Metro train under Hooghly this week

Kolkata: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will next week inaugurate Kolkata Metro Railway's Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section, touted to be the first transportation tunnel "under any mighty river in India", a government release said on Sunday. The PM will also inaugurate in Kolkata the Kavi Subhash-Hemanta Mukhopadhyay and the Taratala-Majerhat metro sections, "with a focus on enhancing avenues for ensuring ease of urban mobility", it said. Mr Modi is scheduled to visit Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar from March 4-6. ■ Full report on Page 3

Farmer leaders call 'rail roko' on Mar 10

New Delhi: Farmer leaders Sarwan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallelaw gave a call to the farmers across the nation to reach Delhi on March 6 for a protest while they also gave a "rail roko" countryside call for March 10. ■ Full report on Page 2

Cal HC judge to quit judiciary on Tuesday

Kolkata: Calcutta high court judge Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, whose rulings on various education-related issues in the state stirred political debates, said he will resign from judiciary on Tuesday. ■ Full report on Page 4

COUNTERPOINT



He was caught selling fake party tickets!

WEATHER

Max: 23°C
Min: 8°C
RH: 52%
Rain: 0%

Forecast: Cloudy

ASTROGUIDE

Shobhakarut: Uttarayana
Tithi: Magha Bahula Aastami till 8.45 am
Star: Jyeshtha till 4.14 pm
Variyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 12.51 pm to 1.38 pm; 3.12 pm to 3.59 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
SUNSET TODAY 6.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.42 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.37 AM
MOONSET TODAY 11.45 AM

Ministers told to avoid controversies Focus on Viksit Bharat vision

PM talks with all ministers on 100-day agenda for Modi 3.0

YOJNA GUSAI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

Confident of scoring a hat-trick in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a day-long meeting of his full council of ministers as they brainstormed on the vision document for "Viksit Bharat 2047", and a detailed action plan for the next five years. Sources said Mr Modi sounded confident about the NDA retaining power and told his ministers to refrain from making any controversial statements and focus on the work done by their respective ministries and the achievements of the government in the past 10 years. Mr Modi, the sources said, also asked his team to compare the work done by the NDA and the previous government at the Centre. The PM, sources said,



BJP president J.P. Nadda and party's candidate Bansuri Swaraj for the New Delhi constituency during a meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. Bansuri Swaraj is the daughter of late external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj. — PTI

any controversy, either through their remarks or actions, and only focus on taking their report card to the people. The PM, the sources said, also asked his ministers that the coming full Budget in June should showcase what "Viksit Bharat" (developed India) means for the people who will continue to give their blessing to the BJP-led government by creating

Denied ticket, Vardhan bows out of politics

New Delhi, March 3: With sitting MP Harsh Vardhan's name not figuring from his Chandni Chowk constituency in the list of candidates announced by the BJP for the Lok Sabha polls, he on Sunday announced bowing out of active politics. In a post on X, Mr Vardhan said he will return to his roots. He said, "I shall continue to pursue my work against tobacco and substance abuse, against climate change and teaching simple and sustainable lifestyles." ■ More on Page 2

BJP's Asansol candidate pulls out of LS race

New Delhi/Kolkata, March 3: Bhojpuri singer-actor Pawan Singh withdrew his name from the Lok Sabha poll contest from Asansol seat in West Bengal on Sunday, a day after the BJP named him as its candidate from the constituency. The TMC was quick to mock the BJP by saying it surrendered before the commencement of the election campaign. In a post on X, Mr Singh thanked the BJP leadership for his candidature but added that he will not be able to contest from Asansol "due to some reason". ■ More on Page 3

29 events in 12 states over 10 days: Modi enters poll mode

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be attending 29 programmes spread across 12 states and Union territories over the next 10 days, ahead of the likely announcement of the Lok Sabha polls. The Prime Minister has already visited more than a dozen states since last month for various government and other events. In the coming days, the

On Monday, Mr Modi will unveil multiple development projects in Adilabad in Telangana and later visit Bharatiya Nabhikiya Viduyt Nigam Limited (BHAVIND) in Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu. He will address public meetings in Adilabad as well as in Chennai. The Prime Minister will launch several projects in Sangareddy in Telangana on March 5 and address an event before travelling to Odisha, where he will

Navy to deploy Seahawks in Kochi March 6

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

In a significant upgrade in the Indian Navy's firepower, it will commission on Wednesday the newly-inducted MH 60R Seahawk (a maritime variant of Blackhawk helicopter) multi-role helicopter at the naval air station INS Garuda in Kochi. The Seahawks squadron will be commissioned in the Indian Navy as INAS 834. ■ More on Page 4

Wrestlers' plea on WFI polls set to be heard in HC today

'Declare federation elections and wrestling trials illegal'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 3
The Delhi high court will on Monday hear a petition by wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and her husband Satyawart Kadian seeking to set aside and declare illegal the elections held by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). The petition by the wrestlers, who were at the forefront of last year's protest at Jantar Mantar here, demanding the arrest of former WFI chief



A view of the crowd during the "Jan Vishwas Rally" at the iconic Gandhi Maidan in Patna on Sunday. — PTI

Massive show of strength by INDIA bloc in Patna Nitish mocked: 'Is PM sure he won't shift again?'

Yadavs, Rahul target Modi for sowing hate

NAYYAR AZAD
PATNA, MARCH 3

The Jan Vishwas Rally held at Patna's iconic Gandhi Maidan on Sunday emerged as a significant display of strength for Bihar's Opposition Mahagathbandhan. This was the first Mahagathbandhan rally where top INDIA bloc leaders like RJD supreme Lalu Prasad Yadav, former Bihar deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, top party leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav were present. The event is seen as a significant move ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Top Left leaders like Sitaram Yechury, D. Raja and Dipankar Bhattacharya were also present on the dais. Addressing the rally, RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav launched a scathing attack on Prime



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader Rahul Gandhi and RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav during the "Jan Vishwas Rally" in Patna on Sunday. — PTI

Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of not following Hindu traditions. He said "his failure to shave his head and beard after his mother's demise suggests that he was not a true Hindu". He also took a jibe at the Prime Minister for accusing the Opposition of promoting dynastic politics, saying: "If he doesn't have ■ Turn to Page 4

Café blasts probe to NIA if need arises: K'taka CM Slams BJP's 'Bomb Bengaluru' jab

M.B. GIRISH
BENGALURU, MARCH 3

Reacting to the BJP's demand for an NIA investigation into the Rameshwaram Café blast, Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said that the government may consider handing over the blast case to the Central agency if the need arises. The chief minister assured that the central crime branch (CCB), Bengaluru, is investigating the twin blasts case, which left 10 peo-

7 chargesheeted by CBI for arms, ammunition loot by Manipur mob

New Delhi, March 3: The CBI has filed a chargesheet against seven accused in connection with the looting of arms and ammunition from the Bishnupur police armoury during the Manipur ethnic violence last year, officials said on Sunday. The CBI, which is probing cases related to the ethnic clashes in Manipur, recently filed its chargesheet before the court of chief judicial magistrate in Kamrup (Metro) in Assam's Guwahati. The accused named in the chargesheet are Laishram Prem Singh, Khumukcham Dhiren alias Thapka, Moirangthem Anand Singh, Athokpam Kajit alias Kishorjit, Loukrakpam Michael Mangangcha alias Michael, Konthoujam Romojit Meitei alias Romojit, and Keisham Johnson alias Johnson. On August 3 last year, a mob looted more than 300 weapons, 19,800 rounds of ammunition and other accessories from two rooms of the 2nd Indian Reserve Battalion headquarters at Naraneina in Bishnupur. The Supreme Court in August last year had transferred all CBI cases from Manipur to Assam. — PTI ■ More on Page 3

Shehbaz elected PM, vows to do 'deep surgery' to end Pak crisis

Islamabad, March 3: Pakistan's newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday vowed to do a "deep surgery" and bring changes in the system to bring the cash-strapped country out of the alarming debt crisis and secure G-20 membership by 2030.

Shehbaz Sharif, who was the consensus candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), became the Prime Minister on Sunday for a

PAGE 6

Shehbaz rakes up Kashmir issue, pledges to improve ties with neighbours

on Monday. In his victory speech as the country's 24th Prime Minister, Shehbaz said Pakistan had a big challenge and opportunity before it. "If we come together and decide to change the fate of Pakistan — then God willing, we will defeat these challenges and take Pakistan to its rightful position," the 72-year-old leader said as he profusely thanked his elder brother and three-time PM Nawaz Sharif's visionary leadership. — PTI ■ More on Page 6



Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Shehbaz Sharif (right) meets former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after being elected as Prime Minister of Pakistan on Sunday. — PTI



SHORT TAKES

Delhi police SI shoots self at flat

New Delhi: A sub-inspector of the Delhi police died by allegedly shooting himself with a pistol at his flat in east Delhi, in a suspected case of suicide, officials said on Sunday. According to the police, the deceased has been identified as K. Ganesh, a resident of Telangana who was currently posted at the Madhu Vihar police station. "On the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday at around 2 am, the police got a call from the family members of the SI, saying the officer was not responding to their calls," a senior police officer said. This raised suspicion and the local police rushed to the Ganesh's flat in Madhu Vihar, the officer said. As the apartment was found locked from inside, the police team climbed up to the balcony of the flat, situated on the building's first floor. On peeping through the glass pane, they spotted SI Ganesh lying dead inside with a pistol on his lap, the officer added.

Nationwide pulse polio drive held

New Delhi: A nationwide pulse polio immunisation drive to administer polio vaccine to the children below the age of 5 was conducted in all districts across the country on Polio Day on Sunday. The nation had detected the last case of wild poliovirus in West Bengal in 2011. The victim then an 18-month-old girl named Rukhsar from Howrah district, was infected with type 1 poliovirus. However, India was declared polio-free by the WHO south-east Asia regional office on March 27, 2014. Dr Nischal Pandey from Rotary International said, "Even after 10 years of being declared Polio-free, the threat from the virus persists as India shared borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan, who continue to be Polio endemic".

29 events in 12 states in next 10 days for PM

Continued from Page 1
 inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of multiple development initiatives. Before travelling to West Bengal, he will address a public meeting in Chandikhole in Odisha. On March 6, Mr Modi will unveil development projects in Kolkata and address a public meeting in Barasat. He will then travel to Bihar and inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of multiple development projects in Bettiah. The Prime Minister will be in Jammu and Kashmir on March 7 and attend a media event in Delhi in the evening. On March 8, Mr Modi will participate in the first-ever National Creator's Award in Delhi and then leave for Assam in the evening. Mr Modi will inaugurate the Sela tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh's West Kameng district and then unveil multiple development projects in Itanagar. Later, he will unveil a statue of legendary Ahom army commander Lachit Borphukan in Jorhat, Assam. Thereafter, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of multiple development projects in Jorhat. The Prime Minister will also visit West Bengal, launch development projects in Siliguri and address a public meeting there. On March 10, Mr Modi will be in Uttar Pradesh and will dedicate to the nation various projects from Azamgarh. The Prime Minister will attend an event in Delhi the next day related to the "Name Drone Didi" and "Lakshpati Didi" programmes. Then, he will inaugurate the Haryana section of the Dwarka Expressway. In the evening, he will attend a Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) programme. On March 12, Mr Modi will visit Sabarmati in Gujarat and Pokhran in Rajasthan. He will lay the foundation stones for three important semiconductor projects in Gujarat and Assam via video conferencing on March 13. He is also scheduled to attend an outreach programme for disadvantaged sections of society via video conferencing. The Prime Minister has been unveiling a slew of development projects running into lakhs of crores of rupees across the nation as he seeks to turn the spotlight on his government's development and welfare agenda in the run-up to the general election expected to be held in April-May.

NETA'S NATTER



'MODI HAI TO MUMKIN HAI'

Realising that a BJP candidate is more likely to win than its rivals in the impending Lok Sabha polls, many politicians are ready to contest from anywhere in the country on the saffron party's ticket. Recently, a person reached the Delhi BJP office and asked for a party ticket from the North West Delhi parliamentary seat. He was informed that the names of probable candidates from the national capital have already been submitted. However, a party leader asked the ticket aspirant if he would contest from Kerala. The man promptly said yes, adding that except Wayanad, the seat represented by former Congress president Rahul Gandhi. After some time, the ticket seeker told the Delhi BJP that he was even willing to contest from the Gaya (reserved) Lok Sabha seat in Bihar. A Delhi BJP leader jokingly said that this is "Modi's magic".

SPEAKER KEPT A CLOSE WATCH

As the term of the current Lok Sabha nears its completion, it is significant to remember the role of the Speaker Om Birla, who ensured that he was in Parliament whenever the House was in session. He never even went out for lunch during a session and used to keep a close watch on the House proceedings. Last year, during the Monsoon Session, unhappy over the behaviour of the MPs, he refused to preside over the House, but only for one day.



OPP. POKES FUN AS BJP MPs WORRY BEING DENIED LOK SABHA TICKETS

On February 10, the last day of the 17th Lok Sabha, the members of Parliament of various political parties were wishing each other to come back again after winning the ensuing Lok Sabha elections. However, some MPs of the ruling BJP appeared a little perturbed, as they were not sure whether their party will field them again or not. Not to miss out on an opportunity to poke fun, a TMC MP from the outgoing Lok Sabha said that most of the sitting MPs from the Opposition block are likely to contest the coming general election, but this is not true for the BJP's MPs as their fate is hanging in the air until their names are not approved by the high command. It is said that the BJP is expected to replace nearly one-third of their sitting MPs with new faces for the impending Lok Sabha elections.

U'KHAND ALMOST SQUANDERED GOODWILL PM'S VISIT EARNED FOR ALMORA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jageshwar Dham in Uttarakhand's Almora district led to a surge of YouTubers and visitors to the otherwise quaint location. Subsequently, the Uttarakhand government announced a master plan to develop the area, under which about 1,000 deodar trees were to be felled. After some of these trees were marked by the forest department to be cut down,



the state government faced massive outrage for 'disturbing' the holy abode of the deity. Not just environmentalists; even the locals staged protests and warned to launch a second "Chipko Aandolan" to save the trees.

Most of these trees, according to locals, are hundreds of years old and are also worshipped as part of Lord Shiva's sacred forest in the "valley of the gods." Sensing the situation, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami ordered a re-evaluation of the order of chopping the trees and assured that the ecology of the area will be given priority.

Farmer leaders call 'rail roko' on March 10

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

Farmer leaders Sarwan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Sunday gave a call to the farmers across the nation to reach Delhi on March 6 for a protest while they also gave a four-hour 'rail roko' countrywide call for March 10 in support of their various demands.

The two farmer leaders asserted that the farmers' ongoing agitation will be intensified at the existing protest points and will continue till their demands are met by the government. They were speaking in Bathinda district's Balloh village, the native village of a farmer who died recently during clashes



Farmers work at a field as dark clouds gather in the sky in Gurgaon on Sunday.

with the Haryana security personnel in Khanauri. The Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) is spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march by the farmers to press the government to accept their demands, which includes that the Centre should give a legal guarantee of the minimum support price (MSP) for the

Centre used all tactics to stop their 'Delhi Chalo' march. "The Centre is trying to build a perception that the current agitation is limited to Punjab and the fight is led by only two forums. But we want to make it clear that more than 200 outfits in the country are part of the two forums," he said. Allying the Centre does not want to resolve the farmers' issue, the farmer leader also accused the BJP of playing divisive politics to win the elections. Mr Pandher also reiterated that India should come out of the WTO agreement. Mr Dallewal, on his part, underlined, "We will have to fight till our last breath and we will fight till our demands are met."



Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena visits heritage monuments in Mehrauli Archaeological Park and Sanjay Van in New Delhi on Sunday.

L-G orders restoration of heritage monuments

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

After the heritage sites at Mehrauli Archaeological Park and Sanjay Van were handed over to DDA from the ASI, Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena on Sunday undertook an extensive visit of these places and directed the DDA to carry out a comprehensive conservation and restoration work of several heritage monuments lying on the verge of destruction due to utter neglect, under the overall supervision of ASI.

Mr Saxena, accompanied by officials of DDA and

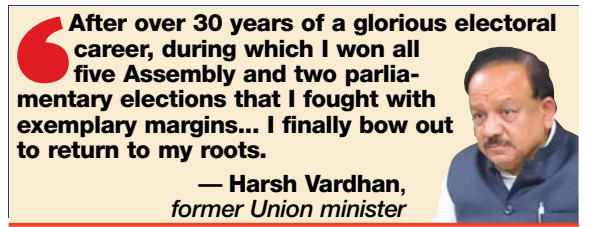
Hints at returning to career as ENT surgeon

Denied a ticket, Harsh Vardhan quits politics

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

The former Union minister and sitting BJP MP from Delhi's Chandni Chowk, Dr Harsh Vardhan, announced his decision to quit politics on Sunday. His decision came a day after the BJP declared its first list of Lok Sabha candidates, which did not include his name. A five-time MLA and two-time MP from the constituency, Dr Vardhan served as the Union health minister during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2014, Dr Vardhan had defeated Kapil Sibal, then with the Congress, to win the Chandni Chowk Lok Sabha seat while in the 2019 polls he trounced Congress' Jai Prakash Agarwal. In a detailed post on X, he recalled his achievements in his "over 30 years of glorious electoral career" and thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the party workers.

The veteran BJP leader also hinted at returning to his career as an ENT surgeon and resuming duties at his clinic in East Delhi's Krishna Nagar. In his post, Dr Vardhan said, "After over 30 years of a glorious electoral career, during which I won all five Assembly and two parliamentary elections that I fought with exemplary margins... I finally bow out to return to my roots."



Acknowledging the RSS's role in his political career, Dr Vardhan mentioned, "It was at the insistence of the then RSS leadership that I jumped into the electoral fray." He expressed gratitude towards his party colleagues and supporters and said, "I would like to thank all my party karyakartas, my fans, and supporters amongst the common citizens as well as my party leaders... I must acknowledge that I consider it a great privilege to have worked closely with the most dynamic Prime Minister in India's history, Shri Narendra Modi ji." Of the seven seats in Delhi, the BJP in its first list announced the names of five candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Confederation of All India Traders secretary Praveen Khandelwal has been named as the party candidate for the Chandni Chowk constituency. The BJP is expected to announce its candidates for the remaining two seats—East Delhi and Northwest Delhi—in the second list of nominees. Interestingly, before Dr Vardhan, sitting MP Gautam Gambhir also announced his decision to quit active politics to focus on cricket. Dr Vardhan has served as Central minister in various portfolios including health and family welfare, science and technology, Earth sciences and environment, forest, and climate change. Previously, he held the position of minister of health, education, law and justice, and legislative affairs in the Delhi government during his five-term tenure as MLA (1993-1998). He has also been hailed for his role in the pulse polio immunisation programme in the country. "I served as Delhi health minister and twice as Union health minister, a subject close to my heart. I had the rare opportunity bestowed upon me to be able to first work towards creating a polio-free Bharat and then to take care of the health of millions of our countrymen grappling with the dreaded Covid-19 during its first and second phases," he said.

AAP slams BJP over naming Bansuri for LS polls, she hits back

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

The AAP on Sunday attacked the BJP for fielding Bansuri Swaraj from the New Delhi constituency in the Lok Sabha elections, claiming she had represented "anti-national powers" in court, even as she hit back at Delhi's ruling party over its choice of candidate from the seat. Delhi minister Atishi said at a press conference that Ms Swaraj—the daughter of late BJP leader and former Union minister Sushma Swaraj—should apologise to the people of the country for taking up such cases and also demanded that the saffron party replace her.

"Bansuri Swaraj has replaced Meenakshi Lekhi from the New Delhi Lok Sabha constituency. She has represented anti-national powers in courts of law," the senior AAP leader claimed. "She (Swaraj) represented the Chandigarh mayor who was elected by cheating in the recent mayoral polls. She has represented Lalit Modi, a fugitive, from 2012 to 2014 in courts of law," Ms Atishi alleged. She also demanded that the BJP change its candidate from the constituency.

Hitting back, Ms Swaraj questioned the AAP on its choice of candidate, who was allegedly beaten up by his own cadre in Rajendra Nagar on



Bansuri Swaraj

"THEY HAVE named a candidate who is not liked by his own party members. They can put allegations against us but people will give them a reply in the elections I would like to ask the AAP—why have you fielded a candidate who was beaten up by his own cadre in Rajendra Nagar yesterday (Saturday)," Ms Swaraj said. Saturday. Responding to the AAP's allegations, Ms Swaraj said, "I would like to ask the AAP—why have you fielded a candidate who was beaten up by his own cadre in Rajendra Nagar yesterday (Saturday)?" "They have named a candidate who is not liked by his own party members. They can put allegations against us but people will give them a reply in the elections," she said. The AAP has named Somnath Bharti as its candidate for the New Delhi seat.

2 men die in mall as iron grille falls from 5th floor

Noida, March 3: Two men died on Sunday allegedly after an iron grille fell on them inside a shopping mall in Noida Extension, police said. The duo were walking towards an escalator on the ground floor of Galaxy Blue Sapphire mall when the iron structure fell on them from the fifth floor, leaving them dead on the spot, additional DCP (Central Noida) Hridesh Katheriya said. Both the victims, aged around 35, were residents of the Vijay Nagar area in adjoining Ghaziabad district, Mr Katheriya said. "The local Bisrakh police station was informed by Yatharth Hospital that two people

THE DUO were walking towards an escalator on the ground floor of Galaxy Blue Sapphire mall when the iron structure fell on them. They died in Blue Sapphire mall after an iron grille fell on them from the fifth floor. A police team immediately reached the spot," he said. "Those killed have been identified as Harendra Bhati and Shakeel, the officer said. Mr Katheriya said the families of the victims have been contacted and legal action would be initiated in the case once a complaint is received from them. —PTI

3 die after car collides with truck, 4 injured

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

Three men were killed and four injured after their car collided with a truck on the Badarpur flyover in Southeast Delhi, the police said on Sunday. The accident took place late on Saturday when seven men were returning to Okhla's Sanjay Colony from a wedding in Haryana's Faridabad, it added. Officers at the Badarpur police station received a PCR call at 12.48 am about an accident on the Badarpur flyover near the Honda showroom, DCP (Southeast) Rajesh Deo said. A police team reached the spot and rushed the injured to the trauma cen-

INVESTIGATIONS REVEALED that the car driver lost control of his vehicle and hit a divider on the flyover. The car bounced off the divider under the impact of the collision and landed on the opposite carriageway, where it collided with the truck. Investigations revealed that the car driver lost control of his vehicle and hit a divider on the flyover. The car bounced off the divider under the impact of the collision and landed on the opposite carriageway, where it collided with the truck, he added. The victims have been identified as one Raj (21), Sanju (38), and Dinesh (22),

the police said. Among the injured, one Ansul (18) is said to be critical while Neeraj (18), Ajit (28), and Vishal (28) are stable, it said. Raj was unmarried and living with his family in Laxmi Nagar. His father works as a tailor in Mathura while his mother has passed away, the police said. Sanju, a resident of Sanjay Colony, was married with two children—a son and a daughter. He worked as a labourer at a tailor shop. Dinesh, also a resident of Sanjay Colony, was unmarried. He was a cloth cutter at a shop in Okhla, it added. According to the police, the impact of the accident was such that the car was completely mangled.

Woman, son die as bike rams into road divider

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

A woman and her son died after the motorcycle they were riding skidded and rams into a divider in southeast Delhi, the police said on Sunday. The deceased were identified as Shanti Devi and her son Rahul, residents of Faridabad in Haryana, they said. The Sunlight Colony police station received a call Saturday late night regarding the accident that took place at Sarai Kale Khan, a police officer

A police team rushed to the spot and took the injured persons to LNJP hospital, where they succumbed to injuries, the officer said. During investigation, it was revealed that the accident occurred when the mother-son duo were going towards ITO from their home, the officer said, adding that the woman was riding pillion. According to an eyewitness, the man suddenly lost balance of the motorcycle, following which it skidded and collided with the divider.

SHORT TAKES

Raut challenges Modi to contest from Maha

Mumbai: Senior Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut has challenged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to contest from Nashik constituency in Maharashtra in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. The BJP's position in Maharashtra is so grave that they do not have candidates to contest the elections in the state. Even if PM Modi contests from here, he will lose, Mr Raut said. The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader was in Nashik on Sunday to oversee the preparations for Aadiitya Thackeray's public rally at Ghoti in Igatpuri taluka of Nashik district. He claimed that if Nashik MP (from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena) contests the elections this time, he would lose the deposit. "PM Modi should contest from the Nashik Lok Sabha seat... even he will be defeated. Maharashtra's people are appalled over the game of power and money played (by the BJP) in the state," he said. — PTI

Supporters of BJP leader clash; 1 hurt

Gwalior: One person was injured in a firing after supporters of a BJP leader clashed with each other in front of the party's office in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior city on Sunday, police said. The incident occurred close to a police outpost in the Maharaj Bada area in the afternoon, an official said. According to party sources, a fight broke out between supporters of BJP leader Bharat Singh Kushwaha, who is the party's candidate from Gwalior seat for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. "We were notified about the firing near BJP office. We rushed the injured man, Dharmendra Singh Gurjar, to a hospital," Kotwali City Superintendent of Police (CSP) Ayush Gupta told PTI. Gurjar sustained bullet injury to his arm, he said. — PTI

Day after quitting BJD, neta joins BJP

Bhubaneswar: Five-time Odisha MLA Arabinda Dhali on Sunday joined the BJP, a day after resigning from the ruling BJD. Mr Dhali went to the BJP office in Bhubaneswar along with his supporters in a procession, and formally joined the BJP in the presence of its state president Manmohan Samal and MP Aparajita Sarangi, among others. Former MLA Mukunda Sodi, who also resigned from the BJD, joined the BJP along with Mr Dhali. Addressing the press, Mr Dhali alleged that there was no democracy within the BJD and senior leaders were being neglected. "After feeling suffocated, I left the BJD and joined the BJP, which has internal democracy," he said. Mr Dhali, the MLA of Jaydev in Khorda district, claimed that the BJP will form the next government in the state. — PTI

HOPE TO BECOME U.P. MANTRI THIS WEEK: RAJBHAR

Ballia, UP, March 3: Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar on Sunday expressed the hope of becoming a minister in the Uttar Pradesh government this week and also claimed the victory of NDA candidates on all the 80 seats of Uttar Pradesh. Addressing the Vanchit Shoshit Haq Adhikar rally in Sikandarpur of the district, he said, "Purvanchal state will be formed after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. After that you all will be the chief minister and your government will be formed." Mr Rajbhar said, "In the most populous Uttar Pradesh, the Dalits, the deprived and the exploited have not got their full rights yet. For this, it is necessary that a uniform education system be implemented in the entire country." The SBSP is a constituent of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Since Mr Rajbhar, who was part of the Samajwadi Party (SP) alliance in the 2022 assembly elections in UP, returned to the NDA a few months ago, there is constant speculation about his becoming a minister in the state government led by Yogi Adityanath. — PTI

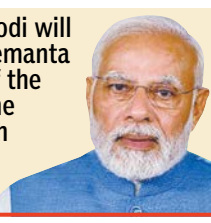


Om Prakash Rajbhar

Modi set to inaugurate Metro train under Hooghly this week

Kolkata, March 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will next week inaugurate Kolkata Metro Railway's Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section, touted to be the first transportation tunnel "under any mighty river in India", a government release said on Sunday. "The PM will also inaugurate in Kolkata the Kavi Subhash-Hemanta Mukhopadhyay and the Taratala-Majerhat Metro sections, with a focus on enhancing avenues for ensuring ease of urban mobility", it said. Mr Modi is scheduled to visit Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar from March 4-6. "The Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section (East West Metro corridor) has the first transportation tunnel under any mighty

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will also launch the Kavi Subhash Hemanta Mukhopadhyay Metro section of the Kavi Subhash-Airport line and the Taratala-Majerhat section, which is a part of the Joka-Esplanade line, the release said



river in India", said the release. It passes under the Hooghly river, on the east and west banks of which are situated Kolkata and Howrah cities. Kolkata Metro created history in April 2023, when its rake ran through a tunnel under a river, the Hooghly, for the first time in the country. The PM will also launch the Kavi Subhash-Hemanta Mukhopadhyay Metro section of the Kavi Subhash-Airport line and the Taratala-Majerhat section, which is a part of the

Joka-Esplanade line, the release said. The Howrah Metro station is also the deepest metro station in India. The 4.8-km stretch between Howrah Maidan and Esplanade is the second section of the East West Metro corridor between Howrah Maidan and IT hub Salt Lake Sector V. The Esplanade-Sealdah stretch of the East West alignment is awaiting completion. Metro railway general manager P. Uday Kumar Reddy had earlier said it is targeting June

July this year to start commercial operation in the entire route of East West alignment. Completion of the project has suffered delays owing to an aquifer burst at Bowbazar in central Kolkata on August 31, 2019, leading to severe ground subsidence, and the collapse of a number of buildings there and two more water leakage incidents at the same site in 2022 during tunneling and construction work. The Salt Lake Sector V to Sealdah stretch of the East-West Metro corridor is commercially operational at present. Out of the total 16.6 km length of the East West Metro, the underground corridor constitutes 10.8 km between Howrah Maidan and Phoolbag, with the tunnel under the Hooghly river. — PTI

LS polls: BJP's Pawan Singh withdraws from Asansol seat

Abhishek hails 'indomitable spirit, power of WB people'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 3



Pawan Singh

A day after the BJP named him as its candidate from West Bengal's Asansol parliamentary constituency, Bhojpuri singer-actor Pawan Singh on Sunday withdrew his name from the Lok Sabha election contest. Asansol is currently represented by TMC's Shastrughan Sinha, who won this seat in a 2022 bypoll in the state. Soon after Mr Singh's name was announced, many social media handles of the TMC supporters started uploading video clips of some of his songs, pointing out how the videos and the language were crude and depicted women, including those from the state, in a vulgar way. In a post on X, Mr Singh

thanked the BJP leadership for his candidature but added that he will not be able to contest from Asansol "due to some reason". TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee shared Mr Singh's post on X and said the "indomitable spirit and power of the people of West Bengal." The BJP apparently decided to nudge Mr Singh to step aside from the contest to defuse the

controversy, more so when the party seized on the Sandeshkhali row to go after the TMC leadership. Many women in Sandeshkhali have accused suspended TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh and his associates of sexual assault and land grabbing. According to Sources, even the BJP workers were opposed to Mr Singh's candidature. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi is anti-Bengali. He came here, lectured on 'Nari Shakti' and then gave a ticket to someone who has vilified Bengali women. That's the 'Modi ki guarantee'. If you speak ill of Bengal, women, we'll give you a ticket," said the Trinamul Congress leader Derek O. Brien.



