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DHAKA MUST LEARN
TO STAND HINDUS**WORLD 8**
IRAQ'S PM SURVIVES
ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT**SPORT 12**
WT20: INDIA OUSTED AS NEW
ZEALAND CLINCH SF SPOT

NEW DELHI, MONDAY NOVEMBER 8, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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BIG B'S
REQUEST TO
ROHIT SHETTY
10 VIVACITY

BJP gears up for ballot battle

Exec fixes 3 goals to help win Assembly polls in 5 States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Set on winning the forthcoming Assembly polls in five States, including Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Uttarakhand, the BJP on Sunday fixed three organisational goals. These are: Party committees in all 10.40 lakh booths, appointment of 'page pramukhs', and a booth-level listening mechanism for the Prime Minister's 'Mam ki baat' in the next six months.

The party also offered to provide "judicial justice" to each of the BJP workers affected by the post-poll violence in West Bengal.

The National Executive of the BJP, which started here at the NDMC Convention Centre amid beating of drums and singing of 'chaath' songs, worked on a heavy agenda of unravelling a plan to succeed in five Assembly polls after witnessing mixed results in 29 Assembly bypolls and three Lok Sabha by-elections.

The meeting, presided over by party president JP Nadra, was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman, S



Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives to attend the National Executive Committee meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the NDMC Convention Centre in New Delhi on Sunday PTI

Jaishankar, Piyush Goyal, Dharmendra Pradhan and Chief Ministers and Deputy-Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States.

State presidents and several others connected online with the meeting, the first since 2019 and post the pandemic. Party veterans like LK Advani and MM Joshi, too, attended the meet virtually.

Besides deciding to set up and consolidate all booth committees and completing the appointment of 'panna pramukhs', particularly in the five poll-bound States, the National

Executive also sought to chalk-out a working plan "to surge ahead" in States like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

In his inaugural address to the conclave, Nadra said that the party's "peak is yet to come" and set a three-point plan for the workers in the next six-months to expand and consolidate the party's hold in all the States.

The BJP president fixed a "six-month leap" for the party organisation ahead of the crucial Assembly elections.

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TMC: Don't play broken record

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Reacting to the attack by the BJP for the post-poll violence in West Bengal, the TMC said it was time the saffron party stopped playing the "broken record." TMC MP Saugato Roy said, "The BJP had been trying to polarise the State for electoral gains. They used filthy language and brought false allegations against our leaders... but the net result was that they lost."

Be a bridge of faith for people: PM to workers

Work with 'seva, samarpan and vishwas', Modi tells BJP men

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asked party workers "to become a bridge of faith for the common man" reminding them that the "BJP is not a *parivar*-based party." He also expressed "confidence" in the "feedback" given to the National Executive Meet by BJP leaders of the five poll-bound States about election preparedness as he delivered his concluding address at the one-day National Executive, the highest decision-making body of the party.

Modi's brief speech came after the BJP passed a political resolution that condemned the "opportunistic politics of Opposition parties" who "tried to break the resolve of the country" and "raised doubts"

about "country's vaccine programme" while the Prime Minister "worked hard" to build trust.

The resolution criticised "the tweet politics" of Opposition parties and their leaders who "did not come on the road to help-out the common people."

In his address, Modi said the main reason for the BJP finding a place in the Centre was its "connect with the common man."

Modi urged BJP workers to move forward with "seva, samarpan aur vishwas" (service, dedication and faith) and recalled that the BJP has grown due to the "hard work" of the party veterans.

He said 19 months of Covid-19 and India's leadership have conveyed well that it is not only politics but "seva" that is the basis of politics and this has been acknowledged by the world.

The work carried out by the BJP has "strengthened the democratic system", the Prime Minister said.

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BJP to contest all seats in Punjab; setback to Capt

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

In a setback for former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, the BJP on Sunday declared it would contest from all 117 seats in the State in the forthcoming Assembly polls.

The announcement — seen as a virtual snub to the former Chief Minister — was made by Punjab BJP president Ashwani Sharma after he placed his report on the poll-bound State before the party's National Executive.

Punjab BJP chief's declaration is also seen as a sign that the party leadership is, as of now, not in the mood to forge an alliance or join hands with any political party or leader in the State, scheduled to go to polls early next year.

Notably, Amarinder, a month after stepping down as the Chief Minister, had bid a final goodbye to the Congress party citing "continued humiliation", and announced a new political outfit — Punjab Lok Congress. He has repeatedly indicated at arriving at a "seat sharing arrangement" with the BJP though on the condition of an acceptable resolution to farm laws issue.

After his resignation, Amarinder had met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and

BJP's decision being seen as a snub to ex-CM of State

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. At the same time, the BJP leaders, especially in Punjab, also softened their stance against Amarinder.

"There are so many ifs and buts... There is still time in the elections. In fact, there are no formal talks as such... So we are making our full preparations on all 117 seats. We have asked all our leaders and workers to be fully prepared to contest polls all alone," a senior BJP leader told *The Pioneer*, requesting anonymity.

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CAPSULE

OVER 33L CHILDREN IN INDIA MALNOURISHED

New Delhi: Over 33 lakh children in India are malnourished and more than half of them fall in the severely malnourished category with Maharashtra, Bihar and Gujarat topping the list, the Women and Child Development Ministry said in response to an RTI.

COP SHOT DEAD BY ULTRAS IN SRINAGAR

Srinagar: A policeman was shot dead by terrorists in the Batamalo area of the city on Sunday. He was identified as Constable Tausif Ahmad, they said. "At about 8 pm, terrorists fired upon J&K Police Constable Tausif Ahmad near his residence at SD Colony, Batamalo," an official said. They said the cop was critically injured and was taken to the SMHS hospital.

INDIAN FISHERMAN KILLED IN PAK FIRING

New Delhi: India has taken serious note of the Pakistani Maritime Security Agency resorting to unprovoked firing on an Indian fishing boat in the Arabian Sea that resulted in the death of an Indian national, official sources said on Sunday. The incident took place on Saturday, they said.

PUNJAB CUTS PETROL PRICE BY ₹10

Chandigarh: The Congress-led Government in Punjab on Sunday announced a reduction in VAT on petrol and diesel, making them cheaper by ₹10 and ₹5 per litre respectively.

'Wankhede, Kamboj masterminded Aryan ransom plot, selfie spoilt it'

Maha Minister alleges Aryan was 'trapped, taken to ship'

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a sensational claim made in the mid-sea drug bust case, Maharashtra Minister and senior NCP leader Nawab Malik on Sunday alleged that BJP leader Mohit Kamboj-Bharatiya — in collusion with the Narcotics Control Bureau's (NCB's) Mumbai Zonal director Sameer Wankhede — masterminded the "kidnap and ransom" drama involving Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan, but "the entire drama went for a toss because of one selfie".

Amid reports that SRK had left from Mumbai for Delhi in a private plane and was being approached by international media outlets for interviews over the recent drug saga involving his son, Malik said, "Shah Rukh Khan is being threatened since the time I started speaking out. He is being asked not to speak out on



Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik addresses a Press conference at Kurla in Mumbai on Sunday PTI

the issue since his manager Pooja Dadlani's name cropped up in the allegations of extortion in the drug bust case."

"As part of the conspiracy hatched by Kamboj, Aryan was called on October 2 to join the cruise. Working at Kamboj's behest, Pratik Gaba and Amir Furniturewala trapped him and took him to the Goa-bound luxury cruise. Once Aryan was on board, the kidnap and ransom drama unfolded. A ransom of ₹25 crore was initially demanded. The deal was later settled for ₹18 crore. Even ₹50 lakh was paid as part of the deal.

But the entire drama went for a toss because of a selfie (clicked up by an independent witness Kiran Gosavi) that went viral," Malik said.

Addressing a Press conference here, Malik alleged that while Kamboj, who is a former BJP youth wing president and the party's Mumbai unit general secretary, was the "mastermind" behind the "kidnap and ransom" drama involving Aryan, Wankhede was his "partner-in-crime".

Malik alleged that Wankhede had met Kamboj near a burial ground on

October 7. "Kamboj enjoys good relations with Wankhede. Local residents told me that both had met in front of a burial ground in the city on October 7. Fortunately for Wankhede, we could not get the CCTV footage of their meeting, because the cameras in the neighbourhood were not functioning," he said.

It may be recalled that Aryan and seven others were initially detained on the night of October 2 and later arrested on October 3, after the NCB officials busted a rave party and seized 13 grams of cocaine, 5 grams of Mephedrone, 21 grams of Charas, 22 pills of MDMA (Ecstasy) and ₹1.33 lakh in cash from Goa-bound Cordelia Cruises' Empress ship, off the Mumbai coast. Subsequently, 12 more people were arrested in connection with the mid-sea rave party case.

Malik recalled that at a Press conference held immediately after the October 2 drug bust, he had alleged that the NCB had "let off" three individuals — Rishabh Sachdeva, Gaba and Furniturewala — after having allegedly detained them from the luxury cruise.

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10 fresh Zika cases reported in Kanpur, tally rises to 89

Surveillance intensified to control disease

PTI ■ KANPUR

Ten more people, including three Indian Air Force personnel, tested positive for Zika virus in Kanpur on Sunday, taking the total number of cases to 89, District Magistrate Vishak G Ayyar said.

On Saturday, 13 people had tested positive for Zika virus.

"Out of the 89 infected people, 55 are men and 34 are women. Among these, 23 are those below the age of 21 years. Of the total infected people, 12 are Indian Air Force personnel. This includes 11 men and one woman," the District Magistrate said.

Health teams had collected blood samples of 525 people on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and were sent to the virology lab of the King George's Medical University in Lucknow and the National Institute of Virology in Pune for testing.

"Of this, 23 samples tested positive for Zika virus," the district magistrate added.

ALL ABOUT ZIKA VIRUS

Zika virus disease is an emerging viral disease transmitted through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito

SYMPTOMS	
◆ Most of those infected with Zika virus disease either remain asymptomatic or show mild symptoms of fever, rash, conjunctivitis, body ache, joint pain	uncommon and fatalities are rare
◆ Severe forms of the disease requiring hospitalisation are	◆ There is no vaccine or drug available to prevent/treat Zika virus at present
	◆ Infection during pregnancy can cause infants to be born with microcephaly and other malformation disease

Ayyar also said that health teams have collected samples of 525 people who were in close contact with the infected persons and living in the radius of 3 km of Indian Air Force station hangars for testing.

The first case of the virus was reported in the city on

October 23 when a warrant officer of the IAF tested positive for the infection.

So far, a total of 3,283 samples were collected from the city and sent to the virology lab of KGMU in Lucknow and NIV in Pune for testing.

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Social media as harmful as narcotics: US study

Parents ignorant of its ill-effects on brains of adolescent children who routinely fall prey to it: Expert

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Social media is as dangerous and hazardous as narcotics, according to a research by a team of clinical psychologists, neurobiologists, teachers and social scientists in North Carolina University in the USA.

Though the research, is being held in the US, the revelations that have come out till date suggest that India, especially Kerala, is taking the

brunt of the ill-effects of this technology, which has given high hopes by shrinking the world into a global village.

In Kerala, adolescent girls as well as grown up females, including middle-aged women routinely, fall prey to the predators lurking behind social media cover. Not a single day passes in Kerala without news reports of girls and women running away with their "prince charming" who would have courted them only

through social media sites.

Why do adolescents fall easy prey to social media? "Last five years of research held among adolescents show that their brains are susceptible to social media. The pubertal hormones affect the brain a year or two before there are any physical changes. Those hormones flood the young brain with neurotransmitters responsible for feeling good and the urge for social interactions and acceptance," sums up Gerald Posner, an award-winning author of books like *God's Bankers* and *Pharma*.

Posner is on a mission to bring out a book on the dark deeds of social media giants who employ science and tech-



nology experts to woo the young and old and make them sit glued to the screens. It is only a matter of time before they fall prey to the designs of the predators.

Jim Winston, scion of a business family that made a fortune through real estate and a clinical psychologist by profession, is the name the world is going to hear frequently as he is the one who is taking on the social media bull by its horns to save the young and old alike.

Winston has found that the parents are ignorant about the ill-effects of social media and the effect it has on the brains of their adolescent children. He also found that no study has been held till date to under-

stand the biological impact that the social media creates in the brain.

Posner says it is worse than the impact made by narcotics. The social media giants try all tricks in the game to make people addicted to it.

"Forget about the old people. The children, especially adolescents end up as speeding vehicles without breaks. They lose the ability to read classics," he told *The Pioneer*.

The research is expected to give a solution which would help parents, clinical psychologists and teachers to wean away potential victims from social media that has developed itself into an octopus, feels Posner.

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POLLUTION RISING TO KILLING LEVELS

Min for meeting on stubble fire

People of Delhi suffocating, says Min Gopal Rai

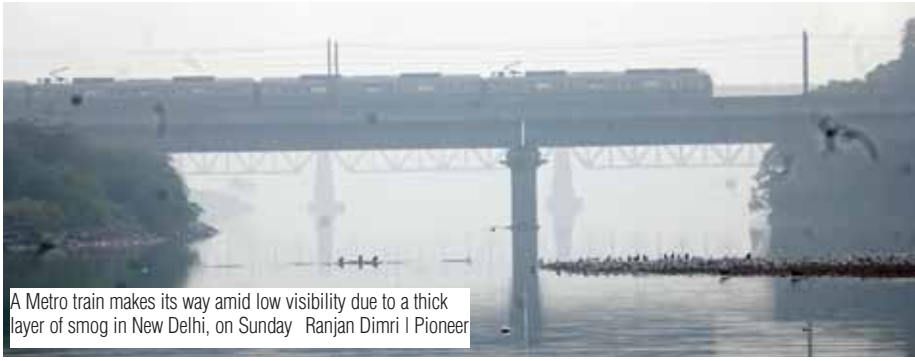
SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when the national Capital is struggling to deal with farm fire pollution, Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday pitched for a joint action plan (JAP) to get rid of stubble burning.

According to pollution monitoring agency SAFAR, impact of farm fire pollution PM 2.5 recorded 48 per cent which was the highest so far.

Rai also sought emergency meeting on air pollution with Union Minister and representatives of Delhi's neighbouring States urging the Centre to implement solution to curb stubble burning pollution. "People of Delhi suffocating, choking on polluted air thanks to the negligence of Centre and neighbouring States; have written a letter to Union Environment Minister seeking an Emergency Meeting over the pollution situation, Rai added mentioning farm fire data in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh recorded by US based space satellite organization - NASA.

Elaborating stubble burning data, Rai said that the 5,728 stubble burnings took



A Metro train makes its way amid low visibility due to a thick layer of smog in New Delhi, on Sunday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

PM10 (µgm-3)	423	Very Poor	339	Poor	254	Poor
PM2.5 (µgm-3)	282	Severe	225	Very Poor	169	Very Poor

place in Punjab, Haryana and UP on November 5; addition of firecracker pollution to this mix made the situation extremely lethal," the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said, adding, "Centre, neighbouring states showing no concern for human lives. Delhi government implemented the bio-decomposer solution so there were 0 stubble burnings in Delhi; we asked other states to do the same but they did not care."

"For the last three days, all the people of Delhi have been forced to breathe heavily polluted and suffocating air. This is an extremely concerning and worrying situation for all of us. Along with DPCC's sci-

entists, we researched the changes in pollution levels in Delhi since November 1.

According to NASA satellite observatory, on November 1st, there were 2,077 incidents of stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana and UP. The AQI on this day in Delhi was 281. On November 2, there were 3,291 incidents. The AQI was 303. On November 3, 2,775 incidents were recorded and the AQI was 314. 3,383 incidents on November 4, while the AQI was 382.

The number of stubble burnings shoots up to 5,728 incidents on November 5, and the AQI levels including pollution from firecrackers rises to

462. The number of burnings came down to 4,369 on November 6, and the AQI came down to 437. "Data clearly shows that the state of pollution in Delhi gets very devastating as the number of stubble burning incidents rise. Adding on to that the pollution generated by firecrackers makes the situation even more lethal. The impact of firecracker pollution is slowly receding but the same can not be said about stubble burning. Till the time when there is no proper plan in place to plug stubble burning in neighbouring states, we can't get freedom from this suffocation," he added further.

Capital records 47 Covid-19 cases, positivity rate 0.11%



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi recorded 47 Covid-19 cases and zero daily deaths due to the disease on Sunday, while the positivity rate stood at 0.11 per cent, data shared by the health department showed.

The number of cumulative cases now stands at 14,40,118. Over 14.14 lakh patients have recovered from the infection so far.

The death toll due to the coronavirus infection in Delhi stands at 25,091. The national capital has not reported any fatality due to COVID-19 so far this month. It reported four deaths in October and five in September.

The case positivity rate slightly increased to 0.11 per cent on Sunday, according to the latest bulletin.

Water supply hit in parts of city as ammonia levels rise in Yamuna

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Water supply was disrupted in parts of the national capital on Sunday as production at the treatment plants in the city was hit due to increase in ammonia to 3 ppm in River Yamuna near Wazirabad.

Water production has been hit due to heavy sewage and industrial discharge from Haryana, Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice chairman Raghav Chadha said in a statement. He said water supply is likely to be affected in East, North East, South Delhi, parts of NDMC area and areas under PPP command.

"We request everyone to make judicious use of water. We have also pressed into service adequate numbers of water tankers," he said.

The level of ammonia in Yamuna increased to 3 ppm (parts per million) affecting water production at Sonia Vihar, Bhagirathi, Chadrawal, Okhla and Wazirabad treatment plants, he said.

The DJB water quality management team has increased coagulants and disinfectants dosing in raw Yamuna water to control the increased water pollution and

to maintain the water quality as per production norms, he said.

"We are working closely with Haryana to address the issue of ammonia in River Yamuna. @DelhiJalBoard is putting in tireless efforts to restore normal water supply ASAP and to bring down the levels ammonia," Chadha tweeted.

During the Dussehra-Diwali period, Ganga canal (that supplies Ganga water to Delhi) gets shut for annual maintenance. As a result, production at Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi WTPs which too get their raw water supply from Yamuna gets reduced by 50 percent, Chadha said.

Presently the treatment plants are not operating at optimum due to pollutants discharged in Yamuna by Haryana, he added.

The water production at Wazirabad plant was reduced to 129.37 million gallon per day (MGD) against 134 MGD capacity.

The production at other plants was 83.09 MGD (94 MGD) at Chandrawal, Bhagirathi 49.78 MGD (110 MGD), and Sonia Vihar 51.23 MGD (140 MGD), he added.

Govt seeks action against 12 DU college principals for inciting teachers



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Government's department of higher education has asked Delhi University's Vice-Chancellor to take action against the principals of 12 Delhi Government funded colleges, accusing them of inciting teachers and creating a hostile education environment over funding issues.

There are 12 DU colleges that are fully funded by the Delhi Government, and tussles between them and the government over the release of grants has been a long-standing issue.

In a letter dated November 3 to DU V-C Yogesh Singh, the government's Higher Education Director Ranjana Deshwal said the principals have been inciting teachers instead of "managing the accounts properly.

"Instead of providing UCs (Utilisation Certificates) on time, adhering to the conditions of pattern of assistance, managing the accounts properly, evolving mechanisms for generation of internal resources, the principals have been inciting teachers and staff by utterances, creating a hostile educational environment. The principals in their leadership role have been leading adverse critical and embarrassing chants," the letter said.

The letter goes on to ask that disciplinary action be taken against the principals for violation of Central Civil Service (Conduct) Rules.

DU's Assistant Registrar (Colleges) has asked the principals to provide all communications made with the Director of Higher Education and other related officials.

Special drive: Delhi Traffic Police issued 19,500 challans to e-rickshaws from Jan-Oct

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Traffic Police, in a special drive, took action against over 19,500 e-rickshaws over improper parking, driving in 'no entry zone' or without license, exceeding the number of passengers among other violations from January to October 31 this year, official data stated.

According to the data, out of the total 19,591 challans issued to e-rickshaws, the maximum number of challans were issued in Western Range (14,580) followed by 2,802 challans in New Delhi Range and 2,209 challans in Southern Range of the traffic police.

An analysis of the data of the three traffic ranges accessed from January till October 31 so far showed that 11,983 challans were issued for improper parking, 5,546 challans for driving in 'no entry zone', while 2,062 for other violations related to registration certificate (RC), license, wrong side, exceeding passenger limit or dangerous driving.

During the same period, the Delhi Traffic Police impounded 31,723 e-rickshaws in its three ranges, with the maximum of 554 such vehicles in west, followed by 124 in southern and the least in New Delhi at 45, the data showed.

The data also cited the action taken by the traffic police both through Virtual Online Challan Application (VoCA) and e-challan machine. Police also stated that the challans issued for different violations range from Rs 5,000 and beyond pertaining to types of offences.

The Western Range of the traffic unit includes many market areas, including Peera Garhi Chowk, Mundka, Sagarpur, Shadi Put



Chowk and Dwarka More.

Deputy Commissioner of Traffic (West) Ghanshyam Bansal said in the special drive conducted since January this year, action was taken against 19,591 e-rickshaws for violating law by driving without RC, license or driving against the flow of traffic, dangerous driving or over-crowding their vehicles and parking at improper places.

"But in the last six months, we have seen a lot of improvement. Maximum prosecutions have also instilled discipline among the e-rickshaw drivers who otherwise added congestion and affected the traffic flow by randomly stopping in the middle of the road to either pick or drop passengers," he said.

"In congested areas, where there is heavy presence of e-rickshaws like in Uttam Nagar, Nangloi Chowk or Peera Garhi, we have done an extensive drive to ease out the traffic situation. We deployed our staff who instructed the e-rickshaw drivers to park their vehicles at the designated spot. In places like Peera Garhi, especially on Rohtak road, e-rickshaws are not allowed so, despite that if they did, we impounded the vehicles," he added.

The officer observed that with maximum prosecution through the special drive, they have now noticed discipline among the e-rickshaw drivers in their district which has also reduced congestion, traffic snarls and most importantly averted accidents as pedestrians now have space to move.

The New Delhi Range of the traffic unit includes Mandir Marg, Chanakapuri, Mahipalpur, NH-48 and station road among others, while the Southern Range includes Vasant Vihar, Saket, Mehrauli, Lajpat Nagar, Greater Kailash, Sangam Vihar, Kalkaji, Sukhdev Vihar and Sarita Vihar area.

A senior traffic official said prosecution has been low in these areas as compared to the western unit because in many areas of New Delhi and Southern ranges, e-rickshaws are not allowed on specific roads.

"A notification has been issued according to which e-rickshaws are not allowed on certain roads beyond a specific point. On the basis of the notification, we asked the PWD to display cautionary boards as a warning sign for these vehicles to not enter the specified areas where it is not allowed," he said.

The officer said a series of meetings have been held with e-rickshaw association members to ensure they do not drive on roads where their entry is unauthorised.

"But during the meetings, the e-rickshaw drivers raised their issues, saying when they pickup their passengers, they have to pass through some major or arterial roads or no entry zones. They said they cannot ask the passengers to get down in the middle because their entry is restricted on the other end," he added.

BJP MP vows to defy Chhath puja ban at Yamuna bank

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The one-upmanship over Chhath celebration involving the ruling AAP and Opposition BJP intensified on Sunday with saffron party MP Parvesh Verma asserting to defy the ban on celebrating the festival at Yamuna banks and challenging Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to stop him if he can. Meanwhile, some Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislators staged a protest accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of stopping them from preparing a Chhath ghat at Dwarka.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) has prohibited Chhath Puja on the banks of the Yamuna this year.

The AAP and BJP leaders have been involved in a war of words over Chhath for the last several days. The festival assumes political significance as Purvanchalis (natives of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) who are settled in Delhi and celebrate the festival are a major vote bank in the city.

Verma, the BJP MP from west Delhi, alleged that Kejriwal has "prohibited" celebration of Chhath at Yamuna ghats which is "unacceptable".



"I will be accompanied by Purvanchali brothers and sisters and we will clean the Chhath ghat at ITO and start the puja. I challenge Arvind Kejriwal to stop us if he can," Verma said.

Meanwhile, AAP MLAs Sanjeev Jha and Vinay Mishra, who staged a protest in Dwarka demanding that a Chhath ghat be constructed there, alleged that the BJP was trying to obstruct Chhath Puja in the city.

"The BJP at many places in Delhi is stopping Purvanchalis from preparing Chhath ghats to obstruct the Chhath Puja. The AAP MLA and volunteers have come forward to construct Chhath ghat in Dwarka in response to this," tweeted Jha who is the AAP legislator from Burari.

The tussle between the AAP and BJP started with DDMA's September 30 order prohibiting celebration of Chhath at public places this year due to COVID-19.

SIMIAN MENACE

Not a monkey sterilised in Delhi since Centre sanctioned funds in Jan 2019

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Not a single monkey has been sterilised in Delhi since January 2019 when the Centre released funds to the city forest department to control the simian population through laparoscopic sterilisation, officials said.

In 2018, the then chief wildlife warden, Ishwar Singh, had prepared a three-year plan to sterilise monkeys of reproductive age to curb the simian menace in the national capital.

The Centre sanctioned Rs 5.43 crore to the forest department in January 2019 for sterilisation of 8,000 monkeys in the first year.

Over two-and-a-half years later, officials say "not a single monkey has been sterilised in Delhi".

"The forest department had floated tenders thrice, but no agency (to capture and sterilise monkeys) came forward. Not much could be done during the (COVID-19) pandemic. I believe the fund has been returned to the Centre. There is no proposal for sterilisation pending now," a senior forest department official said.

In 2007, the Delhi High Court had asked municipal



corporations to catch monkeys from human habitations and shift them to Asola sanctuary. It had directed the forest department to provide the animals food so that they do not venture out.

At present, there are more than 25,000 monkeys in the sanctuary and there is no count of those roaming free in human habitations, according to officials.

Sonya Ghosh, a member of a Delhi High Court-appointed committee for translocation of monkeys, said the panel last met before the pandemic and nothing has happened since then.

The official quoted above said the panel is scheduled to meet in the third week of

November.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had sanctioned the National Institute of Immunology and Wildlife Institute of India to develop a reversible contraceptive vaccine to control monkey population.

According to the official and Ghosh, there is no update on the vaccine so far.

Ghosh also alleged that old, ill and injured monkeys are being "dumped into the Asola sanctuary for leopards".

Deputy Conservator of Forests (South Division) Amit Anand said the department cannot conduct sterilisation on its own due to "shortage of manpower". He added that sterilisation may not yield the desired results as "an alpha male captured will be replaced by another male".