Former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana Soren seeks blessing from her mother-in-law Rupri Soren and JMM chief Shibu Soren in Ranchi before attending the foundation day programme of the party. — PTI

Tejashwi: RJD stands for 'rights, jobs, development'

Patna, March 3: Labelling the BJP as a "factory of lies", former Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday asserted that his RJD stands for "rights, jobs and development". Addressing the "Jan Vishwas Maha" rally in Patna's Gandhi Maidan, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader said, "I can say with confidence that the BJP is a factory of lies... But the RJD stands for 'rights, jobs and development'."



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, CPM secretary general Sitaram Yechury and CPI general secretary D. Raja during the "Jan Vishwas Rally" in Patna on Sunday. — PTI

"BJP leaders make false promises (jumla karte hain)... But we fight for the rights and jobs of the people of Bihar and the country," he said. He further asserted that while some claim that the RJD is a party of the M-Y (Muslim and Yadav), it is in fact a party of the M-Y and BAAP, where B stands for Bahujan, A for "Agda" (upper caste), A for "Aadhi

Aabadi" (women) and P for poor. Hitting out at chief minister Nitish Kumar, who dumped the RJD-led grand alliance to return to the NDA in Bihar, he said, "What the Mahagathabandhan government did in the last 17 months in the state, Nitishji, who has joined hands with the

BJP, could not do in the last 17 years." Mocking Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar for his latest volte-face, he referred to a Hindi film song Idhar Chala Main Udhar Chala and said, "Nitish chacha (uncle) does something like this and frequently changes sides." — PTI

Ex-CM: Anything can happen in HP in coming days

Shimla, March 3: Indicating a change of guard in Himachal Pradesh, Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday asked his party workers to get ready, and said that anything can happen in the coming days. Mr Thakur said it is "difficult for the Congress to stay in power", as the political situation in the state is grim for the party. "Even the ministers are now walking out of the cabinet meeting," he added. Mr Thakur's remarks come as high drama was witnessed during the Cabinet meeting on Saturday with revenue minister Jagat Negi leaving the meeting in between and education minister Rohit Thakur also walking out after heated arguments. The two ministers, however, maintained they had their engagements. — PTI

Ahead of LS polls, security up all along western border

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

Ahead of the impending Lok Sabha election in the coming months, the security along with the western border and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been tightened up. The Central forces have also been directed to keep utmost vigil on the border areas especially along the Line of Control (LoC) while the "security grid system" has been recalibrated in the Kashmir Valley. According to the sources in the security setup, a communication has been sent by the Union home ministry to all border guarding forces instructing them to increase intensive border patrolling from Punjab to J&K. Referring to the drone menace carrying arms

A COMMUNICATION has been sent by the Union home ministry to all border guarding forces instructing them to increase intensive border patrolling from Punjab to J&K

in Kashmir was activated during the lone-wolf attacks cases in recent years. Under this system, the sensitive areas have been divided into grids and CCTV surveillance is activated to keep an eye on the suspicious activities of anti-national elements. A senior Army official said that despite a huge requisition of the Central forces for the election duties, adequate numbers of battalions have been kept in reserve for border guarding purposes. The recent intelligence inputs have suggested a change in the tactics by Pakistan's Army, Rangers, and ISI, which intend to avoid any backlash or counteroffensive at this juncture, as this would have international and domestic ramifications beyond their control, the sources said.

Centre earned ₹3,700-cr in railways from senior citizens: Rahul 'BJP govt put financial burden on people'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday attacked the BJP-led Union government for putting a financial burden on the common man by increasing the price of travel and platform tickets of the railways. He alleged that the policies of the railways were being framed by the government keeping only the rich in mind. He also claimed that the trust in Prime

Minister Narendra Modi is a "guarantee of betrayal". In a post on X, Mr Gandhi said, "The people of 'Hawai Chappal' dreamed of travelling by plane, Narendra Modi is taking away the 'railways of the poor' from them. Amidst a 10 per cent increase in fare every year, loot in the name of dynamic fare, rising cancellation charges and expensive platform tickets, people are being lured by showing the picture of

an 'elite train' on which the poor cannot even step foot," he said. He also claimed that the government has collected ₹3,700 crore from senior citizens in the last three years by "snatching away" the exemptions given to them, also the poor and middle-class passengers have been left out of railways' priority. "Common persons' trains are made to languish to give precedence to the train selected for publicity. To increase the

number of AC coaches, the number of general coaches is being reduced. Not only labourers and farmers but also students and service-class people travel in these (general) coaches. The production of AC coaches has also been increased to three times that of normal coaches," Mr Gandhi alleged, adding that ending the tradition of presenting the Railway Budget separately was a conspiracy to hide these exploits.

Thackeray takes a dig over Gadkari's exclusion from list

'Tainted Kripa Shankar in BJP list'

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, MARCH 3

A day after the BJP released its first list of 195 candidates for the Lok Sabha elections, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday took a dig at the BJP stating that Union minister Nitin Gadkari is not there in the list but tainted Kripa Shankar Singh has got ticket from UP's Jaunpur seat. He also claimed that there is a massive unrest against the BJP in the country and if it wins the Lok Sabha elections, it will be only because of the "EVM scam". Mr Thackeray said that when Narendra Modi and Amit Shah were nowhere, Nitin Gadkari was known to the country. "I was surprised (over seeing the first list)... even before I had heard the names of Modi ji and Shah ji, I had heard the name of Mr Gadkari and worked with him. He (Nitin Gadkari) is a loyal BJP worker. He had constructed the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, which



Uddhav Thackeray

was a dream project of Shiv Sena founder (Bal Thackeray), in record time. His name was not featured in the first list. But it contains the name of one whom they alleged to have disproportionate assets, Kripa Shankar Singh. This is today's BJP," the Sena (UBT) chief said. Kripashankar Singh, a former state minister in the Congress-NCP government in Maharashtra, will be the BJP candidate from his hometown Jaunpur Lok Sabha constituency in Jaunpur district of UP. In 2015, Mr Singh and his family members were chargesheeted for possessing more assets than their known income.

SC verdict today on immunity to MPs, MLAs over bribes for votes

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

A seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India is slated to pronounce its verdict on Monday on the issue of whether MPs and MLAs enjoy immunity from prosecution for taking bribes to make a speech or cast a vote in Parliament or state legislatures. The bench had reserved its judgment on October 5 last year. The Centre had submitted before SC that bribery can never be a subject

matter of immunity and a parliamentary privilege is not meant to place a lawmaker above law. The judgment was reserved after the bench heard arguments from the attorney-general, the solicitor-general and amicus curiae P.S. Patwalia, who was assisting the court in the matter. Twenty-five years after the JMM bribery scandal rocked the country; the seven-judge bench is reconsidering the judgment delivered by a five-judge bench of the apex court in 1998 in the JMM graft case, by which MPs and MLAs were granted

immunity from prosecution for taking bribes to make a speech or vote in legislature. The bench said it would examine whether the immunity granted to lawmakers from prosecution for taking bribes to make a speech or vote in Parliament and state legislatures is extended to them, even if criminality is attached to their actions. On 20th September 2023, the SC had agreed to reconsider its judgment, saying it was an important issue having a significant bearing on "morality of polity".

CBI charges 7 in Manipur armoury loot case

New Delhi, March 3: The CBI has filed a charge sheet against seven accused in connection with the looting of arms and ammunition from the Bishnupur police armoury during the Manipur ethnic violence last year, officials said on Sunday. The CBI, which is probing cases related to the ethnic clashes in Manipur, recently filed its charge sheet before the court of

chief judicial magistrate in Kamrup (Metro) in Assam's Guwahati. The accused named in the charge sheet are Laishram Prem Singh, Khumukcham Dhiren alias Thapka, Moirangthem Anand Singh, Athokpam Kajit alias Kishorjit, Loukrakpam Michael Mangangcha alias Michael, Konthoujam Romojit Meitei alias Romojit, and Keisham Johnson alias Johnson.

AROUND 9,000 rounds of bullets of different calibres, an AK series assault rifle, 3 "Ghaatak" rifles, 195 self-loading rifles, five MP-5 guns, 16 9mm pistols, 25 bulletproof jackets, 21 carbines, and 124 hand grenades were looted

ammunition and other accessories from two rooms of the 2nd Indian Reserve Battalion headquarters at Naranseina in Bishnupur. Around 9,000 rounds of bullets of different calibres, an AK series assault rifle, three "Ghaatak" rifles, 195 self-loading rifles, five MP-5 guns, 16 9mm pistols, 25 bulletproof jackets, 21 carbines, and 124 hand grenades, among others, were looted by the

mob, the officials said. Barring Laishram Prem Singh and Khumukcham Dhiren alias Thapka, the remaining five have been earlier chargesheeted by the CBI in looting of police armoury at the Manipur Police Training Centre (MPTC) at Pangei in Imphal. This incident took place on May 4 last year, the day ethnic clashes between Meitei and Kukis broke out in Manipur. — PTI



SHORT TAKES

CBI arrests NHA official over graft

New Delhi/Nagpur: The CBI on Sunday said that it has arrested a general manager of the NHA in a bribery case involving an amount of ₹20 lakh in Maharashtra's Nagpur. Arvind Kale, who is also a project director, allegedly received the bribe from an employee of a Bhopal-based private company, Bansal Construction Works Private Limited, engaged in the infrastructure construction business, the officials in the agency said. The CBI carried out searches at five locations in Bhopal and Nagpur, including residential and official premises, and recovered ₹45 lakh in cash, including the bribe amount of ₹20 lakh, they further said. A case has been registered against Kale and 11 others, including company and its director. The CBI had received inputs that a director of the company was allegedly delivering bribes to NHA officials through the firm's employees for various undue favours, officials said.

DRI officials seize 300 turtles, 3 held

Bhubaneswar: The officials of the directorate of revenue intelligence (DRI) on Saturday foiled a major wildlife trafficking attempt and rescued over 300 Indian Tent Turtles in Odisha from a car, reports said on Sunday. Acting on specific intelligence, officers of DRI carried out surveillance near Manguli Toll Plaza, Cuttack, and intercepted a vehicle. As per reports, three persons were inside the vehicle which was coming from West Bengal. During questioning, the three accused confessed that they were carrying 351 Indian Tent Turtles (Pangshura tentoria) from West Bengal that were to be delivered to Karnataka. The Indian tent turtle is listed in Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and is thereby provided the highest degree of protection.

GI tag for Cuttack's silver filigree work

Bhubaneswar: Silver filigree, popularly known as chandi tarakasi of Odisha's Cuttack city has been accorded geographical indications (GI) tag. The development assures a lot of significance for the people of Odisha, especially Cuttack as it is the hub for the sophisticated craft which has been practiced for ages. As per reports, an application was filed in 2021 seeking geographical indications for Cuttack Silver Filigree (under "handi crafts" category). Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik said that it is a matter of honour for Odisha to get the GI tag for Cuttack's silver filigree (chandi tarakasi). Taking to his official X handle (formerly known as Twitter), Mr Patnaik wrote, "The centuries-old sophisticated craft practiced in the Silver City of Cuttack gives a distinct identity to our state for its intricate workmanship."

Navy set to witness significant surge in maritime prowess

Navy to commission Seahawk copter March 6 at INS Garuda

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

In a significant upgrade in the Indian Navy's firepower, it will commission on Wednesday the newly-inducted MH 60R Seahawk (a maritime variant of Blackhawk helicopter) multi-role helicopter at the naval air station INS Garuda, Kochi.

The Seahawks squadron will be commissioned in the Indian Navy as INAS 334. India had signed the \$2.4 billion deal to buy these 24 helicopters during the visit of former US President Donald Trump.

To date, India has received 6 of these helicopters. These helicopters are a replacement for the Sea King 42/42A helicopters which were already decommissioned in the 1990s and are envisaged to



MH 60R Seahawk helicopter ahead of its commissioning.

operate from the frontline ships and the aircraft carriers providing them the critical attributes of flexibility of operation, enhanced surveillance, and attacking capability. The Seahawk helicopter is designed for anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), search and res-

cue (SAR), medical evacuation (Medevac) and vertical replenishment (Vertrep). The Indian Navy is set to witness a significant surge in its maritime prowess with the induction of the Seahawks. The helicopter has been rigorously tested in Indian reference atmos-

phere (IRA) conditions and is fully integrated into the fleet. The advanced weapons, sensors and avionics suite make the Seahawks ideal for the Navy's maritime security needs, offering enhanced capabilities for both conventional as well as asymmetric threats.

The MH 60R helicopter would enhance India's blue-water capabilities, extending the operational reach of the Navy and supporting sustained naval operations across spectrums and over vast maritime domains. The Seahawk's deployment in the Indian Ocean Region would strengthen the Navy's maritime presence, deterring potential threats and ensuring a secure and safe environment in this strategically crucial region.

Calcutta HC judge Abhijit says he'll resign tomorrow

Declines to comment whether he intends to enter politics

Kolkata, March 3: Calcutta High Court judge Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, whose rulings on various education-related issues in the state stirred political debates, said he will resign on Tuesday.

Justice Gangopadhyay declined to comment on whether he intends to enter politics, stating that he would address all media inquiries after submitting his resignation.

"I will resign from the post of Calcutta high court on Tuesday," he told reporters outside his residence here on Sunday.

Justice Gangopadhyay, who is due for retirement later this year, said he will submit his resignation to the President of India in the first hour on Tuesday, with copies sent to the

HE HAS issued several directives instructing the CBI and ED to probe allegations of irregularities in the hiring processes of teaching and non-teaching staff in West Bengal

Chief Justice of India and the Chief Justice of Calcutta HC.

He has issued several directives instructing the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to probe allegations of irregularities in the recruitment processes of teaching and non-teaching staff in West Bengal government-sponsored and -aided schools.

Justice Gangopadhyay, known for his swift directives, occasionally mandating compliance within hours, has garnered

appreciation from diverse segments of society, particularly aspiring candidates for school jobs. However, his remarks in specific cases have also stirred dissatisfaction among certain leaders of the ruling party in the state. Following a tussle between his single bench and a division bench of the high court over instituting a CBI probe in an alleged scam in issuing caste certificates to candidates aspiring for reserved category MBBS seats in West Bengal, the SC had in January intervened and transferred to itself all petitions related to the matter.

"Tomorrow will be my last day as a judge. I will not hear or adjudicate any matter and will release some cases which have been part-heard in my court," he said. —PTI

Avalanche in HP, 500 roads closed amid rains & snow

Shimla, March 3: An avalanche hit a village in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul and Spiti district in the wee hours of Sunday, obstructing the flow of Chenab and triggering an alert in the adjoining area, officials said.