"Monkeys will become aggressive which will increase cases of man-animal conflict. It is not a proven successful method. The relocated monkeys are adapting to their new habitat (Asola). Many venture out, but are captured and brought back. The process continues till they form a bond with the natural environment," the official noted.

HC grants divorce to couple, says husband viewed wife as cash cow

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has granted divorce to a couple on the ground of mental cruelty by the husband, observing that he viewed his wife as a "cash cow" and became interested in her only after she got a job with the Delhi Police.

A bench headed by Justice Vipin Sanghi said the husband's materialistic attitude, without any emotional ties, would have caused mental agony and trauma to the wife, which is sufficient to constitute cruelty to her.

The bench, also comprising Justice Jasmeet Singh, observed that generally, it is the desire of every married woman to start a family, however, in the present case, the husband appeared to be "not interested in nurturing the marriage but only interested in the wife's income".

The court set aside a family court's order which rejected the wife's divorce plea and dissolved the marriage between the parties under the Hindu Marriage Act.

She sought a divorce on the ground that the husband was unemployed, an alcoholic and used to physically abuse her and demand money.

In the present case, both the parties belonged to poor background and the marriage was solemnised when the husband and the wife were 19 years old and 13 years old, respectively.

Even after attaining the age of majority in 2005, the wife was not taken to the matrimonial home until November 2014, that is, when she secured a job with the Delhi Police.

"The continued distance between the parties even after the appellant (wife) attained majority would, in itself, have caused trauma and resulted in cruelty to the appellant apart from everything else... (the) circumstance probalises the stand of the appellant, that the respondent (husband) harassed the appellant to pocket her income, since he was himself unemployed," the court said.

"The respondent, it appears, viewed the appellant as a cash cow and became interested in her only after she got the job with the Delhi Police. Such brazenly materialistic attitude of the respondent, with no emotional ties, would have in itself caused mental agony and trauma to the appellant sufficient to constitute cruelty to her," it added.

Man killed by four drunks in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old man was killed while his friend sustained severe injuries after four men, who were under the influence of alcohol, hit them with bricks following a brawl in outer Delhi's Swaroop Nagar. Police said that they have arrested the accused and further investigation is going on.

The deceased has been identified as Ankit Jaiswal, a resident of Delhi's Nathu Colony. He was a student and also used to repair air-conditioners and refrigerators. His injured friend, 20 year-old Anand Kumar Jha, is a resident of Burari in North Delhi and works as a building contractor. He is undergoing treatment at a city hospital in Burari and is out of danger.

The incident took place on the intervening night of November 4 and 5 when Jaiswal and Jha were together enjoying a motorcycle ride on Diwali night, police said.

According to Bijendra Kumar Yadav, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer north district, a police control room (PCR) call was received at around 2.52 AM on November 5 regarding a quarrel in IP colony, Swaroop

Nagar.

"When PCR was reached the spot, a person was found in unconscious state and he was taken to BJRM Hospital, where he was declared brought dead. Another person, who also sustained injuries, was admitted in Sant Hospital in north Delhi's Burari and is currently out of danger," said the DCP.

Based on Jha's statement, a case was registered under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 394 (voluntarily causing hurt in committing robbery) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention), the DCP said.

"After scanning through several CCTV cameras and local inquiry, we arrested all the four accused -- Nikhil Pal, Vijay, Shushil and Ashok. Their blood stained clothes and one of the looted mobile phones of the injured was recovered at the instance of accused Shushil," said the DCP.

All the four accused, including two history-sheeters, have been sent to judicial custody. Shushil was involved in a 2009 case of attempt to murder in Adarsh Nagar while Vijay was involved in a 2014 case of attempt to murder, the DCP added.

100 people held under Arms Act, 85 under Excise Act, in city in Oct: Data

22 UNDER NDPS ACT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 100 people were arrested under the Arms Act, 85 people under the Excise Act, and 22 people under the NDPS Act in three districts of the Delhi Police in October, according to official data.

Eighteen people were held under the Arms Act in north district and five country-made pistols and 10 cartridges were seized from their possession, it said.

According to the data, the southeast district registered 17 cases under the Arms Act and arrested 18 people. Six firearms and 11 knives were recovered from their possession.

In the northeast district, 59 cases under the Arms Act were registered and 68 people have been arrested. A total of 23 pistols, 45 live cartridges and 40 knives were recovered, it said.

The north, southeast and northeast districts made the arrest of 85 people under the Excise Act last month. Among them, 19 were arrested in north, 44 in southeast, and 22 in northeast districts.

CRPF issues guidelines to honour veterans' last abode



RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In order to instil a sense of regimentation and cohesion in its ranks, the CRPF has issued a detailed set of guidelines to officially honour the veterans' final abode as also organise their last rights. The idea is to give a befitting and decent farewell from the CRPF during their last journey.

As per the guidelines, a CRPF officer of an appropriate rank will contact the family of a deceased veteran and provide on-the-spot assistance and organise his last rites in a befitting and decent manner.

For the funeral of Inspector General and above rank officers, a Commandant rank officer of the nearest unit or establishment will visit the bereaved family. For Assistant Commandant to Deputy Inspector General, a Deputy Commandant or Second-in-

Command (2 I/C) will attend the last rites. Likewise, for Constable to Subedar Major, an Assistant Commandant or Inspector will visit his family.

The designated officer will be supposed to lay a wreath on the mortal remains of the deceased officer on behalf of the CRPF.

"The Central Reserve Police Force is discharging the duties creditably in extremely tough conditions in various theatres of the country. During the discharge of duties in difficult and stressful conditions, the personnel of this Force make a lot of sacrifice on a personal level in the line of duty. In order to ensure that these veterans/retirees of the Force get a befitting and decent farewell from the CRPF during their last journey, a need was felt to issue standard instructions in this regard," reads a Standing Order issued last

week by CRPF DG Kuldip Singh.

The CRPF has a culture wherein all members of the Force serving or retired, are like members of the CRPF family. As such, it is imperative that we ensure an honourable farewell to Force veterans during their last journey and send a clear message that "CRPF cares for Force veterans till their last journey," according to the order.

The nearest unit/establishment has been tasked to send the designated officer for a deceased veteran's funeral and the Group Centres/Heads of Offices have been assigned the role to widely publicise the latest welfare scheme during Welfare Day functions and Pension Adalats.

For effective implementation of the scheme, the next of kin, dependent or relatives are allowed to contact any Group

Centre or Unit in vicinity. Upon receipt of information of demise of a veteran, a designated officer will be detailed to proceed to the residence of the deceased veteran for laying the wreath on the mortal remains.

The guidelines also provide for collection of data and maintain record of retirees/veterans residing in the operational jurisdiction of the respective Group Centre or Establishment.

The visiting officer will interact with the family members of the deceased veteran. The expenditure for the wreath laying ceremony will be borne out of the Welfare Fund of the Unit or Establishment with the limit fixed at ₹8,000.

A photographic record of the wreath/funeral tribute on behalf of DG CRPF will also be maintained.

The CRPF is the biggest armed force of the Union Government under Home Ministry and has been shifting its policies and ethos towards regimentation and cohesion after learning some hard lessons from the field. Regimentation and cohesion are basic structural formats of any armed force to generate camaraderie and esprit-de-corp, officials said.

"After doing away with the annual changeover of compact battalions in 2008-09, there is a realisation in the Force that unit cohesion and even discipline was diluted to a certain degree in the process," said a CRPF veteran welcoming the latest welfare scheme of the paramilitary to honour the deceased retirees.

The annual changeover of the compact battalions that continued from 1939 to 2009 is again being brainstormed in the CRPF to implement the concepts of regimentation and camaraderie or cohesion in the ranks, another veteran said.

Rijiju raps Congress for questioning credibility of Govt on India-China border issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday hit out at the Congress for allegedly quoting a foreign media report to question the "credibility" of the Government on the India-China border issue.

He also once again posted a short video of then Defence Minister AK Antony's purported remarks on China in Lok Sabha. "Dear Congress members, listen to Congress Government's Defence Minister before speaking on China border issue," the Minister said in a tweet in Hindi.

The Congress had on Saturday sought an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and asked him to "withdraw" his "clean chit" to China that no one has entered into Indian territory while citing a Pentagon report that claims China has entered 4.5 km into Arunachal Pradesh.

In a series of tweets, Rijiju, who hails from Arunachal Pradesh, claimed that "some mischievous media" wrote in bold that China has built a village inside Arunachal "and then slightly mentioned 'at the area occupied by China in 1959'. What's your purpose?"

Rijiju said that "these people" deliberately don't believe the Indian Army but quickly quoted a foreign story to "create a misleading headline to question the credibility of our Government and strength of our army with a malicious motive to demoralise the nation".

In a September 6, 2013, clip, Antony told the House

that independent India had a policy for many years that best defence is not to develop the border. Undeveloped border is safer than developed border, the then defence minister said, adding that China on the other had improved its infrastructure on the border.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera on Saturday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi must give answers and give deadlines on when there will be status quo ante as on April 2020 on all our borders with China.

The demand came after the Congress cited a Pentagon report in this regard.

Khera said the Chinese intrusion has now been confirmed by the Pentagon to the US Congress in its annual report. The villages across the border are of dual-use that have not only civilian population but act as cantonment for the Chinese army.

He said in June 2020, BJP MP in Arunachal Pradesh Tapir Gao had written to the prime minister and the home minister warning them of the transgressions made by China into Indian territory.

Khera said the Prime Minister and the Home Minister denied the transgressions and it has been 17 months since PM Modi gave a "clean chit" to China.

"That clean chit is a dark chapter in our history because it was used by China across the world. China was emboldened by this clean chit, not just in Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh but also in Uttarakhand, where PLA entered and destroyed our infrastructure," he told reporters.

NIA conducts raids for extortion, disruption of Govt works in Jharkhand



PTI ■ RANCHI

The NIA has conducted searches at two premises of an accused in connection with conspiracy and commission of terrorist acts for extortion and disruption of Government works in Jharkhand's Latehar, an official said on Sunday.

The searches were carried out at the premises of the accused in village Bundu in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, the official of the premier investigation agency said.

The case was registered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in March in connection with the conspiracy and commission of terrorist acts for extortion and disruption of Government works at Tetariyakhad Colliery in Latehar, Jharkhand, the NIA official said.

The accused were the associates of Sujit Sinha and Aman Sahu gang, and had carried out arson of five vehicles at Tetariyakhad Colliery in December last year, causing injuries to four civilians, he said.

The searches con-

THE ACCUSED WERE THE ASSOCIATES OF SUJIT SINHA AND AMAN SAHU GANG, AND HAD CARRIED OUT ARSON OF FIVE VEHICLES AT TETARIYAKHAD COLLIERY IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR, CAUSING INJURIES TO FOUR CIVILIANS

ducted at the residential premises of the arrested and the absconding accused persons led to the recovery of digital devices and other incriminating documents, which were seized, the official said, adding that further investigation in the case is underway.

Editors Guild slams Tripura cops for booking 102 people, including scribes, under UAPA



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India (EGI) on Sunday condemned the Tripura Police's action of booking 102 people, including journalists, under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and said the government cannot use such stringent laws to suppress reporting on communal violence incidents.

The Guild, in a statement, said it was "deeply shocked" at the police's action against journalists and said it was an attempt by the Tripura government to deflect attention away from its own failure to control majoritarian violence. Tripura Police on Saturday booked 102 social media account holders under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), criminal conspiracy and forgery charges and served notices to the authorities of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to freeze their accounts and inform all particulars of those persons to it. This action came after Tripura Police registered a case against four Supreme Court lawyers under the stringent act and various sections of the Indian Penal Code for allegedly promoting communal disharmony with their social media

posts on the recent violence in the state targeting Muslims.

The EGI said, "The Editors Guild of India is deeply shocked by the Tripura Police's action of booking 102 people, including journalists, under the coercive Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, for reporting and writing on the recent communal violence in the state."

The Guild said one of the journalists, Shyam Meera Singh, has alleged that he has been booked under the UAPA for merely tweeting 'Tripura is burning'.

"This is an extremely disturbing trend where such a harsh law, where in the process of investigation and bail applications are extremely rigorous and overbearing, is being used for merely reporting on and protesting against communal violence.

"The Guild is of the opinion that this is an attempt by the State Government to deflect attention away from its own failure to control majoritarian violence, as well as to take action against the perpetrators of this. Governments cannot use stringent laws like UAPA to suppress reporting on such incidents," it said.

The EGI demanded that the state government conduct an objective and fair investigation into the circumstances of the rights instead of penalising journalists and civil society activists.

"Further, the Guild reiterates its earlier demand to the Supreme Court of India to take cognisance of the manner in which such laws are unjustifiably used against freedom of speech, and to issue stringent guidelines on charging journalist under them, so that these laws don't become an easy tool for suppressing press freedom," it said.

A mosque was vandalised and two shops were set ablaze at Chamtilla in Tripura during a rally by Vishva Hindu Parishad on October 26, called to protest against the communal violence in neighbouring Bangladesh.

Three houses and a few shops, reportedly owned by Muslims, were also ransacked in nearby Rowa Bazar, according to police.

The State Government had on October 29 alleged that a group from outside with vested interests had hatched a conspiracy against the administration to create unrest in Tripura and malign its image by uploading fake photographs of a burning mosque on social media after the October 26 incident.

SC: Mental health of person cannot be compressed into one-size-fits-all approach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The mental health of a person cannot be compressed into a "one size fits all" approach, the Supreme Court has said while setting aside an order of the Karnataka High Court which quashed criminal proceedings against a government official in a case of abetment of suicide.

A bench of justices D Y Chandrachud and B V Nagarathna said the observation of the high court that there is no material to corroborate the allegations made in the suicide note is erroneous.

"The Single Judge, other than deciding on the merits of the case while exercising the power under Section 482 of the CrPC, has also made observations diminishing the importance of mental health. The mental health of a person cannot be compressed into a one size fits

all approach," the bench said. The apex court said it is not a consideration for the high court while exercising its power under Section 482 of the CrPC, particularly in view of the fact that the trial has not begun.

The top court said the Single Judge of the high court has termed a person who decided to commit suicide a 'weakling' and has also made observations on how the behavior of the deceased before he committed suicide was not that of a person who is depressed and suffering from mental health issues.

"Behavioural scientists have initiated the discourse on the heterogeneity of every individual and have challenged the traditional notion of 'all humans behave alike'. Individual personality differences manifest as a variation in the behavior of people.

Modi to lay foundation stone for expansion of 2 Pandharpur highways

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for four-laning of five sections of Shri Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj Palkhi Marg (NH-965) and three sections of Shri Sant Tukaram Maharaj Palkhi Marg (NH-965G) via video conferencing on Monday.

The development is designed to facilitate pilgrims' journey to Pandharpur, a town associated with Sant Tukaram and Sant Dnyaneshwar. Dedicated walkways for 'Palkhi' (palanquin) will be constructed on either side of these national highways, providing hassle free and safe passage to devotees, the Prime Minister's office said in a statement.

About 221 km of Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj



Palkhi Marg from Diveghat to Mohol and about 130 km of Sant Tukaram Maharaj Palkhi Marg from Patas to Tondale-Bondale will be four-laned at estimated costs of more than Rs 6690 crore and about ₹4400 crore respectively, it said.

Modi will also "dedicate to the nation" more than 223 km of completed and upgraded road projects, constructed with an estimated cost

of over ₹1,180 crore at different national highways for boosting connectivity to Pandharpur.

These projects include construction done on Mhaswad - Piliv - Pandharpur (NH 548E), Kurduwadi - Pandharpur (NH 965C), Pandharpur - Sangola (NH 965C), Tembhurni-Pandharpur section of NH 561A, and Pandharpur - Mangalwedha - Umadi section of NH 561A.

SC to hear Lakhimpur Kheri matter today

New Delhi: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday the matter related to the October 3 Lakhimpur Kheri incident in which eight people, including four farmers, were killed in violence during a farmers' protest.

A bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli would hear the matter in which the Supreme Court had on October 26 directed the Uttar Pradesh government to provide protection to witnesses under the Witness Protection Scheme, 2018.

The top court had also asked the Uttar Pradesh government to record the statements of other witnesses before the judicial magistrate under section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)



and expedite the examination of digital evidence by experts.

Statements under section 164 of the CrPC are recorded before a judicial magistrate

and they have evidentiary value.

The bench had sought a status report from the state government on the alleged lynching of a journalist and

one Shyam Sundar by the mob, after a vehicle mowed down four protesting farmers.

The top court is hearing the Lakhimpur Kheri matter after two lawyers had written

to the CJI seeking a high-level judicial inquiry, also involving the CBI, into the incident.

The counsel appearing for the state government had told the Supreme Court on October 26 that out of 68 witnesses, the statements of 30 witnesses have been recorded under section 164 of the CrPC and some more testimonies will be recorded.

"Of these 30 witnesses, 23 claim to be eye-witnesses. A lot of witnesses are formal witnesses of recovery and all," the state's counsel had told the bench, adding that 16 accused have been identified so far.

The police have so far arrested several accused, including Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra, in connection with the case. PTI

Rahul slams Centre over rising poverty

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at the Government over a media report that claimed that in the last eight years, the poor in the country are rising rapidly, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday asked where are those who used to say "achche din" (good days) are coming.

He hit out at the

Government on the issue of poverty and alleged that those who were in the middle-class in the country are poor now and the poor are being crushed now. The report claimed that in 2020, 7.6 crore people have gone below the poverty line and the number of poor is increasing.

"Those in the middle-class earlier are now poor. Those who were poor are now being crushed. Where are those who

used to say that 'achche din' (good days) are coming," he asked in a tweet in Hindi.

The Congress on its official Twitter account also alleged that people have lost their better days while waiting for 'achche din' to come. Gandhi made an apparent reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections where he used the slogan "achche din" are coming" in his poll campaign.

CBI arrests former Assam CM Hiteswar Saikia's son Ashok in loan default case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Sunday arrested Ashok Saikia, son of former Assam chief minister Hiteswar Saikia, in connection with a 25-year-old alleged loan default case of around ₹9 lakh, officials said.

The action came after a non-bailable warrant was issued against him for non-appearance in court despite summons, they said.

Ashok Saikia, who was questioned by the Guwahati team of the CBI, was put under arrest and will be produced in court on Monday, the officials said. When contacted, his elder brother and Leader of Opposition in the Assam Assembly Debabrata Saikia told PTI that Ashok Saikia was taken away by a team of CBI officials in the evening.

"I do not know whether he has been arrested or detained. In fact, I do not know where he has been taken. This is a very old case and was duly settled. The bank did not inform the court and it was the bank's fault," the senior Congress leader added.

Ashok Saikia, a businessman by profession, issued a statement through his elder brother and said that he had availed the loan in 1996 from The Assam State Co-operative Agriculture and Rural

Development Bank Ltd (ASCARD).

"Later, I repaid the loan as per an ASCARD letter in 2011. The ASCARD general manager in-charge through an official letter, dated October 28, 2015, had stated that no dues were pending. The CBI team suddenly came to our house and said my loan is pending. I did not receive any notice from the CBI or the court. "I do not know why the CBI has brought

me in a baseless and fictitious case. Only the CBI or the government will know this," the businessman said.

Debabrata Saikia also shared the ASCARD certificate, issued by its General Manager In-Charge H N Borah on October 28, 2015, which had mentioned that Ashok Kr Saikia, director of HPS India Pvt Ltd, had availed a loan of Rs 9,37,701 under the bridge loan scheme in 1996.

Over 33 L kids in India malnourished: Govt data

17.7 LAKH OF THEM SEVERELY MALNOURISHED

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 33 lakh children in India are malnourished and more than half of them fall in the severely malnourished category with Maharashtra, Bihar and Gujarat topping the list, the WCD ministry has said in response to an RTI query.

Prompting concern that the Covid pandemic could exacerbate the health and nutrition crisis among the poorest of the poor, the Women and Child Development ministry estimates that there are 17,76,902 (17.76 lakh/1.7 million) severely acute malnourished children (SAM) and 15,46,420 (15.46 lakh/1.5 million) moderately acute malnourished (MAM) children as of October 14, 2021.

The total 33,23,322 (33.23 lakh/3.3 million) is a compilation of data from 34 States and union territories, the Ministry said in response to an RTI query by PTI. The numbers were registered on the Poshan tracker app developed last year as a governance tool for real-time monitoring of nutritional outcomes.

While the numbers are alarming in themselves, a comparison with figures from last November make them even more so. A 91 per cent rise in



the number of SAM children has been seen between November 2020 and October 14, 2021 -- up from 9,27,606 (9.27 lakh) to 17.76 lakh now.

However, the two sets of figures are based on differing methods of data collection. The number of SAM children (from six months to six years) identified last year was counted by 36 states and union territories and conveyed to the Centre.

The latest figures are through Poshan tracker where the numbers were directly entered by anganwadis and accessed by the Centre and the age group of the children has not been specified. The World Health Organisation defines SAM by very low weight-for-height or a mid-upper arm circumference less than 115 mm, or by the presence of nutritional oedema. MAM is defined as moderate wasting and/or mid-

upper-arm circumference (MUAC) greater or equal to 115 mm and less than 125 mm.

Both MAM and SAM have severe health repercussions on the health of a child. Children suffering from SAM have very low weight for their height, and are nine times more likely to die in case of diseases due to their weakened immune system. Those suffering from MAM are also at increased risk of morbidity and mortality during childhood.

According to the RTI reply quoting the Poshan tracker, Maharashtra registered the highest number of malnourished children at 6,16,772 (6.16 lakh) with 1,57,984 (1.57 lakh) MAM children and 4,58,788 (4.58 lakh) SAM children. Number two on the list is Bihar with 4,75,824 (4.75 lakh) malnourished children (3,23,741 MAM children and 1,52,083 SAM children).

Modi, ex-CAG Vinod should apologise for conspiracy to oust UPA-II Govt: Congress

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Congress on Sunday demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Vinod Rai tender an unconditional apology to the nation for their "sinister role" in an alleged conspiracy to bring down Manmohan Singh-headed the UPA-II government using the purported 2G spectrum scam.

A conspiracy to destabilise the government has been exposed with Rai's recent apology to Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam for wrongly naming him as one of the MPs who had pressured him not to name Singh in the CAG report on 2G spectrum allocation, Congress spokesperson Gourav Vallabh claimed.

"The criminal conspiracy to bring down the UPA government is thus writ large. The nation must know that truth has been vindicated.... The BJP had conspired to malign our government and Vinod Rai was a party to it.

"Let Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vinod Rai and all others tender an unconditional apology to the nation and admit to their sinister role (in the conspiracy)," Vallabh told a press conference here.

Rai had recently tendered an unconditional apology to Nirupam in response to a defamation case filed by the latter following his claim that the Nirupam was one of the lawmakers who sought to pres-

sure him to keep then PM Manmohan Singh's name out of the government's audit report on 2G spectrum auctions.

Nirupam had filed the defamation case against Rai after the former CAG in his book in 2014 made the allegation against him and repeated it in interviews to the media.

Vallabh asserted that the loss of Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the exchequer in the grant of 2G spectrum licenses during the UPA regime was a 'presumptive' number put forth by Rai, which was not backed by any evidence.

The Congress leader alleged that the BJP, the RSS, AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and several others latched on to this "vicious and malicious campaign" with an aim to somehow install a saffron party government led by Narendra Modi into power.

"The then Director General, Audit, P&T (Post and Telecommunications) in the CAG, RP Singh, who was the principal 2G spectrum auditor, told the Joint Parliamentary Committee on 2G spectrum that no loss had been caused to the exchequer. When he had forwarded his findings to the CAG headquarters, he was taken off the audit and the findings were changed," Vallabh said. The Congress leader pointed that after the Modi-led government came to power at the Centre, Rai was appointed as the chairman of the Banking Recruitment Board.

ITBP to deploy specialised engineering wing to build roads along the LAC



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has taken a first-time decision to deploy its specialised engineering wing for constructing certain roads and foot tracks along the Line of Actual Control to speed up connectivity projects with its posts in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.

The move, which was approved by the Union Home Ministry, comes amid a military standoff with China in the eastern Ladakh area.

Official sources told PTI that the border force, ITBP, has taken up the "challenge" to construct four out of the 32 roads under phase-II of the India-China Border Roads project and two out of the total 18 foot tracks sanctioned to it by the Government.

They said the roads of varying lengths of about one to two kilometres, connecting ITBP border posts in the Himalayan ranges, are in the Ladakh region's 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC)

with China while the foot tracks, which are used by troops during patrols, are in the Arunachal Pradesh area.

The engineers and supervisors of the ITBP wing will "plan and monitor" the entire work, and a ground force comprising labourers and masons will be hired according to Government norms, sources said.

Traditionally, road construction projects along these areas are carried out by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) and other such agencies.

Officials said the engineering wing of the force, an essential component of the ITBP since its raising in 1962, has been roped in for the task in order to speed up the border posts connectivity work.

In these high-altitude and remote areas, getting contractors and construction workers is not that easy and hence, the work of border road construction remains slow, an officer explained.

Constable shot dead by ultra in Srinagar

PNS ■ JAMMU

In a fresh strike 'unidentified' terrorists late Sunday evening shot dead a constable of Jammu and Kashmir police outside his residence in SD Colony area of Batmaloo in Srinagar.

According to the preliminary reports, the policeman was hit from a close range. He received a bullet injury in his head and was rushed to the nearby SMHS hospital where he was declared brought dead by the hospital authorities.

According to police the martyred cop has been identified as Constable Touseef Ahmad.

This is the first incident of targeted killing of a policeman after adequate security measures were taken to enhance vigil in and around Srinagar after sudden spurt in incidents of attacks on the members belonging to the minority communities. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had directed the security forces to enhance presence of the security forces to instil confidence among the local residents and ensure safety and security of the minorities. Additional central paramilitary forces were rushed from North and South Kashmir districts to central Kashmir to beef up the security. Large number of bunkers were also set up to check the movement of the suspicious people.

UP Govt starts interest waiver scheme for electricity consumers on bill arrears

PTI ■ MATHURA

The Uttar Pradesh Government has started an interest waiver scheme for electricity consumers on their bill arrears, the state's Energy Minister for Srikant Sharma has said.

"Under the scheme, interest on arrears would be waived off for certain category of consumers," Sharma, UP Minister for Energy and Additional Source of Energy, told reporters.

He said the money realised will pave the way for improvement as the department is already running at a deficit of ₹90,000 crore.

The loan waiver scheme has been introduced as roughly 70 per cent of rural consumers are not able to deposit their bills in time, while 25 per cent of urban consumers have turned defaulters due to the non-payment of bills in time, the minister said.