Meanwhile, heavy snow and rainfall in Himachal Pradesh in the past two days have triggered over half a dozen avalanches and landslides, leading to closure of over 500 roads, including five national highways, they said.

So far no casualty has been reported in any of the avalanches, they added.

The flow of Chenab river was obstructed following an avalanche at Dara Waterfall near Jasrat village in Lahaul and Spiti. The district, located at a high altitude, reported heavy snowfall in the past 24 hours.

Residents of adjoining villages of Jobrang, Rapi, Jasrath, Tarand and Tharot have been advised to stay cautious and inform the nearest police post in case of emergency, said SP Lahaul and Spiti Mayank Chaudhary.

Some shops were buried in an avalanche at Tandri Bridge in Lahaul subdivision.

Incidents of multiple avalanche occurred in Lahaul and Spiti at Seli Nallah in Rashel village, Faldi Nallah in Jobrang, Cho Veer Mod in Lohni and Tatha Nallah near Udaipur village. —PTI



People during the "Yadav Mahakumbh" rally in Lucknow on Sunday. Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav and Uttar Pradesh deputy chief minister Brajesh Pathak also attended the event.

Force also plans training of cadaver dogs

NDRF enhances rescuers' skills for correct identification of dead

New Delhi, March 3: The NDRF, which is mandated to save lives during disasters, has now taken upon itself to train its rescuers and dogs in specialised skills for correct identification of the dead and ensure their dignity.

The federal contingency force is working on new areas of victim identification forensics and training of cadaver dogs, NDRF director general (DG) Atul Karwal told PTI during an interaction. The DG said a new 'victim identification' capsule has been added to the NDRF's existing module on deceased management that is imparted to the personnel as a part of the basic "first responder course".

As part of this module, the NDRF rescuers are trained on how to recover

and take care of the bodies during accidents and disasters, ensure respect to the mortal remains which may be rotten or broken into pieces, how to put them together and place them in body bags and precautions to be taken so that there is no spread of an epidemic.

"We are shortly going to start a victim identification course from what we learnt during the Balasore rail accident... This is forensic science. When we recovered bodies in Balasore, we later found that the exact location of the recovery was not marked. What should have been done is that if we are recovering a body from bogie X, we should put a tag or mark there so that later you can match it with the railway reserva-

tion chart or the passenger manifest and ensure that the person is identified swiftly and correctly," Mr Karwal said.

This course will also train our rescuers in gaining skills that will enable them to help the local administration and medical staff in taking biometrics and DNA samples of victims in time so that down the line, identification of the deceased is possible, he said.

The Balasore accident involved a massive collision of three trains near the Bahanaga Bazar station in Odisha on June 2, 2023 killing more than 290 passengers. It took many days to identify some of the victims, hand them over to their kin even as many bodies remained unclaimed. —PTI

Pak cries foul as India stops ship from China

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

Pakistan has cried foul after India stopped a ship from China to Karachi in Mumbai suspecting it to be a nuclear consignment.

Pakistan's statement on Sunday blamed India for the disruption of free trade and accused it of violating international norms and taking arbitrary measures in violation of international law. The Chinese embassy in New Delhi said it is verifying the authenticity of India's claims.

"A Karachi-bound ship from China was stopped by Indian security agencies at Mumbai's Nhava Sheva port on suspicion that it contained a dual-use consignment that could be used for Pakistan's nuclear and ballistic missile pro-

gramme," officials said on Saturday in Mumbai.

The customs officials, based on an intelligence input, halted a Malta-flagged merchant ship — CMA CGM Attila — at the port en route to Karachi on January 23 and inspected the consignment, which included a computer numerical control (CNC) machine, originally manufactured by an Italian company. CNC machines are basically controlled by a computer and produce a scale of efficiency, consistency and accuracy not possible manually.

CNC machines have been since 1996 covered by the Wassenaar Arrangement, an international arms control regime aiming to prevent the spread of equipment with both civilian and military applications.

Constable, Maoist killed in firefight in C'garh's Kanker

Kanker, March 3: A police constable and a Naxalite were killed in an encounter in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Sunday, a senior police official said.

The gunfight occurred in a forest near Hidur village under Chhotebethiya police station limits, where a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, inspector general of police (Bastar Range) Sundarraaj P said.

The operation was launched based on a specific input about the presence of Naxalites in the Hidur forest, he said.

Personnel from the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Bastar fighters, both units of the state police, along with the Border Security Force (BSF) and district force, were involved in the operation, the official said.

The patrolling team was cordoning off the forest when Naxalites fired on them indiscriminately, leading to the gun battle, he said. "Constable Ramesh Kurethi of the Bastar Fighters was killed in the gunfight. The body of a Naxalite and an AK-47 rifle were recovered from the spot," the IG said. —PTI

SC will hear plea against remission to ex-MP today

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAR 3

The SC is set to hear on Monday a plea challenging the remission granted to former Lok Sabha MP Anand Mohan, convicted for life term in the 1994 murder case of the then Gopalganj district magistrate G. Krishnaiah.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K.V. Viswanathan is scheduled to hear the plea filed by Uma Krishnaiah, the wife of slain IAS officer.

He was released from Bihar's Saharsa jail in April last year after serving more than 14 years in prison, following an April 10, 2023 amendment to the Bihar prison manual by the state. The tweaked manual removed the restriction on early release of those involved in the killing of a public servant on duty.

Mohan was awarded the death penalty on October 5, 2007 by the trial court which was commuted to rigorous life imprisonment by the Patna high court on December 10, 2008 and confirmed by the SC on July 10, 2012. Mr Krishnaiah, Bihar cadre IAS officer who hailed from Telangana, was beaten to death by a mob in 1994 when his vehicle tried to overtake the funeral procession of gangster Chhotan Shukla in Muzaffarpur district.

Yadavs, Rahul target Modi for sowing hate

Continued from Page 1

any family, then what should we do?" During his speech, Mr Lalu Prasad Yadav criticized the BJP for allegedly promoting division and hatred in the country. Mr Yadav also said that the state produced many leaders in the country who were instrumental in bringing political changes to the country.

Mr Yadav also highlighted Bihar's historical significance, noting the state had produced many great leaders and served as a venue for numerous rallies and meetings. He emphasised Bihar's influence on national opinion, suggesting that decisions made in Bihar often set the tone for the rest of the country.

"This is the same Gandhi Maidan which has witnessed many rallies in the past. This has also created many top leaders whose opinions mattered and later played a role in political changes in the country. Tomorrow the same thing is going to happen", Mr Lalu Yadav said.

This was the first public appearance of Lalu Prasad Yadav after the change of government in Bihar: Mr Lalu Yadav also used the occasion to directly criticise Nitish Kumar for switching alliances and returning to the NDA fold and termed him "Paltu Ram". "There was no reason for

him to leave. We didn't do anything wrong, but still he joined hands with the BJP. But now I am calling him a Paltu Ram", Mr Lalu Yadav said.

Tejashwi Yadav, who wrapped up his statewide Jan Vishwas Yatra at the Gandhi Maidan, described the rally as "record-breaking" and expressed gratitude to the masses for their significant participation.

Speaking at the rally, Mr Yadav mocked Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar for his frequent political shifts. He also took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "guarantee" slogans, questioning whether he could guarantee that Nitish Kumar would stay with him in the future.

Mocking Nitish Kumar for repeatedly assuring the Prime Minister at a public meeting in Aurangabad and Begusarai on Saturday, Tejashwi Yadav remarked that "people witnessed Nitish Kumar attempting to assure the Prime Minister that he would not abandon him, but the Prime Minister continued to laugh".

He said: "I won't say anything to him (Nitish Kumar) and I wish him well in life. The Prime Minister, who loves to give guarantees for everything, can he guarantee this time that Nitish Kumar would stay with him in future?"

Addressing the crowd, Tejashwi Yadav claimed over ten lakh people were in attendance despite facing inconvenience from the administration. He said "people turned up for the rally despite all difficulties. This would give a strong message to the BJP. It was from this Gandhi Maidan that two lakh appointment letters were distributed".

Continuing his criticism, Tejashwi Yadav said that Nitish Kumar used to ridicule him for promising 10 lakh jobs to youths. He said Mr Kumar used to question where the money for salaries would come from, asking if it would appear from his father's pocket.

However, when the Mahagathbandhan government came to power, we ensured that Nitish Kumar distributed the appointment letters.

"Today Nitish Kumar has put up posters everywhere in Patna showing that it was his announcement to provide jobs to youth. But people know the truth", Tejashwi Yadav said.

During his speech, Tejashwi Yadav urged the masses to support the Mahagathbandhan and stop the BJP from winning the Lok Sabha polls. "The BJP uses all kinds of stunts to win elections. You have seen how Central investigating

agencies are being used against us but we are not scared of them", Tejashwi Yadav added.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, addressing the "Jan Vishwas Rally" in Patna, criticised the Modi government for neglecting 73 per cent of the country's population, comprising marginalised sections.

In a veiled reference to the BJP, Mr Gandhi said that efforts were being made to sow the seeds of hatred in the country, but the Opposition alliance promotes "Nafrat ke bazaar mein nafrat ki dukan" (spreading love amidst hatred).

He also criticised the Agniveer recruitment scheme, saying that it was against the youth of the country.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who was also present, said he was confident that the "INDIA bloc would win the maximum number of seats in the Lok Sabha elections". He said the Opposition leaders are not intimidated by Central agencies like the ED and I-T, which he claimed was being misused against them.

Mr Kharge urged the people to "support the INDIA bloc in defeating the BJP for the country's prosperity and to protect the Constitution".

PM talks with mantris on agenda for Modi 3.0

Continued from Page 1

NDA for the third time because of its people-centric development work.

The full council of ministers meeting, likely to be the last such exercise during the second term of the Narendra Modi government, also saw the PM deliberating with his team on a 100-day agenda for immediate steps to be taken after the new government is formed in May, for its quick implementation.

Sources said the roadmap for "Viksit Bharat" was the result of more than two years of intensive preparation and involved a "whole of government" approach, involving all ministries and wide-ranging consultations with state governments, academia, industry bodies, civil society, scientific organisations and mobilisation of the youth for inputs.

"More than 2,700 meetings, workshops and seminars were held at various levels. The suggestions of more than 20 lakh youths were received," sources said.

The roadmap for "Viksit Bharat" has a comprehensive blueprint with a clearly articulated national vision, aspirations, goals and action points, the sources said, adding that its goals include areas such as economic growth, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ease of living, ease of doing business, infrastructure and social welfare. Several ministries articulated their ideas at the meeting, that is likely to be the last such get-together before the Lok Sabha polls are announced.

PM's contribution: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday contributed ₹2,000 to the BJP's campaign to strengthen efforts to build a "Viksit Bharat". He contributed ₹2,000 to the party fund and urged people to be a part of the "Donation for Nation Building".

Mr Modi also shared on X a screenshot of the receipt of his contribution.

In his post on X, Mr Modi said: "I am happy to contribute to @BJP4India and strengthen our efforts to build a Viksit Bharat."

Wrestlers' plea on WFI polls set to be heard in HC today

Continued from Page 1

Asian Olympic Games Qualifier Wrestling Tournament notified through its circular dated February 26 against the directives of the ad-hoc committee for the WFI. The petitioners have also sought a direction to the ad-hoc committee to continue administering the day-to-day affairs and management of WFI or appoint a retired Supreme Court judge as an administrator to take over the affairs and management of the body. The petition claimed the WFI has been a "habitual offender" as it has deliberately flouted directions passed by the sports ministry and the ad-hoc committee on multiple occasions, which has adversely affected the career

prospects of Indian wrestlers.

While the WFI had been instructed by the ministry to abstain from the administration and management of the day-to-day activities of the federation and from undertaking any trials or conduct of any nationals, they have deliberately tried to call for nationals and selection trials and continue to organise and conduct illegal trials and events, it said. "The petitioners most humbly prays the court may be pleased to set aside and declare elections held by R2/WFI on December 12 last year as illegal and void ab initio since the same has been held in blatant violation of the sports code," the petition prayed.

'Café blasts probe to NIA if need arises'

Continued from Page 1

over the café blasts, BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal demanded that the blasts case be handed over to the NIA. In a social media post, Mr Yatnal asserted that the NIA investigation is the only way to curb terrorists and terrorism.

Reacting to the BJP leaders' accusations that "Brand Bengaluru has not become Bomb Bengaluru", the chief minister sought to remind the BJP leaders that four bomb blasts occurred during the BJP's government's tenure in Karnataka since 2008. He asked: "What should be said

on it?... Is it not the failure of the NIA, the Intelligence Bureau and the RAW?"

"Who was ruling when the Mangaluru cooker blast took place? There was a blast in front of the BJP's office in Malleswaram. Who was ruling then? Who is in charge of the NIA, IB? Is it not their failure?" said Mr Siddaramaiah, adding, "I'm not defending bomb blasts." In Bengaluru, deputy chief minister D.K. Shivakumar said that the police have been given a free hand to investigate the twin blasts at the café that occurred on Friday.

THE ASIAN AGE

4 MARCH 2024

BJP's first list heralds youth power, change

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party showcased both confidence and creativity in its first list of candidates for the Lok Sabha, that includes Prime Minister Narendra Modi contesting from his current seat of Varanasi, and home minister Amit Shah from Gandhinagar. Besides seeking a comprehensive public mandate for its Cabinet members by nominating 34 ministers and changing the career direction of three former chief ministers, it dropped a large number of sitting MPs, including three known for making controversial remarks or being charged with hate speech.

The three candidates the BJP dropped and sought to replace are Pragna Singh Thakur, Ramesh Bidhuri and Parvesh Verma, all of whom have been guilty of making controversial remarks that hurt the image of the party which proposes to stand for "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" (With Everyone, Develop Everyone).

The party, in its first list of 195 candidates, covers 16 states, and has an intelligent mix of seniors and youth, including debutants. It showcases the confidence of the party in several states and regions, including Uttar Pradesh (51), Madhya Pradesh (24), West Bengal (20), Gujarat and Rajasthan (15 each), Assam, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh (11 each). It also put a strong foot forward in Telangana (nine), Delhi (five) and Uttarakhand (three). The party named 12 candidates in Kerala, where its stakes may be emotionally high but chances low.

Interestingly, in Madhya Pradesh, the BJP is fielding former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan and civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, and has dropped 10 sitting MPs, introducing two new faces. But in Uttar Pradesh, from where ministers Rajnath Singh (Lucknow) and Smriti Irani (Amethi) and former actor Hema Malini (Mathura) will be contesting, the party has cautiously retained sitting MPs.

In Rajasthan, the party will have Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and ministers Arjun Ram Meghwal and Gajendra Shekhawat contesting. Rajya Sabha member and minister Bhupendra Yadav is being fielded from Alwar for first time. In the western desert state, the saffron party has dropped five seats.

In Bengal, besides Suwendu Adhikari's brother Soumendu, and ministers Subhash Sarkar and Santanu Thakur, the party has declared 17 other candidates, including three women candidates: Locket Chatterjee, Sreerupa Mitra Chowdhury and Priya Saha. In Jharkhand, the party named candidates for 11 of 14 constituencies, including Union ministers Arjun Munda and Annapurna Devi, while two sitting MPs have been dropped.

In Telangana, the party retained three of its four sitting MPs, including Union minister G. Kishan Reddy. Several new leaders who have crossed over from the Congress or BRS have been included in the list of nine named out of 17 seats.