He added that timely payment of bills by all will pave the way for an uninterrupted cheap power supply.

In this regard, interest on



arrears has not only been waived off but the facility to pay the arrears in six easy instalments has also been extended for domestic consumers, the minister said.

According to the minister, for the first time, commercial consumers have been brought under the ambit of the scheme.

Respite has also been provided to small shopkeepers hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Full interest on arrears of shopkeepers for the under-two-kilowatts consumption category has been waived off, while 50 per cent interest on arrears of shopkeepers under the 2-5 kilowatt category will be waived off, the minister said.

The objective of introducing the scheme is to fulfil the commitment of the government to provide a cheap, uninterrupted power supply, the minister said.

Road map for ambitious theaterisation plan likely to be firmed up by mid-2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is likely to firm up by the middle of next year a road map for rolling out the ambitious theatre commands that are expected to ensure optimum utilisation of the military resources and enhance the country's war-fighting capability, people familiar with the developments said on Sunday.

The actual operationalisation of the theatre commands may take two to three years, they said. According to the plan, each of the theatre commands will have units of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force and all of them will work as a single entity looking after security challenges in a specified geographical territory under an operational commander. At present, the Army, Navy and the Air Force have separate commands. Initially, a plan was firmed up for the creation of an Air Defence Command and Maritime Theatre Command. The theatre commands are being planned to integrate the capabilities of the three services and to ensure

optimal utilisation of their resources.

Recently, the department of military affairs (DMA) asked the three services to complete their studies on the proposed theatre commands by April so that the plan to create the new structures can be expedited, the people cited above said.

"A roadmap for implementation of the plan to roll out the theatre commands is likely to be firmed up by the middle of next year," said one of the people.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat has been working on the theaterisation model under which new integrated commands are being envisaged. The theatre commands are being set up under a larger mandate of ensuring synergy among the three service chiefs to deal with future security challenges. Gen Rawat took over as India's first CDS on January 1, 2020, with a mandate to bring in convergence among the three services and restructure military commands to effectively deal with future security challenges.

MP: Two tiger cubs spotted in Nauradehi wildlife sanctuary

PTI ■ SAGAR

Tiger 'Radha' has given birth to two cubs, taking the number of striped animals in Madhya Pradesh's largest Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary to seven, an official said on Sunday.

Radha in the first litter had given birth to three cubs in 2020. "A feline named Radha has given birth to two cubs. We have spotted the two new guests in our sanctuary", Divisional Forest Officer Sudhansu Yadav told PTI.

He said Radha from the Kanha Tiger Reserve and tiger Kanha from the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve - both tiger habitats (reserves) located in east Madhya Pradesh - were relocated to Nauradehi in 2018.

Nauradehi is the biggest wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh which is spread over an area of 1,197 sq km in Sagar, Damoh and Narsinghpur districts. Yadav said the sanctuary has plans to build a tiger track in the park for tourists who want to have a glimpse of the majestic beasts.

Heavy rain in Chennai, reservoirs opened; flood alert sounded

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Heavy rains lashed Chennai and its suburban areas overnight leading to all round water-logging and authorities on Sunday sounded a preliminary flood alert to people as three city reservoirs were opened in a phased manner to release surplus water.

Chief Minister MK Stalin inspected several inundated areas here along with top officials including Chief Secretary V Irai Anbu and directed authorities to take swift action to drain flood water.

Stalin, along with Cabinet colleagues distributed flood assistance, including rice, milk and blankets to people in affected areas, housed in a temporary shelter here.

Health Minister Ma Subramanian said Chennai experienced 20 cm rain in about 12 hours since last night. According to IMD data, the rainfall ranged between 10 CM and 23 CM in Chennai and its suburbs. The Kamarajar Salai point (DGP Office on the Marina beachfront) near the Tamil Nadu Secretariat recorded the highest of 23 CM and



A view of Marina Beach following heavy rain in Chennai on Sunday. A flood alert has been sounded for people living in Chennai's suburbs

PTI

suburban Ennore in north Chennai 10 cm.

Some of the suburban locations, including areas covered in nearby Tiruvallur district received between 3 CM (Poondi and RK Pet) and 9 CM (Cholavaram). The IMD has given a 'red' category warning, indicating heavy rains in Tamil Nadu and neighbouring Puducherry on Sunday.

In view of increase in showers in catchment areas, surplus water was released from Poondi reservoir, which was raised in a phased manner up to 3,376 cusecs of water, the Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority said

in a tweet. Similarly, Chembarambakkam and Puzhal reservoirs, two other important sources of drinking water to the Chennai city were opened to let out surplus rain water, water resources authorities here said adding the initial release - from both the facilities - was to the tune of about 500 cusecs.

Four teams of National Disaster Response Force have been deployed to assist in rescue operations in case of emergency. One team each in Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur and two teams at Madurai are stationed for rescue operations, the TNSDMA said.

Bombay HC sends Anil Deshmukh to ED custody till November 12

SETS ASIDE JUDICIAL REMAND ORDER

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a significant development that came less than 24 hours after a special holiday court sent him to judicial custody for 14 days, the Bombay High Court on Sunday remanded Maharashtra's former Home Minister and accused in a money laundering case Anil Deshmukh to the custody of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) till November 12.

In a turn of events that unfolded a day after a special holiday court rejected the ED's plea seeking extension of his custody by nine days, a HC vacation bench of Justice Madhav Jamdar sent Deshmukh back to the ED's custody till November 12.

Justice Jamdar was hearing an ED plea, challenging the special court's November 6 order remanding the former State Home Minister to 14-day judicial custody, on the ground that it was bad in law and

against the principles of natural justice.

While the ED was represented by Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, counsel Vikram Chaudhri and advocate Aniket Nikam appeared for Deshmukh in the high court.

Declining to entertain a plea by the ED seeking extension of his custody by nine days, Holiday Special Court Judge PR Sitre had on Saturday remanded Deshmukh to judicial custody for 14 days.

Seven-one-year-old Deshmukh was arrested in the early hours of November after intense grilling lasting for more than 12 hours in the alleged money laundering case linked to the charges of extortion made against him by Mumbai's former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Deshmukh had resigned from his post as the State Home Minister on April 5 2021 within hours after a Bombay High Court ordered a "Preliminary Enquiry" (PE) by the CBI into the serious charges of corruption made against him by Mumbai's former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh. He is being investigated by the CBI and

Enforcement Directorate (ED) over the allegations of corruption made by Param Bir Singh.

It may be recalled that on March 20, the former commissioner of police had alleged that State Home Minister Deshmukh had asked now arrested and dismissed police officer Sachin Vaze to "collect" a staggering ₹100 crore per month from bars, restaurants and other sources in Mumbai.

Deshmukh is being investigated by the CBI in connection with a First Information Report (FIR) registered by it on April 24 section 7 of the amended Prevention of Corruption Act and section 120-b (conspiracy) of IPC for an "attempt to obtain undue advantage for important and dishonest performance of the public duty".

Having prima facie found "cognisance offences" of corruption and conspiracy against him during a Preliminary Enquiry (PE) conducted by it into the allegations made against him by Mumbai's former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, the CBI on April 21 registered a regular case against him and other unknown people.

Coast Guard ship rescues 7 crew members of fishing boat on fire off Gujarat coast



Indian Coast Guard men onboard ICGS Arush douse a fire on a fishing boat, in the Arabian Sea on Sunday. Seven fishermen were rescued

PTI

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

An Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship on Sunday rescued seven fishermen whose boat caught fire due to fuel leakage from its engine exhaust and was sinking near the international maritime boundary in the Arabian sea off the Gujarat coast.

While on patrol, the ICG Ship (ICGS) Arush rescued the fishermen from the boat 'Kalash Raj' in coordination with other fishing boats in an area close to the notional international boundary, an official release said.

"The boat reportedly caught fire due to fuel leakage

from the engine exhaust. ICGS Arush under the command of Commandant (JG) Ashwini Kumar, arrived with the maximum speed at the scene of the fire and quickly engaged in fire-fighting operations," the Indian Coast Guard said. The boat sank due to the rapid spread of fire, it said. The rescued crew, who were exhausted and visibly tired, were taken on board and provided with first-aid and initial assistance by the ICG ship, the release said.

The rescued fishermen were shifted to another fishing boat operating in the vicinity, which will likely reach Okha in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district by Monday, it added.

BJP, TMC trade fire on Bengal violence

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a curious reference to Bengal politics BJP president JP Nadda and other senior leaders like Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday launched a fierce attack from the party's national executive against the Trinamool Congress regime for letting loose a reign of terror in the State and vowed to protect its cadre during their hours of crisis taking their struggle to its logical conclusion.

Reacting sharply to what came from the BJP national executive the Trinamool Congress said it was high time the saffron leadership stopped playing the "broken record".

Senior TMC MP Saugato Roy said "the BJP had been trying to polarize the State for narrow electoral gains... they used all kinds of filthy languages and brought false allegations against our party leaders... but the net result was that they lost poorly to the TMC in the by-elections losing all the seven seats... this only proves that the people are not buying their arguments... now they should accept the defeat and shut their mouths."

Maha fisherman killed in firing by Pakistan maritime security personnel off Gujarat coast: Police

PTI ■ DEVBHUMI DWARKA

A fisherman from Maharashtra was killed and a crew member of his boat was injured allegedly in firing by Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) personnel near international maritime boundary line in the Arabian sea off Gujarat coast, a police official said on Sunday.

The incident occurred around 4 PM on Saturday, he said. "A fisherman from Thane in Maharashtra, who was on a fishing boat 'Jalpari', was killed after the PMSA personnel opened fire on him and other crew members on Saturday evening," Devbhumi Dwarka Superintendent of Police Sunil Joshi said.

There were seven crew members on the boat and one of them also sustained a minor injury in the firing incident, he said.

The body of fisherman Sridhar Ramesh Chamre (32) was brought to Okha port on Sunday and an FIR was being registered by the Porbandar

Navi Bandar police, which has jurisdiction across Gujarat over any incident that occurs



beyond 12 nautical miles in the Arabian sea, he added.

"Chamre was on the fishing boat 'Jalpari', which had sailed from Okha on October 25 with seven crew members, five of whom were from Gujarat and two from Maharashtra," Joshi said.

Investigation into the incident was underway, he said.

In a statement, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) said: "The case is under investigation at present by police authorities and crew are being interviewed jointly. Details can be shared only after completion of the investigation."

However, the ICG confirmed that there was a firing in which one person died and one person was injured. When asked about Pakistan's claim of arresting six "occupants" of the boat, the ICG responded: "Arrests not confirmed."

Toxi-city

Delhi's air quality worsens as counter-measures for firecrackers and stubble burning go south

Even three days after the Diwali festivities got over, there is no let-up in the pollution hanging over the Capital. The smog that descended to envelop the city is still there. Delhi's Air Quality Index remains in the hazardous/very poor category. It is despite the complete ban on the sale and burning of firecrackers in Delhi. This Diwali, like the previous years, the burning of fireworks went on all night though. The ban and other awareness drives have shown some improvement in the situation as the volume of firecrackers and the time duration have come down though a study is yet to corroborate that. However, it would be wrong to blame Diwali crackers solely for the bad air quality in the Capital as other factors also contribute to polluting the Delhi air. Vehicular pollution and stubble burning in nearby States are big factors. Moreover, the dust from construction sites and garbage burning also make the air quality nosedive. What is more, the change in weather and the missing breeze current keep the pollution cloud hanging over the city for days. It is indeed a routine now and though some efforts have been made to sensitise people against burning stubble and bursting crackers, the practices are still underway in a big way. Unfortunately, there is a big lobby that supports the burning of firecrackers and links it to religious freedom. Tonnes of WhatsApp messages suggest that Hindus have a right to burn the firecrackers and nobody has any business to debar them. They safely forget that burning firecrackers is not part of any religion.

Diwali was supposed to be a festival of lights, not a festival of noise. Moreover, the folks at their homes — especially the older and younger ones — would inhale the same air that they are proudly polluting. A similar story is with the stubble burning. The farmers see it as an easy and cheaper way to clear their fields for the next crop, realising little that it also kills favourable microbes that help the growth of plants. Let's not forget that toxic air kills more than one million people each year in the country. Last year, Delhi recorded the highest concentration of PM2.5 so far — it was at 14 times the safe prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO)! So what is the solution? Again, this has no quick fix solution or can be tackled by banning it and penalising people, which would have its repercussions. A gradual persuasive approach coupled with better alternatives can tackle the problem. For instance, developing 'Harvesters' that can cut the crop from its root. Even small handheld mechanised machines can be employed to do the job. Similarly, community fireworks should be promoted wherein people pool up to enjoy firecrackers in the safe, identified places away from their residential areas. We have tackled vehicular pollution in a big way by replacing the lead mix petrol and diesel with the CNG. It worked, so there is no reason that these pollutants cannot be tackled.



Visibility suffers badly as Delhi remains engulfed in smog

RANJAN DIMRI/ THE PIONEER

Catch up

People missing their second dose in a fresh wave of vaccine hesitancy is an alarming sign

The vaccination process in the country has slowed down. It will be attributed to the festive season, beginning Dusserah and now, Diwali. The season lasts till new year's eve. It could be one reason but other pertinent reasons cannot be ignored. It is nearly certain that if December 31 is the Government's chosen deadline by which to vaccinate all eligible adults, then that target is most likely to be missed. Vaccinations slowed down in the Diwali week to 2.42 crore as against four crore the previous week. That is a drop of close to a half and may not be really surprising considering many people would have been on leave and travelling. The figure may pick up in the coming week. However, what is worrisome is the fact that a large portion of the high-risk population of India has missed the second dose. Forty per cent of elders above 60 years — 11,04,55,016 to be exact — have not yet taken the second dose. Only 6.78-odd crore of them have received both the doses. There is no data available about the reasons. Were they aware of the deadline for the second dose, or were they ill or otherwise occupied that they missed the date, or could they not make it to the vaccination centres for some reason?

It is well-known by now that the Coronavirus is most damaging for the elderly and infirm, more so for those with comorbidities among them. This section with only one dose will be the most vulnerable if the country were to witness a fresh pandemic wave. Even in the 14-44 age group, the percentage of those who received the second dose is much less. Forty-two crore first doses have been given to this segment in comparison to 14.89 crore second doses. It is this group that is most afflicted by vaccine hesitancy and vaccine complacency. The 45-59 per cent age group has fared comparatively better about the second dose. The Government should more vigorously campaign to draw people to the vaccination centres. The immediate focus should be on the vulnerable sections. Those who have consciously missed out on the second dose need convincing. Employers should come up with penalties if the staff is knowingly delaying their second dose. The 'Har Ghar Dastak' campaign should literally knock at doors to get hesitant and complacent to the vaccination centres.



Dhaka must learn to stand Hindus

Bangladesh should not forget that it would still have been a slave of its erstwhile western wing had the Indian armed forces not intervened



PRAFULL GORADIA

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla has in a public statement implied that Indo-Bangladesh relations are excellent. On the other hand, the ISKCON has staged demonstrations at 150 temples across the globe in protest against the recent attacks on a temple as well as the murders of Hindus in Bangladesh. The demonstrations have been extended to outside private residences and other locations. A hundred and fifty countries have complained to the United Nations that Bangladesh should be asked to bring the lawlessness under control. The apparent contradiction is mysterious.

It is a pity that regardless of ideology, Bangladesh should treat Hindu temples and Hindus there in this manner. Have they forgotten that they would still have been slaves of their erstwhile western wing, but for the help and intervention by India's armed forces?

What East Bengal — now Bangladesh — meant to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah is reflected in the fact that he had never visited it before March 1948. When he did visit, he addressed the Dhaka University only to tell its students that Urdu would be the sole national language of Pakistan, angering his audience.

Jinnah arrived in Dhaka on March 19, 1948. On March 21, he warned a large crowd at the Dhaka Race Course, against what he called the forces of subversion conspiracy bent on destroying Pakistan's unity. Feeble protests were heard from the crowd. Far louder voices of protest were to be heard only days later. The Qaid had through his Dhaka speech set East Bengal on a course that would lead, over the next 24 years, to the break-up of Pakistan and the rise of East Bengal as the independent Republic of Bangladesh.

Addressing a special convocation of Dhaka University at Curzon Hall on March 24, an imperious Jinnah made it abundantly clear that "Urdu and Urdu alone" would be the language of the State of Pakistan. Jinnah continued, "Our enemies, among whom, there are still some Muslims, have set about actively encouraging provincialism in the hope of weakening Pakistan and thereby facilitating the reabsorption of this province into the Indian Dominion. Those who are playing this game are living in a fool's paradise, but this does not prevent them from trying..." A sense of alienation between Jinnah and the Bengalis set in immediately with his departure for Karachi.



Evidently, Jinnah did not understand the psyche of the eastern wing. A Bengali, whether eastern or western, would rather give up his life than sacrifice his language. Overall, Bangladeshis can be estimated to be 65 per cent Muslim and 35 per cent Bengali in their outlook. For such people to be told that there is no Rabindranath Tagore or Qazi Nazrul Islam is nothing but sacrilege. Even today, the best Rabindra sangeet singer is Rezwana Choudhury Bannya, a Bangladeshi, who wears a sari and as well as a tika (mark on the forehead).

Regrettably, New Delhi's understanding of Bangladesh is not much deeper. There are a few liberals — quite a few — who still yearn for their lost Pakistan. The majority swing



THE OPTIONS FOR DHAKA ARE FEW; BE FRIENDLY WITH MYANMAR AS WELL AS OTHER COUNTRIES LIKE NEPAL, AND MAKE SURE THAT THERE IS NO SLIP-UP IN INDIA'S GOODWILL

between "Sonar Bangla" and "Ab-e-Zamzam" in Mecca, the circumambulation of which is essential while on the Haj. The Bangladeshi media too oscillates between "Aakaash Paatal" and "Aasmaan Zameen". Another reason for the people of Bangladesh being confused is that they never aspired for a specific nationhood after the British withdrawal. They could have been part of a united India, or a part of Pakistan, or of an independent Bengal, which Fazlur Rahman, Sir Abdul Rahim and Sarat Bose were negotiating during 1946-47. As it happened, they first landed with Pakistan and then became Bangladesh in 1971. For years therefore, the people of Bangladesh felt like nouveau-independent. If they are asked to make up their mind and choose, they are likely to go the Islamic way. The hateful Pakistanis are thousands of kilometres away, whereas the Hindu Bengali is only a border across. They are jealous of him, because for centuries, they served as his serfs.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had a career with the Muslim League for several years after 1947. If his daughter Sheikh Hasina Wajed were to be driven to choose, she would have no alternative but to go for

Islam. That would be the choice of Bangladeshis, not necessarily for God, but for their identity.

Moving from culture to geography, to Bangladesh's east is Myanmar, with a well equipped and capable military. On the west is West Bengal in India; the north again is India, whereas to the south is the Bay of Bengal, dominated by India. Therefore, to conduct foreign policy from Dhaka is as difficult as anything can be. This is more so because the question is how useful can Bangladesh be to any big power. Its natural resources are limited. Traditionally, Bengal has been an agrarian area. Yes, the British did develop many industries, but only down the river Hooghly, notably jute, coal and iron. In other words, East Bengal did not obtain the benefit of development.

For its size, rising sea levels due to increase in global warming are an awkward disadvantage. The options for Dhaka are few; be friendly with Myanmar as well as other countries like Nepal, and make sure that there is no slip-up in India's goodwill.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE CAPITAL GASPS FOR AIR, AGAIN

Sir — Delhi's air quality continued to be in the 'severe' zone with the Air Quality Index (AQI) clocking 533 according to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) data. Delhiites woke up to a severe air quality a day after Diwali due to blatant disregard to the Delhi Government's ban on firecrackers. People burst firecrackers across Delhi and this contributed to the already poor quality of air in the Capital. Experts say that rampant bursting of firecrackers on Diwali played a major role in the pollution spike in Delhi and surrounding areas.

People must ensure that indoor air pollution remains under control and that there is a chimney in the kitchen and an exhaust system in the bathroom. Doctors have asked people to take more precautions and avoid early morning and late evening walks as concentration of pollutants is highest during this period. November is a changeover month from spring to winters, wherein we would see a drop in temperatures as well as wind speed. This seems to set up a stage for unhealthy air in the Capital.

Shashank Patil | Ujjain

IT'S RAINING TROUBLE IN GOA

Sir — Weather aberrations due to a host of reasons have caused climatic miseries in Goa so often that locals are accustomed to the hardships or so it is assumed. The spate of thunderstorms accompanied by lightning that Goa has been witnessing over the last few days due to a low pressure build-up in the Arabian Sea is the recent irregularity. With the phenomenon expected to trigger heavy rainfalls over Goa in the next few days, it is but assured that the locals will have to put up with power outages and a host of other issues related to the weather anomalies.

With the festival of lights being celebrated with great pomp and gaiety, the news that parts of the State were swathed in darkness due to vagaries of the weather would but dampen the spirits of revellers who, after having shrugged off

Covaxin hopes for further recognition



The WHO granting the emergency-use authorisation to the indigenous COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin could provide a boost to the global vaccine supply and facilitate international travel of millions of Indians. According to data, India has administered millions of doses of Covaxin. The WHO's validation now allows India to send Covaxin doses to the UN-backed Covax programme. According to Bharat Biotech, it has the capacity to produce 50-55 million doses per month. The WHO experts recommended administering two doses of the vaccine with a four week interval in between the doses. According to them, the vaccine pro-

vides 78 per cent efficacy against the virus. The decision will help vaccinate people in lower-income countries.

Covaxin uses an inactivated antigen of the virus to stimulate immunity. As India's domestic vaccination rates have improved and daily caseload has fallen, it is now capable of exporting doses. Apart from Covaxin, India manufactures a local version of AstraZeneca's Covishield. As Covaxin is manufactured indigenously by India's top virology institute, it is seen as a symbol of national pride. It must be remembered that the WHO had sought additional clinical trial data from Bharat Biotech and withheld the approval for Covaxin which had sparked an outcry in India. Also, now India looks forward to country-specific authorisation for Covaxin to ease travel restrictions even further. Therefore, efforts are underway to increase the list of countries accepting Indians vaccinated with Covaxin following the WHO's decision. Meanwhile, Australia has already recognised Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

Venu GS | kollam

the apprehensions of a fresh wave of the pandemic, were apparently in a party mood. If the Centre's decision to cut the prices of petrol and diesel came as an apt festival bonus for the embittered public, the additional relief by the State Government was the icing on the cake. Right now, a check on the ever-escalating prices of essential items would be a welcome relief which will earn the Government enormous public goodwill!

Pachu Menon | Margao

FUEL PRICE DROP IS A BIG RELIEF

Sir — With the reduction of VAT on fuel by the Haryana Government, the price of petrol and diesel has been set at ₹95.27 and ₹86.51 per litre respectively, resulting in the decrease in number of customers at petrol pumps in Punjab, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. The reduction of VAT by the Modi Government is being appreciated all over.

Whereas the Opposition parties — especially the Congress — are condemning and criticising the Government for their vested political interests.

After having assessed the profit and losses to the public exchequer, the Central Government has shown political wisdom. The detractors should now remain silent. India is obligated to purchase fuel at rates determined in the international crude oil market. No doubt the purchasing power of oil consumers, especially farmers, has been adversely affected. The oil consumers should be happy with the relief extended. The State Governments should implement the unilaterally accepted formula of VAT imposition on oil and avoid the dirty political game.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

If somebody asks me what would you teach your child, one thing I would say is humility.



Congress leader —Rahul Gandhi

I do not take a salary or bonus from anywhere. Thus, the only way for me to pay taxes is to sell stocks.



Tesla CEO —Elon Musk

I am happy to announce my next movie to you all. Next one is with director #MaheshBabuP and @uvcreationsofficial.



Actor —Anushka Shetty

David Warner is literally an elite fit. He's always fit, but he's at a different level at the moment.



Australia coach —Justin Langer

I want to work for common people and that isn't quite possible if I continue to be a part of the BJP.



BJP leader —Yogi Bhanerjee

FIRST COLUMN

MAKING SENSE OF
HYPERSONIC MISSILES

This is the new 'strategic' weapon that every big power wants for Christmas



GWYNNE DYER

I saw in some of the newspapers they used the term 'Sputnik moment,' said General Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. "I don't know if it's quite a Sputnik moment, but I think it's very close to that. It's a very significant technological event that occurred."

Sputnik was the first artificial satellite, launched by the Soviet Union in 1957. Shocked Americans responded by creating NASA, but also by speeding up their embryonic ballistic missile programme. The tired old 'bomber gap' was replaced by the more convincing (although equally imaginary) 'missile gap', and US spending on new weapons soared. It may be happening again.

What got Milley's attention last week was China's testing of a hypersonic missile that flew all the way around the world, skipping along the top of the atmosphere unlike traditional 'ballistic' missiles that go very high (ca. 2,000 km.) and then come down steeply. It can carry nuclear weapons, of course.

This is the new 'strategic' weapon that every big power wants for Christmas. China's test virtually guarantees extra funding for the American version, whose first full test flight is only scheduled for the autumn of 2022. Russia already has a more or less operational hypersonic missile, and India and North Korea are working on them.



But hypersonic weapons are completely pointless in a nuclear role, and dangerous to deterrence even in a non-nuclear version, so why is there such enthusiasm for them?

Hypersonic missiles are definitely cool. They can fly all the way around the world and approach a target from anywhere. Chinese hypersonic weapons could be coming up over the South Pole to attack the US, for example. That makes them harder to intercept, because the curvature of the Earth hides them until they are quite close to the target, and even harder to stop because they can also manoeuvre on the way in.

But ballistic missiles can already come from any direction, thanks to the magic of missile-firing submarines. And the hypersonic gliders are basically just glorified cruise missiles, although they are moving five to ten times faster. Harder to shoot down, again, but so what?

Forty years after Ronald Reagan's 'Star Wars' fantasy, there is still no country that has anti-missile defences capable of intercepting more than a few ballistic missiles at a time. In a real nuclear war there would be hundreds coming, and the great majority would get through.

So for more than half a century, few serious strategists have wasted their time trying to build a comprehensive defence against nuclear-tipped missiles. The only real defence against a surprise attack is the guaranteed ability to retaliate with your own nuclear weapons even if the other side attacks first: deterrence.

Faster missiles, stealthier missiles, smarter missiles don't make any difference. Deterrence is a business of numbers and brute force, and hypersonic missiles with nuclear warheads don't change the rules of deterrence in any appreciable way. Air and space defence is always a matter of attrition, and some of the missiles will always get through.