In Delhi, the party dropped Ramesh Bidhuri, Parvesh Verma, Meenakshi Lekhi and Harsh Vardhan, even as former cricketer Gautam Gambhir has publicly "sought to be dropped" from electoral duties. In Kerala, the party is setting up an epic battle in Thiruvananthapuram, from where it is fielding Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar to take on Shashi Tharoor, a three-term member from the seat.

A big surprise was the decision to field minister of state Ajay Mishra Teni from Lakhimpur Kheri, even after his son Ashish had been jailed for his alleged involvement in mowing down four farmers during the protests there three years ago.

The overall list, which includes 47 young leaders, and 28 women, augurs well for the party that is focused on not only winning the elections with a big margin but also keen to build the leadership of tomorrow.

After victories in three Hindi heartland states, the BJP's claim for a third term gathered strength. The inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and the implosion of the Congress-led Opposition alliance INDIA has almost perceptibly sealed the verdict of the Lok Sabha elections.

Subhani



A widening gulf: India's trade policy needs a fix



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

India has never shied away from picking a fight with its trade partners during negotiations at the meetings of the World Trade Organisation. Yet, it was certainly out of character for Indian negotiators to have picked a quarrel with their counterparts from Thailand. There was a time when India and Thailand were allies at the WTO and in 2002 India supported the candidature of Thailand's trade negotiator, later its trade minister, Supachai Panitchpakdi, for the post of WTO director-general.

But the spat with Thailand at last week's WTO ministerial conference in Abu Dhabi over a Thai accusation that India was subsidising its rice exports was not entirely out of character given the Narendra Modi government's defensive approach to foreign trade.

Despite all the brouhaha on India being the world's fastest growing economy, in itself a questionable claim, the fact is that the performance of the economy in the arena of international trade has been below par. Foreign trade was an engine of growth during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's tenure, contributing to the eight per cent average rate of national income growth during 2003-2012. Since 2014, India has been faltering on foreign trade, both policy and performance, raising questions about the global competitiveness of Indian industry.

After going down from two per cent in 1950 to 0.5 per cent in 1990, India's share of world merchandise exports rose hand-somely in the 1991-2011 period, crossing two per cent by 2010, thanks to the trade and industrial policy reforms initiated in 1991. On top of this rise in merchandise goods trade, India also notched up impressive

performance in service exports, with India's share of world services exports touching four per cent. During the decade 2004-2014, the share of foreign trade in national income rose to a high of 56 per cent in 2012. Since 2014, that share has remained well below 50 per cent.

The decline in share of foreign trade in national income is mirrored in the decline in India's share of world exports. In short, the record of the Narendra Modi government in the realm of foreign trade — both policy and performance — has been disappointing, especially compared to what was achieved in the preceding decade.

The Modi government's policy on foreign trade has been shaped partly by the inherently protectionist ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party and partly by Indian industry's growing fear of competition from China. While tariffs were rapidly reduced during the decade 1991-2001, after 2017 the government chose to raise them for the first time in two decades. Still, China has managed to increase its exports to India, drawing attention to critical dependencies that Indian industry has not been able to liberate itself from.

To be fair to India's trade negotiators and ministers, the reality is that they have always had to bat on a sticky wicket. India has remained a defensive player, always trying to protect its own turf without aggressively seeking markets. Consequently, Indian negotiators have had to always respond to other countries' proposals rather than table one of their own. Even so, India could have played more smartly at last week's Abu Dhabi ministerial.

One of the most puzzling questions regarding Prime Minister Modi's allocation of portfolios is why he

The global economy has three big markets — the United States, the European Union and East Asia. India has not been able to make a significant headway in any of these three markets.

never chose to name Hardeep Singh Puri for the commerce portfolio. If there is one person in the Modi government who is au fait with trade policy and the WTO it is Mr Puri. A former trade diplomat, Mr Puri would have done much better than the three lacklustre performers at Udyog Bhavan — Nirmala Sitharaman, Suresh Prabhhu and Piyush Goyal.

While Mr Prabhhu was sincere in his efforts, he lacked the chutzpah that was required to carry weight with Western trade policy negotiators. Both Ms Sitharaman and Mr Goyal were out of their depth and hid their technical incompetence behind their arrogance and bravado. None of them was able to make any impact either on multilateral trade policy negotiations or even on bilateral and plurilateral negotiations. The incompetence of individual ministers, and their obedient officials, is only a minor part of the abysmal story of trade policy and performance during the Narendra Modi years. The larger part of the problem has been the inability to secure a deal with any of the major markets around the world. Despite all the bonhomie with US President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Modi failed to get Mr Trump to reverse his decision to end India's access to the US market through the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP).

The US remains a difficult entity, constantly complaining about India's trade policy and about the trade deficit it runs with India. At the WTO ministerial conference last week, commerce minister Piyush Goyal found himself standing alone on an important

matter like trade facilitation, with only his South African counterpart for company.

India came in for criticism from the United States, the European Union, China and the Asean bloc. With the world's second largest market, the European Union and post-Brexit Britain, India continues to negotiate a free trade agreement but has not been able to amicably conclude those negotiations. If such is the case with the Western developed economies, the experience with the exporting powers of Asia has been no better.

India walked out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), naming the trade threat from China as the main reason. Yet, trade with China continues robustly.

The RCEP decision has, on the other hand, hurt trade prospects with the other RCEP members, including Japan and the Asean economies.

The global economy has three big markets — the United States, the European Union and East Asia. India has not been able to make a significant headway in any of these three markets. Prime Minister Modi can only claim some progress in the Gulf, especially with his friendly neighbour in Dubai. After this summer's general election, the next government needs to pay closer attention to trade policy, which also means industrial and foreign investment policy. All three go hand in hand. Neither "Make in India" nor trade policy have delivered impressive results in the past decade. Emerging as the world's third largest economy and sustaining that position requires far-reaching changes to industrial and trade policy. The lazy defensiveness of the past decade cannot serve the goal set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The writer is an author, a former newspaper editor and adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. He has recently edited *The Importance of Shinzo Abe: India, Japan and the Indo-Pacific*.

LETTERS

FINE TILL IT HURTS

Pet owners must be made more accountable for the behaviour of their pets and there have been just too many canine attacks in the past few months. Pitbulls are a dangerously aggressive breed and banned in 30 nations including the UK, Australia and New Zealand. One often wonders the reason for keeping this breed as a pet when the chances of it attacking an innocent bystander is very high. In the latest incident a seven-year-old girl playing outside her home was attacked. Thankfully, she is reported to be out of danger. But the physical and mental trauma would linger. Since only the uber rich can afford such pets, they must be fined till it hurts.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

HELP PENSIONERS

THE GOVERNMENT must be congratulated for navigating the economy through troubled waters like the Covid-19 pandemic, global slowdown and a persistently high global inflation. At the same time, we must concentrate on other issues also like starvation, health, education, hunger and senior citizen care. They are the real problems. The government should not dump the burden on the shoulders of the poor. For instance, the government should fulfil the demands of the old pensioners out of humanity. There are 78 lakh EPS-95 pensioners in the country and they are living with a paltry amount of pension. Give them what is their due.

Suresh Venkatadri
Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh

BJP SUPREMACY

OBSERVERS feel the Centre's pact with the Tripura government and Tipra Motha may appease tribals for now on the eve of the parliamentary elections. The accord does not mandate anything radical to be granted to tribals or the Tipra immediately. The signing of the accord has given a shot in the arm to the BJP in its bid to maintain its political and electoral dominance in the state.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Amarjeet Kumar (March 1). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Hopes rise for truce in Gaza

There may be little sign of the world getting weary of two wars going on in Europe and the Middle East. There is, however, the merest suggestion that one of them could stop, at least briefly, if Israel is willing to halt the offensive during the month of Ramzan in a swap deal of hostages and prisoners with Hamas. Israel may have gone on the offensive in retaliation to the barbaric strike on its territory by Hamas on October 7, 2023. But excesses have become so common that not even unwarranted military action against Palestinian people surrounding a convoy of aid trucks that led to more than 100 deaths caused outrage.

The death toll has already crossed over 30,000, a huge majority being Palestinian citizens who may have little to do with the reign of Hamas. That is a sure sign war has numbed the rest of the world that is looking on helplessly or using whataboutisms.

It would be a great relief if the Israeli operations were to stop in Gaza and give the people a breather even as more than half the population of the Gaza Strip has gravitated to or near Rafah, the last haven, relatively speaking, in a land overtaken by death and destruction.

In a conflicted world there is so little good news that even a whiff of a Gaza truce offer that is being negotiated gives rise to hope. Meanwhile, there is only bad news out of Russia as Vladimir Putin, enraged by a comment from French President Emmanuel Macron about the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine, is bristling to the extent of threatening a nuclear war if any Nato country puts troops on Ukrainian soil.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary



UK warms to King as he fights cancer; welcome to virtual life with the royals

What would the media do without royalty? These days their absence is getting more coverage than their presence ever did — and maybe it is preparing us for a future without them?

Or perhaps not — as even when they are not there the media fills in their absence with speculation as to what could have happened to them! And then — as though their presence/ absence is not enough in photographs, documentaries etc. — we also have long running television series which try to replicate their lives, creating yet another world where they are present. Is it a crutch that the British need — or is it something the media falls back on when they want some more "masala"?

In India we got rid of our royalty and then took over their palaces and made them into museums and hotels — and now apart from their occasional appearance as political leaders or heritage buffs — we barely see them. But for the Brits in the UK, the Royals remain a constant looming presence. They are also a reminder of when the Brits ruled the world — and indeed, symbolically, independent countries like Australia still maintain that allegiance.

So it goes beyond the celebrity cult and is also about enduring power — and political significance: The right wing appreciation of royalty persists and triumphs, winning hearts and minds with golden splendour and pretty pictures!

Thus none of the ruling royals are allowed to actually retire into oblivion, nor can they be wickily or misbehave — as then we will find out and not only reprimand them — but also continuously relive that ignominious moment through investigative journalism. This is the only price they have to pay. We place them on a pedestal, allow them to lead unnatural lives in palaces — and then are apparently mystified when they shake the bars of the gilded cage. Thereafter, we spend many years and much money finding out why they misbehaved — indeed if there is one more documentary/film/serial about Princess Diana that uncovers fresh material about her we should not be surprised.

There is no doubt that for the tabloids, at least, there is no better space filler than the royal family. But lately there has been mainly a "virtual" presence of the royals in the news, due to illness — especially of King Charles III. It has been unheard of to have this degree of coverage for a disease which many men suffer from — but it also speaks of the digital age. If he could not be physically present then we can now continuously look forward to his "virtual presence" as he opens thousands of "get well soon cards". It may not be long before we have AI generated images of a happy royal family waving to us in perpetuity from an AI generated royal balcony. Perhaps that stage is not far...

King Charles is fairly new as the King — and he had been unpopular in the days when Princess Diana died 25 plus years ago. He had to wait till his seventies to succeed to the throne and he needed a serious image makeover. His relationship with Queen Camilla while he was married to Princess Diana had meant that Camilla had to be to be recast as being a nice person, too.

But the news of his ill health has changed all that. Cancer is something people are familiar with as they know someone among their friends or relations who may be in a similar situation. It is serious but not as threatening as it used to be. So yes, a flood of letters with good wishes descended on the monarch. He has bravely promised not to give up his official duties such as reading his red boxes which contain official news and papers to sign! He also has to meet the Prime Minister and his privy council. So he moves between London and Balmoral travelling by helicopter.

All this has been a bonus for Queen Camilla. She has drawn sympathy for Charles' illness — but in his absence she has had to step in and bestow honours and be seen at functions solo.

As if that was not enough, Kate the Princess of Wales had to have some operation a few months back, which is shrouded in secrecy. This has doubled amount of coverage she gets on the Internet — where the speculation has gone

wild about her being in an "induced coma" etc., all of which is being denied by her media team. Unlike other royals — she is still young and glamorous. Her followers on the Internet crosses many millions. What she wears flies off the shelves as she sets the fashion tone, and so her absence has commercial implications as well. Now the public has to worry more — as she will not appear before April...

Recently there was widespread "alarm" when Prince William missed a function for "personal reasons". The media cannot report on this — and so they are struggling.

We are actually now missing Prince Harry, if the media is to be believed. Prince Harry, like his great Uncle Edward, abandoned England to marry an American divorcee.

Hmmmm... as I said, perhaps we are just being introduced to a new life with the royals — one in which they have more of a virtual presence than a physical one. Living without them may not be as difficult for most of us — but the biggest conundrum is — what will the media do without them? Can the media survive without the royal family?

Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author, playwright, and heritage buff who helmed the setting up of the two Partition Museums in Amritsar and Delhi, and chairs the trust that runs them. She also helped set up the Mahatma Gandhi statue outside the UK Parliament.



SHORT TAKES

SWISS LOTTO TO DISH OUT OVER \$70-MN JACKPOT

Geneva, March 3: A record jackpot of 64.59 million Swiss francs (\$73.09 million) was won Saturday in Switzerland by a lucky single ticket-holder. Swiss Lotto said in a statement.

The winning ticket was held by a person in the German- or Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, it said, without elaboration.

The win is the biggest ever scooped by a single player in Swiss Lotto's more than 50-year-history, the *ATS Keystone* news agency reported.

The previous record stood at 48.6 million francs.

170 'EXECUTED' IN BURKINA FASO VILLAGE ATTACKS

Ouagadougou, March 3: Around 170 people were "executed" in attacks on three villages in northern Burkina Faso a week ago, a regional prosecutor said in a statement.

The attacks by unknown assailants were carried out on the villages of Komsilga, Nod-in and Soro in the Yatenga province, the statement dated March 1 said, adding that an investigation had been launched.

The West African Sahel nation has been struggling to contain violent Islamist insurgencies linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State that have spread from neighbouring Mali.

JIHADIST PLOT: BELGIUM ARRESTS FOUR YOUTHS

Brussels, March 3: Belgian police on Sunday arrested four youths over messages they exchanged allegedly plotting a jihadist attack deemed "imminent enough to intervene", a spokesman for the federal prosecutor's office told *AFP*.

The four — three minors in their "late teens" and an adult man aged 18 — were arrested when police raided home addresses in the cities of Brussels, Ninove, Charleroi and Liege.

No weapons or explosives were found. Police took away mobile phones and laptops for analysis, a spokesman said.

AILING NORWAY KING RETURNING FROM MALAYSIA

Oslo, March 3: King Harald of Norway was returning home from Malaysia on Sunday after falling ill on holiday and spending several days in hospital.

The oldest reigning monarch in Europe at 87 years old, Harald contracted an infection while he was on a trip to the island of Langkawi.

The palace said on Saturday that he had been fitted with a "temporary" pacemaker, which his personal physician said would make his return safer.

"Upon arrival in Norway, His Majesty will be admitted to the hospital Rikshospitalet" in Oslo, the statement continued.

GANGS STORM HAITI'S PRISON, CONVICTS FLEE

Port-Au-Prince, March 3: An unknown number of inmates have escaped after armed gangs stormed the main prison in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince on Saturday evening, according to the French embassy and local media.