Theoretically, there could be a role for hypersonic missiles with 'conventional' warheads that target single high-value targets at very long range. This is actually the sole, publicly acknowledged goal of the American hypersonic programme, that suggests at least a residual rationality in the Pentagon. But how do you convince the target government that the incoming hypersonic missile is not nuclear in the three or five minutes after it comes up on their radar? You can't. The whole hypersonic game is a dangerous and needless complication of a deterrent system that has remained reasonably stable for at least three decades now.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)

A pit stop for Chinese hegemonic designs

The Chinese base aims to serve as replenishment point apart from giving Beijing a military edge to dominate the periphery of the Indian Ocean and the African continent

The 'Eastern Quad' of the US, Israel, India, and UAE is a counter to Beijing's imperialist tendencies of "flag follows commerce". In 2017, China took over the control of the Doraleh (Djibouti) port as a part of its loan re-negotiations following its investments in the country through commercial ports and railway project connecting Ethiopia. The last few years has witnessed China's strategic wooing of Israel and the Emirates aiming for a base in the latter. India and the US initiated the 'Eastern Quad', and, China's quest for a new military base in the Emirates that would have connected the Strait of Hormuz and Southern Red Sea has been cut short. Nevertheless, equally important is its Djibouti base. Given China's economic footprints in Africa, the base is a "Logistics Support Facility" with a lease of 99 years.

The takeover of Djibouti showcases China's hegemonic desires and its model of international relations. It contradicts the functionality of bilateral or multilateral relations wherein aid or trade precedes genuine strategic understandings and alliances or partnerships. In order to camouflage its presence, China hosted the China-Africa Defense and Security Forum in 2018, wherein it announced to establish a 'China-Africa Peace and Security Fund' to support peacekeeping, naval presence for anti-piracy operations. A year later, Egypt and China inked an agreement to modernise the Suez Canal. Both these developments aimed to Project China's 'soft approach' to project its 'peaceful rise'. However, as the geopolitical developments unfolded, it shed its 'soft approach' and built naval piers in the North West of the base.

According to news reports, the Djibouti base is heavily fortified with hangars for aircraft and bunkers apart from having a heliport, ammunition depot, and cyber and electronic warfare facilities. It can accommodate large warships and has repair facilities for PLA-Navy. It is significant because of its locational importance. Seven miles from the US base (Camp Lemonnier), it connects the key transit routes, primarily the Gulf of Aden, giving way to the Red Sea and the Suez canal leading up to the European markets. In the eastern direction, it gives way to the western Indian Ocean. The Chinese base is a dual-purpose port aiming to serve as replenishment and resupply point apart from giving Beijing a military edge to dominate the periphery of the Indian Ocean and the African continent. It gives China a platform to conduct operations during open hostilities.

One can strategically read China's emerging contours of its military tactics strategy by joining the 'dots' of its naval facilities at its ports. It aims to challenge the Indian and the American military presence in the Indo-Pacific region by taking over the periphery areas. Its military presence in the greater Coco islands,



THE CHINESE PRESENCE IN AFRICA FUELS THE ANTI-WEST AND DICEY 'SOUTH-SOUTH' NARRATIVES. CHINA ALSO AIMS TO EXTRACT THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THESE AFRICAN COUNTRIES, WHICH IS EVIDENT FROM THE FACT THAT MORE THAN 80 PER CENT OF ITS IMPORTS FROM AFRICA CONSIST OF OIL AND RAW MATERIALS

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)



Hambantota, Djibouti and Gwadar ports, apart from its recent military base in Tajikistan's eastern Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province in the Pamir mountains, well display its 'walls of external defence' in case of a possible military conflict with the US over the Taiwan issue or with India. It might extend its defence facilities to include the Iranian ports to cover the Strait of Hormuz geographically. These naval facilities might well serve as the 'distraction points' to the navies of the adversary while it might focus on its land grabbing attempts elsewhere.

Tactically, Djibouti and the Hambantota ports can be taken as 'ports of security provider' to prevent southern sabotage of its 'economic corridor' — the CPEC. On average, China imports around 80 per cent of its oil supplies by sea, of which approximately 77 per cent is through the Strait of Malacca. CPEC aims to connect Gwadar to Kashgar through a criss-cross network of roads and railways to overcome this route and its bottlenecks. It is the protection of this corridor that its presence in the Gulf of Aden and Persian Gulf is an important step that can help Beijing during a conflict in the Indo-Pacific or with Pakistan's conflict with India. Further, to shift the balance of power in its favour, it might attempt to either disrupt the supply chain routes or cause unacceptable damage to the under-sea cables in the region affecting India and other countries of the region.

To ensure smooth implementation of its plans, it simultaneously announced the establishment of the courts for commercial disputes

under its Maritime Silk Route (MSR). Thus, in case of a clash of interests between the host countries and China, these courts would resolve disputes, and they would be aiming for the Chinese geopolitical interest and hence only aim to deepen the strategic penetration of China. This is in sharp contradiction to the WTO's appellate bodies the decisions of which are acceptable to the world countries.

Further, China's relations with Djibouti are just the tip of the Chinese expansionist iceberg. During the last three decades, China has significantly increased its footprints in the African region. If one examines the statistics, in 2020, the Chinese share of trade was 16.4 per cent of Africa's total trade with the world, and prior to this, between 2000-2019, it provided the African countries with a loan of \$153 billion, most of which did not include the financial transactions and instead was a 'circular debt'. Through its opaque debt policies, China made it compulsory for the countries to award contracts to the Chinese companies and give employment to its nationals. For this purpose, it transferred the amount of the 'loan' to its state-owned companies.

As the transactional nature of Chinese investments and trade continues in Africa and elsewhere, one can easily foresee more air or naval bases in the African continent, thereby complicating the security scenario of Asia as a whole. In the first instance, it downplays the US presence in the region and other players such as the EU, to promote a democratic world order based on equality and justice. The Chinese presence in

Africa successfully fuels the Anti-West and dicey 'South-South' narratives. China also aims to extract the natural resources of these African countries, which is evident from the fact that more than 80 per cent of its imports from Africa consist of oil and raw materials.

Further, the multisectoral power projection ranging from military presence to economic ties is a force multiplier in Beijing's attempts to forward its 'One China' policy. For instance, Liberia (2003), Chad (2006), and Gambia (2016) severed their officialties with Taiwan and got development assistance finance. The same convergences were witnessed in the African voting pattern in the UN on the issue of China's human rights violations in Xinjiang. These countries viewed the violations as "attempts to curb terrorism". In June 2020, at the UN Human Rights Council, twenty-five African countries sided with China on the issue of China's Hong Kong national security law. Not much can be expected from such countries in the UNO in a possible case of Taiwan's annexation by China.

Further, Chinese nationals are serving as the head of four UN agencies: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), and International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Their future decisions also have to be watched out for in case of Chinese hostilities. The memories of WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom and the Coronavirus are still afresh.



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

POINT COUNTERPOINT

HAD I LEFT THE PARTY, I WOULD HAVE UNRAVELLED MANY SECRETS. BUT THAT IS NOT HAPPENING NOW.

—BJP LEADER TATHAGATA ROY



IF YOU ARE SO UPSET AND ASHAMED OF ALL THAT IS HAPPENING WITHIN THE PARTY, WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE?

—BJP NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT DILIP GHOSH

Where did Shah Rukh Khan err?

It is no secret that celebrities have not refrained from exercising their political rights by aligning with parties in keeping with their 'inclinations'

If Aryan Khan was not Shah Rukh Khan's son, in all probability, he would not have faced any imprisonment for alleged involvement in a "drug bust" case. Yes, this case demands analysis not simply on the degree to which Aryan has been falsely/genuinely accused but also on whether he is "suffering" for being a superstar's son. Here, the issue is not just that of his father's religious identity and their surname. The actual picture is apparently far more grim than obvious. It demands a little focus on where Shah Rukh erred for which Aryan is paying the penalty.

Shah Rukh has not been engaged in flying kites with celebrated politicians. He has not starred in any documen-



NILOFAR SUHRAWARDY

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tary favouring "accomplishments" of celebrities and/or their respective states. He has never showed any qualm in openly stating his "secular" perspective, reflected by names of his children as well as it seems by his inter-religious marriage. His "progressively" modern as well as fashionable attitude has been marked his having no objections to his wife's modelling and dresses worn by her for the same. Neither has he cared for criticisms levied by several clerics on the nature of her dresses as well as those of his daughter.

So where did he err? It is debatable whether Shah Rukh should be labelled as being extra-sensitive about his "secular" identity while choosing not to display any political



friendship towards probably those "eager" for the same. Should it be assumed that his "national" priorities in keeping with his constitutional rights and duties matter more to him than giving special importance to certain political concerns? It is not a secret that quite a few Bollywood celebrities have not refrained from exercising their political rights by aligning with/joining parties in keeping with their "inclinations". Such a signal has not yet been openly displayed by Shah Rukh Khan.

Of course, he along with his other Bollywood colleagues has displayed extra-concern while exercising right to vote but without any open announcement of their respective political priorities. What does this suggest? Should it be assumed his option to be extra-cautious about not bending towards certain politicians as well as parties they are linked with has proved to be fairly costly for him? It is possible.

At present, this may be viewed as only a probable reason but certainly not the primary one responsible for his son having got entangled in legal complexities linked with the "drugs case". If Aryan was not Shah Rukh's son, neither would this case have dominated headlines for a considerable stretch of time nor would it have earned publicity for all those involved.

That "religious" identity of key persons associated with this case appears to be probed a little too extensively outbeats gossip mongers at practically all levels. Give another thought to this. From one angle, there is nothing astonishing about this being elaborated upon from various angles, of which the chief is religious "identity" of Shah Rukh and that of Aryan, which is linked with the name — Khan.

At the same time, hype raised about political intricacies linked with "religious" identity of Shah Rukh apparently has yet another dimension. The entire-drama has

been probably deliberately planned in quest for more than media-attention.

Electorat gambles of polarising communally ahead of the assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh cannot be ignored. The Ayodhya-issue no longer has the appeal that it once had. The Covid fear has considerably defused. Yes, the tendency to tap anti-Muslim bias still prevails. Were UP polls not around the corner, Aryan may not have fallen victim to this? On his part, Shah Rukh Khan has acted wisely in not being caught in this complex political web. There are not any reports of his rushing for political favours or issuing any statements, tweets, etc. He has sought primarily what was needed most, the best possible legal help to secure

Aryan's bail.

It wouldn't be surprising if the case gradually loses people's attention (after Aryan's bail) and is almost forgotten about. Chances are that minimal importance will be given to deliberating upon at whose behest and why was this actually 'planned'.

Notwithstanding the perils faced by Aryan and his family because of his having been denied bail for 25 days, the whole drama has an interesting twist. It has helped Aryan remain in the limelight and become almost a household name which probably the best advertising agencies may not have helped in accomplishing within such a short period. Perhaps, Shah Rukh has reason enough to have the last laugh!

GLOBE TROTTING

POLIO ERADICATION DRIVE STARTS IN AF
Islamabad: The Taliban-run Afghan public health ministry announced Sunday the start of a four-day nationwide polio vaccination campaign aimed at inoculating children under age 5. For the past three years before taking control of Afghanistan, the Taliban had barred UN-organised vaccination teams from doing door-to-door campaigns in parts of the country under their control.

MASSIVE WHALE DIES IN NORTHERN FRANCE
Calais: French animal experts said on Sunday they were preparing to conduct an autopsy on a 19-metre-long whale that died after getting stranded in the northern port of Calais. The fin whale, weighing around 15 tonnes, apparently beached itself after getting injured, a rare phenomenon in the area. "It is a female, about 30 years old, who ran aground on Saturday," Jacky Karpouzopoulos of the GMINF animal protection group told AFP. "She was sick but she reached the port of Calais still alive, then she went too close to the rocks and she ran aground," Karpouzopoulos said the whale would be pulled to an area where they could carry out an autopsy on Tuesday.

5 DEAD, 4K MAROONED IN TORRENTIAL RAIN IN LANKA
Colombo: At least five people have died and over 4,000 marooned in Sri Lanka due to heavy rains, the disaster management authority said on Sunday. The fatalities were reported from north, central, south and northwestern regions of the country, National Disaster Management Centre said. Some districts are bound to receive rains over 150 millimeters, it said. The National Building Research Organisation warned that people must stay on alert for landslides and rockfalls as the rainfall over the last 24 hours has exceeded 100 millimeters. The spill gates of some of the main reservoirs have been opened due to the persistent heavy rainfall.

BRITISH SIKH FEMALE SETS OFF ON ADVENTURE
London: A 32-year-old British Sikh Army officer and physiotherapist is on a mission to become the first Indian-origin female to complete a solo, unsupported trek to the South Pole and is flying out to Chile on Sunday to begin her adventure. Captain Harpreet Chandi, known as Polar Preet, will be travelling 700 miles while pulling a pulk or sledge with all of her kit, battling temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius and wind speeds of up to 60mph. Writing on her online blog, she notes that the journey will take approximately 45-47 days during which she plans to upload a live tracking map for people to be able to follow her daily voice blogs.

MAN STABS 10-YR-OLD IN MUNICH DEPT STORE
Vienna: A 57-year-old man stabbed a 10-year-old boy with a kitchen knife in a department store in Munich on Saturday evening, German police told the news agency dpa. Approximately 50 officers responded to the scene at a TK Maxx department store in Munich, the broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk reported. The child was wounded on his neck and shoulder. He was transported to a hospital and police said his injuries are severe but not life-threatening. According to Bayerischer Rundfunk, there is no known connection between the man and the child.