"This Saturday evening, bandits stormed the national penitentiary in Port-au-Prince and allowed a number of inmates to escape," the French embassy said in a note sent to *AFP*.

"Pending clarification of the situation, the embassy of France advises against all travel in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area," it said.

KUWAIT TO HOLD PARLIAMENTARY POLLS ON APRIL 4

Dubai, March 3: Kuwait said on Saturday it will hold elections for its national assembly on April 4, its latest round of voting after years of political turmoil.

The state-run *KUNA* news agency made the announcement, citing a decree published by the oil-rich country's official gazette. In February, Kuwait's emir dissolved Parliament after a lawmaker reportedly insulted the ruler. Domestic political disputes have been gripping Kuwait for years which prevented the sheikhdom from taking on debt.



Former US president and 2024 presidential hopeful Donald Trump speaks during a 'Get Out the Vote' rally in Greensboro, North Carolina, on Saturday. — *AFP*

Trump wins 3 states ahead of 'Super Tuesday'

Washington, March 3: Donald Trump on Saturday inched ahead in his quest to become the Republican Party's presidential nominee, winning internal party elections in the states of Missouri, Michigan and Idaho, US media reported.

The former president has now won every state nominating contest heading into next week's "Super Tuesday," when voters in 15 US states choose their preferred candidate for each party.

Presidential contenders Donald Trump and Nikki Haley will face off in the Washington, D.C., Republican primary on Sunday, a small-stakes contest that could be one of Haley's best shots to score a win over the ex-president.

The United States' capital city only sends 19 out of 2,429 delegates to the Republican National Convention in July, where the nominee is formally selected. Sunday's results are unlikely to change the trajectory of a race that Trump appears to have stitched up, having won all the previous nominating contests.

Trump has gained huge momentum in the race to capture the Republican nomination at the party

convention in July and Tuesday is expected to all but secure the result.

He is likely to face President Joe Biden in November elections, pitting the two for the second time since 2020.

The voting on Saturday in Missouri, Michigan and Idaho were hybrid internal elections with differing rules, in some cases reflecting rifts and tensions despite Trump's formidable sway.

In Missouri, Trump swamped his main opponent, former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley, winning every county caucus in the state, *The New York Times* reported.

Anyone who expressed an "allegiance to the Missouri Republican Party" could vote in the county caucuses.

In Michigan, around 2,000 party activists voted in a caucus convention, and Trump won all 39 delegates up for grabs, *CNN* reported.

The limited vote came in the wake of chaos within the state party, including allegations of overspending and mismanagement.

Trump had grabbed 16 Michigan delegates earlier in the week in a limited

Kyiv's 38 drones attack Crimea

Moscow, March 3: Russian air defence systems destroyed all 38 drones that Ukraine launched at the Crimean Peninsula early on Sunday, Russia's defence ministry said, after reports on Ukrainian and Russian social media of powerful explosions in the port of Feodosia.

The Russian defence ministry did not say whether there was any damage or casualties in its statement on the Telegram messaging app.

Road traffic near Feodosia was significantly restricted, Russian-installed officials in Crimea had said earlier. Traffic on the bridge linking the Crimean Peninsula to the Russian mainland was halted for couple hours before resuming at around 0140 GMT, Russian-installed officials in Crimea said on Telegram.

Russian and Ukrainian social media cited Feodosia residents as reporting powerful explosions were heard in the area of the seaport and an oil depot at about 2 am local time on Sunday (2300 GMT on Saturday).

Reuters was not able to independently verify the reports of blasts.

There was no immediate comment from

ZELENSKY ASKS WEST FOR MORE AIR DEF. SYSTEMS

Kyiv, March 3: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday called on the West to rapidly deliver more air-defence systems as a wave of Russian missile, drone and artillery strikes killed at least 11 people.

Eight were confirmed dead, including a child and a baby, after an overnight drone strike on the southern port city of Odesa, an official said.

Separate shelling attacks on the frontline regions of Kharkiv in the northeast and Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in the south killed another three people, Ukrainian officials said.

"Russia continues to hit civilians," Zelenskyy said in a post on social media. "We need more air defences from our partners." — *AFP*

Ukrainian officials. The Crimean Peninsula was annexed by Russia from Ukraine in a move condemned by Kyiv's allies in 2014. — *Reuters*

New Pak PM Shehbaz rakes up Kashmir in first address

Gohar Ali Khan elected PTI chairman following fresh intra-party polls

Islamabad, March 3: Pakistan's newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday raked up the Kashmir issue in his maiden address but pledged to improve ties with all leading nations, including the country's neighbours.

Jailed ex-prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party on Sunday announced that Barrister Gohar Ali Khan was elected as its chairman following fresh intra-party polls. The party was forced to hold the election to elect key office holders after its elections of last year were not accepted as legal by the Election Commission of Pakistan which also deprived it of the iconic symbol of cricket bat. Addressing a press meet in Islamabad, PTI's spokesperson and chief election commissioner Rao of Hasan announced that Gohar was elected unopposed as the chairman.

Shehbaz said that Pakistan would not become part of any "great game" and his government would increase the number of friends. He pledged to build and improve ties with all leading nations.

"We will keep ties with neighbours on the basis of equality," Shehbaz said as he easily won the election in the National Assembly to become Pakistan's PM for a second time.

Shehbaz, however, raked up the Kashmir issue and equated it with Palestine. "Let's all come together [...]" and the National Assembly should pass a resolution for the freedom of Kashmiris and Palestinia-

ns," he added. He also thanked his allies in the coalition government for putting their

trust in him and making him Leader of the House. "When my Quaid (leader Nawaz) was elected the

prime minister thrice, the development that followed in the country is an example of its own." — *PTI*

SHEHBAZ: ESTABLISHMENT'S FAVOURITE

2022-23: Stint as prime minister during which he clinched a bailout from the International Monetary Fund for Pakistan which was on the brink of a debt default.

2018-22: Shehbaz served as a leader of the opposition after the PML-N lost to Imran Khan's PTI in the 2018 polls.

2017: After then-PM Nawaz Sharif was disqualified from holding office in the Panama Papers case, the PML-N appointed Shehbaz as its president.

2008: Shehbaz wore the hat of Punjab CM for the second term and he won the same slot for the third time in 2013.

2007: The family returned to Pakistan.

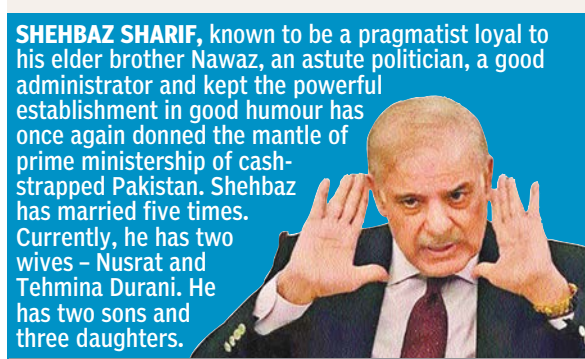
1999: Following General Pervez Musharraf's coup in toppling the Nawaz Sharif government, Shehbaz along with the family spent eight years in exile in Saudi Arabia after striking a deal with the then-military ruler.

1997-99: Shehbaz served as chief minister of Punjab.

1988: Shehbaz, who looked after the sprawling family business, hit the political scene when he was elected as a member of the Punjab Assembly.

1951: Born in a Punjabi-speaking Kashmiri family in Lahore, Shehbaz did his graduation from the Government College University, Lahore.

SHEHBAZ SHARIF, known to be a pragmatist loyal to his elder brother Nawaz, an astute politician, a good administrator and kept the powerful establishment in good humour has once again donned the mantle of prime ministership of cash-strapped Pakistan. Shehbaz has married five times. Currently, he has two wives — Nusrat and Tehmina Durani. He has two sons and three daughters.



100 PTI MEMBERS ARRESTED IN PAK

More than 100 supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party have been arrested from different parts of Punjab province of Pakistan for staging rallies against alleged vote rigging, police said on Sunday.

At least three wanted terrorists were killed and four others were injured by Pakistani security forces in an operation in the restive northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Army said.

The forces seized arms and ammunition, as well as explosive materials from the terrorists.

At least 37 people were killed while 37 others suffered injuries in rain-related incidents across Pakistan in the past 48 hours, authorities said on Sunday. The rains that have swept across Pakistan have led to the collapse of houses and triggered landslides that blocked roads, particularly in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, they said.

S. KOREA DOCS RALLY TO BACK THEIR JUNIORS

Seoul, March 3: Thousands of senior doctors rallied in the South Korean capital, Seoul, on Sunday to express their support for junior doctors who have been on strike for nearly two weeks over a government plan to sharply increase the number of medical school admissions.

The rally came as the government said it would begin to take steps Monday to suspend the doctors' licences of nearly 9,000 medical interns and residents for defying government orders to end their walkouts, which have disrupted hospital operations.

"The government's absurd medical policy has triggered immense resistance by trainee doctors and medical students, and we doctors have become one," Park Sung-min, a senior member of the Korea Medical Association, said in a speech at the rally. "I'm asking the government: Please, stop the threats and suppression now."

Protesters chanted slogans, sang and held placards criticising the government's plan. There were no reports of violence. As of Thursday night, 8,945 of the country's 13,000 medical interns and residents had left their work sites, said the health ministry. The government had said they would face minimum three-month licence suspensions. — *AP*

Israel doubtful at truce talk

Cairo, Jerusalem, March 3:

A Hamas delegation is heading to Cairo to outline the group's position on talks that may lead to a temporary cease-fire with Israel, the release of hostages, and the influx of desperately needed aid into Gaza, an official said.

"We are keen to achieve a result that satisfies our people," Osama Hamdan said in a statement issued by the media centre of Hamas, which rules Gaza and is considered a terrorist organisation by the US and European Union.

The Israeli military said on Sunday it intensified operations in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, destroying dozens of Hamas targets in a blitz of air and artillery strikes.

The air force and artillery hit about 50 targets within six minutes, it said, in a bid to "intensify operational achievements in the area."

Talks would be held on Sunday and Monday, Hamdan added. *AFP* reported that a ceasefire may be secured "within 24 to 48 hours" if Israel accepts Hamas' demands.

However, a senior Israeli official, speaking anonymously, said Israel would not send a high-level delegation to Cairo until Hamas provides answers to questions Israel has been seeking. The official did not elaborate, but reports have said that among other things, Israel seeks information on the wellbeing of the hostages.

Progress toward a pause in fighting has been stalled for weeks as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu bristled at Hamas conditions he termed "delusional." US officials said on Saturday that Israel has esse-



A Palestinian youth carries away items salvaged from the rubble of a house destroyed in an Israeli air strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday. — *AFP*

Israel: Stampede caused aid deaths

Jerusalem, March 3: Israel's military said on Sunday most of the Palestinians killed last week as crowds massed near an aid convoy in Gaza died in a stampede but local health officials said casualties brought into hospitals had been hit by large calibre ammunition.

Pressure has mounted on Israel over the deaths of dozens of Palestinians during a confused incident in the Gaza Strip on

Thursday in which crowds surrounded a convoy of aid trucks and soldiers opened fire, with several countries backing a UN call for an inquiry.

Palestinian health officials say more than 100 people were killed in the early hours, most of them shot by Israeli troops. Israeli officials have dismissed the figures given by the Palestinians but have not offered any estimates of their own. — *Reuters*

initially agreed to a six-week ceasefire if Hamas commits to handing over hostages categorised as vulnerable, including women, the ill or injured, and the elderly. — *Reuters*

A top Israeli Cabinet minister headed to Washington on Sunday for talks with US officials, sparking a rebuke from PM Benjamin Netanyahu, in a sign of widening cracks in Israel's wartime government five months into its war with Hamas. — *Agencies*

SENATE SEEKS PERMANENT BAN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Islamabad, March 3: Amidst serious concerns over the continued disruption of the social media platform X in Pakistan for over a fortnight now, a member of the Senate has demanded a permanent ban on all social media due to its negative impact on the younger generation.

Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi, who was recently expelled by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) after he moved a resolution seeking the delaying of the February 8 polls, in the resolution called for a complete ban on all social media platforms, deeming them detrimental to the future of the young generation. *Dawn News* reported. The resolution is listed on the agenda of the Senate session for Monday.

Tangi said: "Social media platforms are adversely affecting the young generation in the country... [and] being used for promotion of norms against our religion, culture, creating hatred among people on the grounds of language and religion." It notes with concern "the use of such platforms against the interests of the country through negative and malicious propaganda against the armed forces" and calls upon the Senate to recommend to the government to ban Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X, and YouTube. — *PTI*

HOUTH-SUNK SHIP THREATENS SEA ENVIRONS

Aden, Cairo, Tel Aviv, March 3: A UK-owned ship attacked by Houthi militants last month sank in the Red Sea, the US military confirmed on Saturday, as it echoed a warning from Yemen's internationally recognised government that the vessel's cargo of hazardous fertiliser posed a risk to marine life.

The Belize-registered *Rubymar* is the first vessel lost since the Houthis began targeting commercial ships in November.

The sinking bulk carrier also "presents a subsurface impact risk to other ships transiting the busy shipping lanes of the waterway," US Central Command said.

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis vowed on Sunday to continue targeting British ships in the Gulf of Aden. "Yemen will continue to sink more British ships, and any repercussions or other damages will be added to Britain's bill," Hussein al-Ezzi, deputy foreign minister in the Houthi-led government, said.

A top Israeli Cabinet minister headed to Washington on Sunday for talks with US officials, sparking a rebuke from PM Benjamin Netanyahu, in a sign of widening cracks in Israel's wartime government five months into its war with Hamas. — *Agencies*

LEGAL | COST Biggest fee was \$688 mn in '08 for a fraud case over failure of Enron Corp.

Lawyers seek \$6 bn after securing Musk pay cut

Wilmington, March 3: The lawyers who voided Elon Musk's \$56 billion compensation as excessive on Friday sought a record \$6 billion legal fee, payable in the electric car maker's stock.

"We recognise that the requested fee is unprecedented in terms of absolute size," the three law firms said in a filing with the Court of Chancery in Delaware. The fee works out at an hourly rate of \$2,88,888, they said.

Musk blasted the request as "criminal," posting on his X platform that "the lawyers who did nothing



Elon Musk

benefit of linking the award directly to the benefit created and avoids taking even one cent from the Tesla balance sheet to pay fees," the lawyers wrote, adding that the fee would be tax-deductible to Tesla.

Judge Kathaleen McCormick, who is overseeing the case and will decide on the fee, called Musk's pay "unfathomable" in her ruling. The company may object to the fee, as it has a fee request in a similar case over the pay for its directors.

The largest settlements in shareholder cases have occurred in federal court. The biggest fee was \$688 million in 2008 for the legal team that obtained a \$7.2 billion settlement in a securities fraud case over the failure of Enron Corp.

The Tesla fee request comes as the Delaware

Supreme Court considers an appeal of a \$267 million fee in a case that settled for \$1 billion involving Dell Technologies DELL.N.

Delaware judges have said that pursuing cases deep into litigation, through depositions and toward trial, should get a higher percentage of the recovery to reflect the risk and effort. The Musk pay case went to a one-week trial.

Opponents of this approach argue that as settlements and judgments grow in size, attorneys should collect a declining percentage to avoid overcompensation. The legal team said

the requested fee worked out to about 11% of the judgment.

Musk's pay package consisted of stock options that allowed him to buy Tesla stock at heavily discounted prices and required him to hold the stock for five years. The legal team said they were seeking stock without restrictions on selling it.

The shareholder's legal team comprised three law firms, Bernstein Litowitz Berger & Grossmann and Friedman Oster & Teitel, both based in New York, and Andrews & Springer of Wilmington. — *Reuters*

SWISS VOTE TO BOOST PENSION PAYMENTS

Geneva, March 3: Swiss voters on Sunday accepted a proposal to significantly boost pension payments, projections showed, in a move hailed as "historic" by backers at a time when the country's ageing population faces ever-swelling costs.

Not long after polling stations closed, the gfs.bern polling institute projected that a call for a 13th monthly pension payment each year had secured 58 per cent of the popular vote.

The initiative also appeared set to easily secure the double-majority needed to pass. — *AFP*

quick
BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	73,745.35 1.72
Nifty 50	22,338.80 1.62
S&P 500*	5,137.08 0.80
Dollar (₹)	82.90 0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.72 0.28
Euro (₹)	89.68 0.33
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	63,600.37 0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	83.36 1.77
IN 10-Yr bond yield	7.060 -0.018
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.237 -0.016

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Offshore mineral auctions in July, says Pralhad

The first tranche of offshore minerals auctions is likely to kick off by June-July this year, union minister Pralhad Joshi said. A total of 10 offshore mineral blocks have been short-listed by the mines ministry, and inter-ministerial consultations are underway to seek necessary clearances for auctions at the earliest, the minister for coal and mines said. The blocks are located on the east and west coast of India, Joshi said.



FPIs in February invest ₹1,500 cr in equities

Foreign investors made a significant turnaround and injected over ₹1,500 crore into Indian equities in Feb., reversing the massive outflows seen in the preceding month, primarily due to robust corporate earnings and positive economic growth. Additionally, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) continued to be bullish on the debt markets as they put in over ₹22,419 cr during the month under review.

Wardwizard has plans for new assembly unit

Electric vehicle (EV) maker Wardwizard Innovations and Mobility is planning to expand operations as it looks to cater to enhanced demand in both domestic and international markets, chairman and managing director Yatin Gupta said. The Vadodra-based company is setting up a new assembly plant in Sharjah, UAE and also to set up an assembly plant in Deoghar, Jharkhand to cater to the growing demand for EVs.

Godrej & Boyce to invest ₹40 crore in distribution

Godrej & Boyce is aiming to invest about ₹40 crore over the next three years to expand its distribution footprint for its consumer brands in the tier-II and tier-III cities. The fresh investments by the company, which sells interior solutions, furniture, appliances and locks, will see its footprint getting doubled to more than 400 towns by FY27, a executive director and chief executive Anil G Verma said.

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4 players express interest after govt planned ₹76K-cr sops

India to become chip powerhouse: Minister

New Delhi, March 3: India will, in next five years, join the high-stake global stage of semiconductor manufacturing as it combines design capabilities with \$10 billion of incentives to draw manufacturers to set up new fabs and units that will cut dominance of Taiwan, South Korea and China, said IT and telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

Semiconductors are an essential component of electronic devices, and are used in automobiles to computers, mobile phones and even washing machines.

The Central government's Rs 76,000 crore of incentives have got four players including Micron and Tatas.

Vaishnaw said the country already has roughly one-third of global design talent. India is offering itself as a trusted alterna-



● **THE CABINET** approved proposals to set up three semiconductor plants, including a mega fab by Tata Group, at a cumulative investment of ₹1.26 lakh crore.

tive tech hub to China.

"People who were earlier thinking when should we go to India...now they are asking how soon we will go to India...that is the change which is happening. This means, every big player would now like to reconsider their investment plans and come to India," he said.

Last week, the Cabinet approved proposals to set up three semiconductor plants, including a mega fab by Tata Group, at a cumulative investment of ₹1.26 lakh crore, as India

moved to position itself as a powerhouse in chip manufacturing.

"The semiconductor plans will make India self-reliant, trigger a multiplier effect to create jobs," he said.

As per the announcements, Tata Electronics will set up a semiconductor fab in partnership with Taiwan's Powertech Semiconductor Corp at Dholera's special industrial region in Gujarat.

The plant will have the capacity to produce 50,000

wafers per month and involve an investment of ₹91,000 crore.

The government has also approved a proposal by Tatas to build a greenfield semiconductor assembly and test facility in Jagiroad, Assam. The facility will be built with an investment outlay of ₹27,000 crore and is expected to generate over 27,000 direct and indirect jobs in the region.

Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test (TSAT) will develop indigenous advanced semiconductor packaging technologies, including flip chip.

The third proposal that received the Cabinet nod is by CG Power, which in partnership with Renesas Electronics Corp and Stars Microelectronics of Thailand will set up a unit in Sanand in Gujarat at an investment of ₹7,600 crore. —PTI

India, UAE non-oil trade can hit \$100 bn: CII

Abu Dhabi, March 3: The target of \$100 billion non-oil trade between India and the UAE by 2030 is ambitious but achievable as huge business opportunities are there in both the nations for sectors such as textiles, jewellery and pharma, CII President R Dinesh said on Sunday.

He said that the free trade agreement between India and the UAE, which was implemented in May 2022, has resulted in a surge in bilateral trade

and investments. Dinesh was here to participate in global investors' event 'Investopia'.

"The target to achieve \$100 billion in non-oil trade between India and UAE is ambitious but I do believe that it is achievable and recent developments are encouraging in this regard," the CII president said.

He said that the agreement, officially dubbed as comprehensive economic partnership agreement,

● **THE FREE TRADE** agreement between India and the UAE, which was implemented in May 2022, has resulted in a surge in bilateral trade and investments.

covers duty-free access to all labour-intensive sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles and apparel, leather, pharmaceuti-

cal, medical devices, and engineering products.

The bilateral trade has already touched \$84.9 billion in 2022-23, and India is now the UAE's top non-oil trading partner.

"India's consumer base and growing manufacturing capabilities offer an attractive market for UAE goods, while the UAE's status as a global trade hub facilitates Indian export access to international markets," he said. —PTI

Google reorganises teams to support new AI products

California, March 3: Alphabet Inc.'s Google is laying off a handful of employees on its trust and safety team as part of broader staff cuts, even as it's asking members of that group to be on stand-by over the weekend in order to troubleshoot problematic outputs related to its flagship generative AI tool, Gemini.

The cuts in the trust and safety solutions group were confirmed by people with knowledge of the decision who asked not to be identified because Google isn't publicly disclosing details.

Google's various trust and safety teams are tasked with setting up guardrails on its AI products, trying to predict how bad actors could manipulate the tools and conducting risk evaluations to ensure the tools are safe for Google's global user base.

Google is increasing its reliance on its trust and safety staff, even if it's doing so with fewer people. Recently, some employees have been asked to work over the weekend to test Gemini's outputs to prevent further missteps by the tool, according to one of the people familiar with the moves. "We need multiple volunteers on a stand-by



per time block so we can activate rapid adversarial testing on high priority topics," a Google leader wrote in an email to trust and safety employees. While the cuts won't impact the group's members directly working on Gemini, one of the people said, Google's broader trust and safety team has been managing an overwhelming workload as the company deals with the fallout of Gemini generating historical images of people, another person said.

"We're simplifying our structures to give employees more opportunity to work while reducing bureaucracy and layers," a Google spokesperson said in a statement. Google added that the reorganisation to the team affected would help it provide more support for its AI products and would allow the tech giant to eventually add more trust and safety roles at the company. —Bloomberg

BHARAT TEXTILE EXPO MADE ANNUAL EVENT: EXPORT COUNCIL

New Delhi, March 3: The mega textile exhibition, Bharat Tex 2024, will now be held every year in the country as the first event which concluded last week witnessed participation of over 3,500 exhibitors and 3,000 buyers from 111 countries, AEPCC said on Sunday.

The apparel export promotion council (AEPCC) said that as many as 63 agreements were announced during the expo with international institutions focusing on collaborations in research, innovation, entrepreneurship, new product development, skilling and sustainability.

"The Bharat Tex expo will be an annual affair," AEPCC Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said.

He said the industry is working on sustainable production practices as it would help enhance the competitiveness of the sector in the international market.

He added that the government's mantra to boost textiles exports through 5F - farm to fiber, fiber to factory, factory to fashion, fashion to foreign - will energise textiles export sector. —PTI

Survey: UPI use will be hit if charged

New Delhi, March 3: A majority of people will stop using UPI if a transaction fee is levied on it, according to an online survey by LocalCircles.

However, a sizable number of respondents claimed that they have experienced a transaction fee being levied on their UPI payment once or more in the last one year, it added. LocalCircles on Sunday said the survey received

● **Following the RBI** discussion paper, the finance ministry clarified that there was no proposal to levy charges on UPI transactions.

over 34,000 responses from citizens in over 364 districts, comprising 67 per cent of male respondents and 33 per cent of women.

In August 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a discussion paper proposing a tiered structure charge on UPI payments based on different amount bands.

Following the RBI discussion paper, the finance ministry clarified that there was no proposal to levy charges on unified payments interface (UPI) transactions, LocalCircles said in its report on UPI

transaction fees. "Only 23 per cent of UPI users surveyed are willing to bear a transaction fee on payment. 73 per cent of those surveyed indicated that they will stop using UPI if a transaction fee is introduced," it said.

When asked about the frequency of UPI usage, the survey found that 1 in 2 UPI users conduct over 10 transactions every month. —PTI

Global cues, macroeconomic data, FPIs set to drive markets

New Delhi, March 3: Trends in the global markets, trading activity of foreign investors and announcement of domestic macroeconomic data are the major factors that would drive investors' sentiment in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Benchmark indices had a record-breaking rally in the past week driven by impressive GDP data.

Equity markets would remain closed on Friday for Mahashivratri.

"Key upcoming events, such as the release of the US services PMI on March 5, 2024, testimony by the US Fed Chair Powell,



along with the US unemployment rate on March 8 will be closely watched for their potential impact on market sentiment. "Crude oil is also inching higher, and any negative surprise from there can disturb the mood of the market. However, the market is ignoring any bad news and continuing its bullish

momentum," said Santosh Meena, head of Research, Swastika Investmart.

From domestic macroeconomic front, purchasing managers' index (PMI) data for the services sector is scheduled to be announced on Tuesday.

"This week the market will react to the global and domestic economic data, foreign institutional investors' domestic institutional investors investment pattern, crude oil inventories, movement of the rupee against the dollar and trends in global stock markets," Arvinder Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, Master Capital Services, said. —PTI



FINANCE MINISTER TO INAUGURATE GST ENFORCEMENT CHIEFS' MEETING

FC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

Union minister for finance and corporate affairs Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday will hold a one-day conference of enforcement chiefs of all state and central goods and services tax (GST) officers to tackle tax evasion.

Besides, the agenda of the conference will include other issues such as sharing best practices in the system, fostering synergy and leveraging technology and data among others, according to the finance ministry.

The move of the government comes two days after India's gross revenues from the GST grew at a three-month high pace of 12.54 per cent in February to cross ₹1.68 lakh crore.

The finance ministry said that deliberation in the conference will strike a crucial equilibrium between facilitating a smooth business environment and implementing effective, deterrent enforcement measures. The ministry also said that it would focus on combating the fake invoicing.

Term deposits win favour on rising interest

New Delhi, March 3: Rising interest rates seem to be driving more people to go in for term savings plans as the share of such instruments in total bank deposits increased to 60.3 per cent in December 2023 from 57.2 per cent in March 2023, according to the Reserve Bank data.

On an incremental basis, term deposits accounted for nearly 97.6 per cent of the total deposits during April-December 2023 and the shares of current account (CASA) deposits went down, said RBI's Quarterly BSR-2: Deposits with Scheduled Commercial Banks - December 2023.

"Rising return on term deposits has been driving the compositional shift in bank deposits: the share of term deposits in total deposits increased to 60.3 per cent in December 2023 from 57.2 per cent in March 2023," it said.

RBI further said that deposits moved to higher interest rate buckets as the share of term deposits bearing over 7 per cent interest rate rose to 61.4 per cent of the total term deposits in December 2023 from 54.7 per cent a quarter ago and 33.7 per cent in March 2023.

It is almost a year that the Reserve Bank has kept the short-term lending rate or repo rate at 6.5 per cent. The benchmark interest rate was last raised in February 2023 to 6.5 per cent from 6.25 per cent due to inflation driven mainly by global developments. In an off-cycle meeting



● **RBI'S QUARTERLY** BSR data also showed that nearly two thirds of the incremental term deposits during Oct.-Dec. 2023 were of the size ₹1 lakh to less than ₹1 crore.

In May 2022, the Monetary Policy Committee of RBI raised the policy rate by 40 basis points and it was followed by rate hikes of varying sizes, in each of the five subsequent meetings till February 2023. The repo rate was raised by 250 basis points cumulatively between May 2022 and February 2023.

RBI's quarterly BSR data also showed that nearly two thirds of the incremental term deposits during Oct.-Dec. 2023 were of the size ₹1 lakh to less than ₹1 crore. The corresponding share in the previous quarter was 46.5 per cent.

Female customers made significant contribution in deposit accretion. Their shares in incremental CASA, term, and total deposits during October-December 2023 were 63.4 per cent, 36.1 per cent, and 40.1 per cent, respectively. Their share in total deposits increased to 20.6 per cent in December 2023 from 20.2 per cent in September 2023. —PTI

NEW | TECH

Process related industries run the risk of getting replaced with an AI engine

AI not a worry for software workers: Nasscom

Mumbai, March 3: Workers in the software services industry, the Indian tech industry's mainstay, do not have much to worry about getting impacted by the influx of generative artificial intelligence (AI), IT industry body Nasscom's chairman Rajesh Nambiar has said.

However, workers in the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector are at the maximum risk of getting impacted by the influx of generative artificial intelligence, Nambiar, who is also the chairman and managing director of

global technology major Cognizant's India unit, said.

"People who work in process related industries, which we traditionally used to call BPO (business process outsourcing), Some of that runs the risk of getting replaced with an AI engine pretty quickly," said at a seminar organised in Pune.

He stressed that the \$48.9 billion BPM (business process management) industry has evolved quite a bit from merely managing simple business processes. There are heightened



● **A MAJORITY OF IT** services players are deploying their investments in training workforce on AI-related skills to help clients' demands in the future.

concerns around the impact of AI on jobs, especially in the over \$250 billion Indian tech sector which contributes substantially to the overall GDP of the country. In the case of the soft-

ware services industry, he said professionals who do not use AI as part of their work run the risk of getting replaced by those using AI.

A majority of IT services players are deploying

their investments in training workforce on AI-related skills to help clients' demands in the future.

"I think at the end of the day, it is the human ability to leverage and make a difference," Nambiar said, adding that the real impact happens when AI is integrated with an existing system or directed to solve a problem.

Gen AI will impact white collar jobs more, he said, adding that this is a departure from the past, where every technological input aimed at productivity gains has focused on automating tasks being

executed at the lower end of spectrum.

It may not impact the technician working to fix lights or the ACs, but will impact jobs like equity analysts at brokerages or a statistician, he said.

If we were to have a short-term outlook, Gen AI is overhyped, Nambiar said, adding that its impact is underestimated from longer term basis.

"If you want to look at a 5-10 year horizon, the impact of Gen AI and AI will have a much more impact than any of us could imagine at this point of time," he said. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Tiger wins USGA Bob Jones Award

Washington, United States: Tiger Woods, the 15-time major champion who redefined golf and inspired a generation of talent, was awarded the US Golf Association's highest honor, the Bob Jones Award, on Saturday. The 48-year-old American returned to the PGA Tour last month after ankle surgery last April following the Masters to ease pain following a 2021 car crash, the latest example of perseverance that has helped make him among golf's greatest legends. "This award goes beyond playing performance, recognizing the lasting impact of one person's journey that has forever changed the image and growth of golf," said USGA chief executive Mike Whan. "There are very few who stand alongside Tiger Woods in terms of on-course accomplishments and he's in a class of his own when it comes to the impact he has made on the game and future generations who will play it." — AFP

Oz batter Pucovski suffers concussion

Hobart: Australian batter Will Pucovski suffered a nasty blow on his head and had to be substituted while playing for Victoria in a Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania here on Sunday. The No. 3 batter retired hurt for 0 after being hit on his helmet from a Riley Meredith bouncer. It was just the second delivery he faced in Victoria's chase of 442 in the second innings. The 26-year-old, who has experienced several blows to the head with the most recent being in a second XI match in January, was struck on the left side of his helmet after he turned his head to a rising delivery from Meredith. The blow left him visibly disturbed as he knelt on the pitch. The medical staff rushed to the centre. He eventually got up and slowly walked off the field, rubbing his eyes. "Will is currently in the hands of our medical professionals. We'll look to provide an update in due course," a Cricket Victoria spokesperson said. Reserve batter Campbell Kellaway came in as a concussion substitute. — PTI

Deepak goes down fighting in opener

Busto Arsizio, Italy: India's campaign at the first World Olympic Boxing Qualifier was off to a disappointing start as World Championships bronze medalist Deepak Bhoria (51kg) went down fighting to Azerbaijan's Huseynov Nijat on the opening day here on Sunday. Bhoria, who pipped 2019 World Championships silver medalist Amit Panghal to make the Indian squad, lost via 2-3 split verdict. The first two rounds saw a tight contest as both the boxers went into attacking mode from the word go. The young pugilist from Azerbaijan took full advantage of his pace and swift movements to make life difficult for Bhoria in the ring. Bhoria lost both the first and second rounds with an identical 2-3 scoreline. The Indian pugilist came all guns blazing in the final three minutes and delivered some quality blows to take the round 4-1 but it wasn't enough. The Indian boxers have clinched four quotas for the Paris Olympics till now. — PTI

Messi, Suarez star as Miami hit five

Fort Lauderdale, United States: Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez scored two goals each as Inter Miami turned on the style hammering Orlando City 5-0 in Major League Soccer on Saturday. Florida rivals Orlando finished second in the Eastern Conference last season and have been considered contenders for this season's MLS Cup but they were outclassed by Miami from the outset. Suarez had lacked sharpness and match fitness in his first two outings but the prolific 37-year-old top scorer for Gremio in Brazil last season put aside any doubts about his continuing ability in the final third. "I'm very happy for him, that he was able to score. We were calm anyway, we know what Luis is and what he is capable of doing and everyone knows it," Messi said. Suarez took just four minutes to get Miami on the scoreboard and his first goal for his new club came in emphatic style, meeting a low cross from Julian Gressel with a thumping first-time shot inside the near post. — AFP

SHARP DUL!

Thakur-led Mumbai's rearguard puts Tamil Nadu on mat

Mumbai, March 3: Shardul Thakur's sizzling 109 and Tanush Kotian's unbeaten 74 off set R. Sai Kishore's six-wicket haul, putting Mumbai in command by powering to a 207-run first-innings lead over Tamil Nadu on the second day of the Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Sunday.

Thakur's sensational counterattacking hundred, featuring 13 fours and four sixes from a mere 104 balls, pulled Mumbai out of doldrums after they were reduced to 106 for seven at one stage.

At stumps, Mumbai were 353 for 9 at stumps against Tamil Nadu's first innings' 146, with Sai Kishore causing the maximum damage.

Sai Kishore (6/97) ran through a chunk of Mumbai's batting line-up, while Shreyas Iyer (3) fell to pacer Sandeep Warrier as Tamil Nadu levelled up with the hosts for the first time in the game.

But Thakur launched a stunning onslaught, putting each of Tamil Nadu bowlers under severe pressure while forging vital partnerships along the way to take Mumbai far ahead in the game.

Thakur teamed up with Hardik Tamore (35) for a crucial 105-run stand for the eighth wicket and took Mumbai further ahead in the company of Kotian, adding another 79 runs for the ninth wicket.

Using his blade to perfection, Thakur was adroit with his hands to pierce gaps at will and did not miss out clearing the field with disdain four times for maximums — one of which also brought up his maiden century across formats.

Thakur, who also struggled with an ankle-related issue along the way, finally fell to Kuldeep Sen (2/65) in the third session, which brought the pair of Kotian and Tushar Deshpande together again after their heroics in the last match. — PTI

BRIEF SCORES

Tamil Nadu 146 vs Mumbai 353/9 in 100 overs (Musheer Khan 55, Shardul Thakur 109, Tanush Kotian 74 batting; R. Sai Kishore 6/97).



Madhya Pradesh batter Himanshu Mantri plays a shot en route to his century against Vidarbha on the second day of the Ranji Trophy semifinal at Vidarbha Cricket Association (VCA) Stadium in Nagpur on Sunday. — PTI

Mantri century gives MP edge

Nagpur, March 3: Himanshu Mantri showed patience and technical aptitude while constructing a fine hundred to singlehandedly guide Madhya Pradesh to 252 in their first innings against Vidarbha on the second day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal at the VCA Stadium here on Sunday.

Mantri's 126 off 265 balls (13x4, 1x6) helped Madhya Pradesh to gain a small yet significant 82-run lead after beginning the day at 47 for one.

In their second innings, Vidarbha reached 13 for the loss of Atharva Taide at stumps, trailing by 69

BRIEF SCORES

Vidarbha 170 & 13/1 vs Madhya Pradesh 252 in 94.3 overs (Himanshu Mantri 126, Saransh Jain 30, Umesh Yadav 3/40, Yash Thakur 3/51, Akshay Wakhare 2/68).

runs. The importance of Mantri's knock, his third hundred of the season, can be gauged from the fact that the next highest score in MP innings was a 30 by Saransh Jain. But in the morning session, Madhya Pradesh

made a steady start through Mantri and Harsh Gawli as the second wicket pair stretched their alliance to 61 as Vidarbha reached 81 for one.

But pacer Yash Thakur (3/51) trapped Gawli (25, 77b) in front of the wicket to snap the stand and Vidarbha lost two more wickets while adding another 12 runs.

Veteran speedster Umesh Yadav (3/40) yorked hosts skipper Shubham Sharma (1) and Thakur won an appeal for leg-before against shuffling Venkatesh Iyer (0).

Vidarbha slipped to an uncomfortable 93 for four

but Sagar Solanki (25) gave Mantri solid support as the fifth wicket duo milked 42 runs to steady the ship.

A mix-up with Mantri saw Solanki getting out but a more solid period followed. Mantri found another willing partner in Jain as the duo added 73 runs to the sixth wicket, taking Madhya Pradesh past Vidarbha's first innings total of 170.

The pitch was eased out a bit as compared to Day 1 but there was enough carry and bounce on the track to keep the bowlers interested. — PTI

Lyon king as Aussies crush Kiwis

Wellington (New Zealand), March 3: Australia captain Pat Cummins heaped praise on teammates Nathan Lyon and Cameron Green on Sunday for match-winning performances as his side secured a 172-run triumph over New Zealand in the first Test.

Lyon spun the visitors to victory in the morning session on day four in Wellington, taking six wickets as New Zealand crumbled to 196 all out.

New Zealand lost their last seven wickets before lunch for 70 runs, with four falling to off-spinner Lyon, who finished with figures of 6/65 off 27 overs and 10-108 in the match.

The 36-year-old capitalised on spin-friendly Basin Reserve conditions and some meek batting from New Zealand, who began the day on 111/3 needing an unlikely 258 more runs to win.

Green's career-high unbeaten 174 on Day One rescued Australia from 89/4, having been put into bat, to reach 383 and set up a decisive 204-run first-innings lead.

It gave Green the nod over Lyon as man of the match and Cummins said that was a fair outcome. "Cam was amazing, he was really the difference in the end," Cummins said.

"I thought the way he went about it, with that intent, really put the pres-



Australia's Nathan Lyon (right) celebrates the dismissal of New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra with teammate wicketkeeper Alex Carey on Day Four of the first Test at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on Sunday. — AFP

sure back on the bowlers on day one.

"There was as much bounce as I've seen in any wicket for a long time but thankfully it spun which,

with Nathan in our side, is always a pretty good thing."

New Zealand pace bowler Will O'Rourke is a doubt for the second and

final Test starting in Christchurch on Friday after leaving the field with a tight hamstring on day three.

Captain Tim Southee said he wouldn't rule out a shock recall for veteran pace bowler Neil Wagner, who retired last week.

The 37-year-old had been named in New Zealand's squad, but tearfully announced his retirement after being left out of the first Test side, ending a 64-Test, 260-wicket career.

Southee ruled out calling up Trent Boult because he has only been playing white ball cricket of late, but was less adamant when asked about Wagner.

"Obviously the Test match has only just finished so we'll see how Will scrubs up and we'll go from there," Southee said.

Cummins said Australia would be prepared if Wagner returned. "It'd be the world's shortest retirement. It'd be good to see his high energy," he said of the short-ball specialist.

Southee hailed Glenn Phillips after the all-rounder top scored with 71 in the first innings and claimed career-best figures of 5/45 with his part-time off-spin as Australia were dismissed for 164 in the second. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES

Australia 383 & 164 beat New Zealand 179 & 196 (Rachin Ravindra 59, Nathan Lyon 6/65).

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

Capitals blow Giants away

Bengaluru, March 3: Captain Meg Lanning's fifty and a cunning spell of left-arm spin by Jess Jonassen drove Delhi Capitals to a slick 25-run victory over Gujarat Giants in their Women's Premier League match here on Sunday. Lanning (55, 41b, 6x4, 1x6) was Capitals' guiding force to an adequate 163 for 8 despite a late flurry of wickets.

The Giants' chase never grew wings, ending up with 138 for 8 despite Ashleigh Gardner's well-timed 40 off 31 balls as they crashed to their fourth defeat on the bounce.

Jonassen led Capitals' bowling with a shrewd spell (3/22) and she received very good support from Radha Yadav (3/20). The win also propelled Delhi to the top of the table with six points.

The Gujarat side made a shaky start, conceding a maiden in the very first over to WPL debutant pacer Titas Sadhu.

Their beginning was further marred when experienced pacer Shikha Pandey castled Laura Wolvaardt with a delivery that shaped in that tiny bit to beat her swat.

But the Giants too found some flow as captain Beth Mooney and Phoebe Litchfield combined to smash 15 runs in the fourth over bowled by Pandey.

However, it was just an isolated spark as the Giants stumbled against Jonassen. In the fifth over, the Australian spinner jettisoned Mooney and Litchfield in the space of four balls to reduce Giants to 34 for

SCOREBOARD

Delhi Capitals: Meg Lanning c Hemalatha b Meghna Singh 55, Shafali Verma c Wolvaardt b Meghna Singh 13, Alice Capsey c Kanwar b Meghna Singh 27, Jemimah Rodrigues c Pathan b Kashyap 7, Annabel Sutherland c Gardner b Kanwar 20, Jess Jonassen c Mooney b Gardner 11, Arundhati Reddy c Meghna Singh b Gardner 5, Radha Yadav lbw b Meghna Singh 5, Shikha Pandey not out 14. Extras (w-6) 6. Total (for 8 wickets in 20 overs) 163.

Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-58, 3-105, 4-111, 5-138, 6-142, 7-146, 8-163.

Bowling: Tanuja Kanwar 4-0-31-1, Kathryn Bryce 4-0-32-0, Meghna Singh 4-0-37-4, Ashleigh Gardner 4-0-37-2, Mannat Kashyap 3-0-16-1, Tarannum Pathan 1-0-10-0.

Gujarat Giants: Beth Mooney lbw b Jonassen 12, Laura Wolvaardt b Pandey 0, Phoebe Litchfield c Sutherland b Jonassen 15, Veda Krishnamurthy c Pandey b Yadav 12, Ashleigh Gardner st Bhatia b Jonassen 40, Kathryn Bryce lbw b Yadav 3, Tanuja Kanwar c Shafali Verma b Yadav 13, Tarannum Pathan lbw b Reddy 9, Meghna Singh not out 10, Sayali Satghare not out 7. Extras (lb-9, nb-1, w-7) 17. Total (for 8 wickets in 19.6 overs) 138.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-28, 3-34, 4-53, 5-73, 6-105, 7-113, 8-123.

Bowling: Titas Sadhu 2-1-12-0, Shikha Pandey 3-6-1-28-1, Jess Jonassen 4-0-22-3, Arundhati Reddy 3-0-27-1, Annabel Sutherland 3-0-20-0, Radha Yadav 4-0-20-3.

three. Gardner displayed her power while hammering pacer Annabel Sutherland for two fours and a six in the 12th over to make a total of 16 runs. — PTI



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior (right) vies for the ball with Valencia's Dimitri Foulquier during their Spanish league match at the Mestalla Stadium in Valencia on Saturday. The match ended 2-2. — AFP

Vinicius scores 2 to earn Real draw

Barcelona (Spain), March 3: Vinicius Junior scored twice to lift Real Madrid to 2-2 against Valencia in the Spanish League on Saturday, a large group of spectators did chant "Vinicius is stupid" and booed him loudly throughout.

After his first goal, Vinicius held up his fist toward the Valencia fans behind the goal. After his equaliser, he cupped his ears as if asking for more from the fans who jeered him.

While Valencia banned three fans for life from its stadium after they were identified as having racially abused Vinicius last season, the club has likewise criticised the player and Madrid for what it considers the unfair categorisation of its fanbase as predominantly racist.

"Vinicius played a very good game," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. — AP

INDIA CLIMB TO TOP SPOT IN WTC CHART

Dubai, March 3: Two-time finalists India jumped to the top of the World Test Championship standings, replacing New Zealand in the latest rankings issued on Sunday.

India, who defeated England by five wickets in the fourth Test in Ranchi to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series, replaced the Kiwis with a stronger points percentage of 64.58.

With five wins, two losses and one draw, India have 62 points in 8 matches, while the Black Caps have 36 from five matches (three wins, two losses) and have a point-percentage of 60.00.

Before the start of the Wellington Test, New Zealand were sitting at the top of the table with 36 points in four games and a points percentage of 75.

But following their massive 172-run defeat, the 2021 WTC champions lost the top spot, slipping to the No 2 position with a points percentage of 60.

Third-placed Australia have closed on the gap after the Wellington Test, gaining 12 crucial points as they now have 78 points from 11 matches. — PTI

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