Iraq's PM survives assassination attempt

Iraqi PM calls for 'calm and restraint' after escaping unhurt from a drone attack on his Baghdad residence

AP ■ BAGHDAD

Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi survived an assassination attempt with armed drones that targeted his residence early on Sunday and officials said he was unharmed. The attack was a major escalation amid tensions sparked by the refusal of Iran-backed militias to accept last month's parliamentary election results. Two Iraqi officials told *The Associated Press* that seven of al-Kadhimi's security guards were injured in the attack with two armed drones which occurred in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone area. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to give official statements. "I am fine and among my people. Thank God," the Prime

Minister tweeted shortly after the attack. He called for calm and restraint, "for the sake of Iraq." He later appeared on Iraqi television, seated behind a desk in a white shirt, looking calm and composed. "Cowardly rocket and drone attacks don't build homelands and don't build a future," he said. In a statement, the Government said an explosives-laden drone tried to hit al-Kadhimi's home. Residents of Baghdad heard the sound of an explosion followed by heavy gunfire from the direction of the Green Zone, which houses foreign embassies and government offices. The statement released by state-run media said security forces were "taking the necessary measures in connection with this failed attempt."



Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi

There was no immediate claim for the attack. It comes amid a stand-off between security forces and pro-Iran Shiite militias whose supporters have been camped outside the Green Zone for nearly a month after they rejected the results of Iraq's parliamentary elections in which they lost around two-thirds of their seats. "The assassination attempt is a dramatic escalation, cross-

ing a line in unprecedented fashion that may have violent reverberations," wrote Ranj Alaaldin, a nonresident fellow at the Brookings Institution, in a post on Twitter. Protests turned deadly Friday when the demonstrators tried to enter the Green Zone. Security forces used tear gas and live ammunition. There was an exchange of fire in which one protester affiliated

with the militias was killed. Dozens of security forces were injured. Al-Khadimi ordered an investigation to determine what sparked the clashes and who violated orders not to open fire. Some of the leaders of the most powerful militia factions loyal to Iran openly blamed al-Kadhimi for Friday's clashes and the protester's death. "The blood of martyrs is to hold you accountable," said Qais al-Khazali, leader of the Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia, addressing al-Kadhimi at a funeral held for the protester Saturday. "The protesters only had one demand against fraud in elections. Responding like this (with live fire) means you are the first responsible for this fraud." The funeral was attended by leaders of the mostly Shiite Iran-backed factions who together are known as the Popular Mobilization Forces, or Hashd al-Shaabi in Arabic. Abu Alaa al-Walae, commander of Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, in a tweet apparent-

ly addressed to al-Kadhimi that did not name him told him to forget about another term. Al-Kadhimi, 54, was Iraq's former intelligence chief before becoming prime minister in May last year. He is considered by the militias to be close to the US, and has tried to balance between Iraq's alliances with both the US and Iran. Prior to the elections, he hosted several rounds of talks between regional foes Iran and Saudi Arabia in Baghdad in a bid to ease regional tensions. Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's national security council, said indirectly in a tweet Sunday that the United States was behind the attack. The assault on al-Kadhimi "is a new sedition that must be traced back to foreign think tanks, which have brought nothing but insecurity, discord & instability to oppressed Iraqi people through creation & support of terrorist groups & occupation of this country for years," he said. The US strongly denounced the attack.

"This apparent act of terrorism, which we strongly condemn, was directed at the heart of the Iraqi state," said State Department spokesperson Ned Price. "We are in close touch with the Iraqi security forces charged with upholding Iraq's sovereignty and independence and have offered our assistance as they investigate this attack," he added. Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi also condemned the assassination attempt. Writing on Facebook, he called on all sides in Iraq to "calm down, renounce violence and join forces to preserve the country's stability." Saudi Arabia issued a statement of support for stability in Iraq and said it strongly condemned the "cowardly terrorist attack that targeted Iraq's prime minister." The United States, the UN Security Council and others have praised the October 10 election, which was mostly violence-free and without major technical glitches.

Palestinians, Israel spar over US mission in Jerusalem

AP ■ TEL AVIV

The Palestinians on Sunday slammed Israel for rejecting the promised reopening of the US consulate in Jerusalem, a move that would restore Washington's main diplomatic mission for the Palestinians in the contested city. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said late Saturday there was no room in Jerusalem for another American mission. The Trump administration shuttered the US Jerusalem consulate, an office that for years served as the de facto embassy to the Palestinians. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has pledged to reopen it, a move that Israel says would challenge its sovereignty over the city. The reopening could help mend US ties with the Palestinians ruptured under Trump. In a statement, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said it views the reopening of the consulate as part of the

international community's commitments to ending Israel's decades-long occupation of territories the Palestinians seek for their future state. "East Jerusalem is an inseparable part of the occupied Palestinian territory and is the capital of the state of Palestine. Israel, as the occupying power, does not have the right to veto the US administration's decision," the statement said. Asked about the consulate at a Press conference, Bennett repeated Israel's position on Jerusalem. "There's no room for another American consulate in Jerusalem," he said. "Jerusalem is the capital of one state and that's the state of Israel." Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid suggested the consulate could instead be opened in the Palestinian administrative center in Ramallah, West Bank. The Palestinians reject the idea because it would undermine their claims to Jerusalem. Israel views Jerusalem as its

eternal, undivided capital. The Palestinians seek the eastern part of the city, which Israel occupied in 1967 and later annexed, as capital of their hoped-for state. The consulate is emerging as another test between Bennett's government and the Biden administration, which has moved to restore traditional US foreign policy toward Israel and the Palestinians after the Trump White House largely sided with Israel on issues related to the conflict. Trump had downgraded the consulate's operations and placed them under his ambassador to Israel when he moved the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city in 2018. The embassy move infuriated the Palestinians and led them to sever most ties with the Trump administration. Blinken has not provided a firm date for the reopening and US officials have implied that Israeli resistance to the move could act as a hindrance.

Iran begins annual war games ahead of nuke talks with West

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran's military began its annual war games in a coastal area of the Gulf of Oman, state TV reported Sunday, less than a month before upcoming nuclear talks with the West. The report said navy and air force units as well as ground forces were participating in a more than 1 million square-kilometer (386,100 square-mile) area east of the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Nearly 20% of all oil shipping passes through the strait to the Gulf of Oman and Indian Ocean. The drill comes amid heightened tensions between Iran and the US in the wake of former President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal of America from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. State TV said brigades including commandos and airborne infantry deployed for the annual exercise. Fighter jets, helicopters, military transport



In this picture released by the Iranian Army on Saturday, troops attend a maneuver in a coastal area in southeastern Iran

aircraft, submarines and drones were also expected to take part in the drill. It wasn't immediately clear how long the exercise would last. Dubbed "Zolfaghar-1400," the war games are aimed at "improving readiness in confronting foreign threats and any possible invasion," state TV said.

US officials said last week that Iran had seized a Vietnamese-flagged oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman last month and was still holding the vessel in its port. Iran offered conflicting accounts of what happened, claiming that elite Revolutionary Guard commandos had thwarted a U.S.

seizure of a tanker carrying Iranian oil in the Gulf of Oman and freed the vessel. It aired dramatic footage on state television but did not further explain the incident. The nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for limits on its nuclear program, and is meant to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb. After the US withdrew from the deal in 2018 and restored sanctions on Iran, the Islamic Republic gradually — and publicly — abandoned the deal's limits on its nuclear development. Iran says its stockpile of 20% enriched uranium has reached over 210 kilograms (463 pounds), the latest defiant move ahead of upcoming nuclear talks with the West. Under the historic nuclear deal, Iran was prohibited from enriching uranium above 3.67%.

Houston leaders seek clues for concert surge that killed 8

Houston: Authorities said they would watch video, interview witnesses and review concert protocols to determine how eight people died at a Houston music festival when fans suddenly surged toward the stage to watch rapper Travis Scott. City officials said Saturday they were in the early stages of investigating the pandemonium that unfolded Friday evening at Astroworld, a sold-out, two-day event in NRG Park with an estimated 50,000 people in attendance. One attendee said that as a timer clicked down to the start of Scott's performance, the crowd pushed forward. "As soon as he jumped out on the stage, it was like an energy took over and everything went haywire," concertgoer Niaara Goods said. "All of a

sudden, your ribs are being crushed. You have someone's arm in your neck. You're trying to breathe, but you can't." Goods said she was so desperate to get out that she bit a man on the shoulder to get him to move. The dead ranged in age from 14 to 27, and 13 people were still hospitalized Saturday, Mayor Sylvester Turner said. He called the disaster "a tragedy on many different levels" and said it was too early to draw conclusions about what went wrong. Dozens were injured. "It may well be that this tragedy is the result of unpredictable events, of circumstances coming together that couldn't possibly have been avoided," said Judge Lina Hidalgo, Harris County's top elected official. **AP**

Nicaragua's Ortega seeks re-election in questioned vote

AP ■ MANAGUA

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega sought a fourth consecutive term in elections Sunday against a field of little-known candidates while those who could have given him a real challenge sat in jail. More than 13,000 polling places opened Sunday morning even as the opposition denounced more arrests of its leaders in activists around the county in the hours leading up to the vote. The opposition called on Nicaraguans to stay home in protest of an electoral process that has been roundly criticized as not credible by foreign powers. The election will determine who holds the presidency for the next five years, as well as 90 of the 92 seats in the congress and Nicaragua's representation in the Central

American Parliament. More than 4.4 million Nicaraguan age 16 and above were eligible to vote. Ortega's Sandinista Front and its allies control the congress and all government institutions. Ortega first served as president from 1985 to 1990, before returning to power in 2007. He recently declared his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, his "co-president." In June, police arrested seven potential presidential challengers on charges that essentially amount to treason. They remained in detention on election day. Some two dozen other opposition leaders were also swept up ahead of the elections. The other contenders on Sunday's ballot were little known politicians from minor parties seen as friendly with Ortega's Sandinista Front. On Saturday, the Blue and

White National Union, an opposition alliance, issued an alert after at least eight of its leaders were "abducted by the regime in illegal raids" Saturday afternoon and evening. The Civic Alliance, another opposition coalition, reported "harassment, surveillance, intimidation, assault, attacks, illegal and arbitrary detentions" of some of its leaders around Nicaragua. The National Police had not confirmed nor denied the opposition reports. One of the first to vote Sunday was Foreign Minister Denis Moncada at a secondary school in the capital. "The majority of Nicaraguans are going to elect today Commander Daniel (Ortega), comrade Rosario (Murillo) and the deputies," Moncada said to pro-government news outlets.

Taliban orders taxi drivers not to transport other gunmen: Report

ANI ■ NANGARHAR

The Taliban has ordered the taxi drivers of the eastern Nangarhar province not to transport any other gunmen other than the ones who are the Taliban affiliates, reported a local media. In a statement released by Nangarhar's provincial office, the Taliban asked the drivers around the province to give them hand in ensuring the security of the province and acknowledged them to prevent transporting other gunmen, reported Khaam Press. The statement has further asked the people of the province to inform the authorities upon seeing any suspected gunmen in the taxis, accord-

The statement is believed to aim at the ISIS-K terrorists who are reportedly more active in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan. However, it did not name any specific group ing to the news agency. The statement is believed to aim at the ISIS-K terrorists who are reportedly more active in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan, however, it did not name any specific group. It also came at a time when the number of killings has risen which led to the rise in tensions among the locals.

N Korea stages artillery firing drill in latest weapons test

AP ■ SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

North Korea has conducted artillery firing exercises to bolster its defence capability, state media reported Sunday, its latest weapons test as Pyongyang continues to pressure Washington and Seoul to abandon what it calls their hostile policy. An artillery firing competition among mechanized units was held on Saturday, with senior government and military officials present, the official Korean Central News Agency reported. Leader Kim Jong Un was not mentioned in the report, suggesting he did not observe the training. He supervised a similar artillery firing drill last

year. This year's drills were designed to inspect the mechanized units' progress in their mobile combat capabilities and to further intensify competitive training throughout the North's military, KCNA said. Since September, North Korea has test-launched a series of newly developed missiles, including nuclear-capable weapons that place U.S. allies South Korea and Japan within striking distance. Some experts say North Korea wants its rivals to accept it as a nuclear power state and work to ease international sanctions on the country. The North's artillery tests draw less outside attention than its missile tests, particularly ballistic weapons launches that are banned by multiple U.N.

Security Council resolutions. But its long-range artillery pieces deployed near the border with South Korea pose a serious threat to the South's populous metropolitan region and other areas, experts say. U.S.-led talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear program collapsed in early 2019 amid bickering over the sanctions. U.S. officials have recently offered a resumption of talks with North Korea without any preconditions. The North said it won't return to the talks unless the United States first abandons what Pyongyang calls its hostile policy, an apparent reference to the sanctions and regular military drills between Washington and Seoul.

Libya Govt rejects suspension of Foreign Min before poll

AP ■ CAIRO

Libya's Government on Sunday rejected a decision by the country's presidential council to suspend the foreign minister over allegations of monopolizing foreign policy. The standoff between the two bodies is likely to increase political tensions in the North African country less than seven weeks before planned elections. It also comes a few days ahead of an international conference in Paris to push for holding the vote as scheduled Dec. 24. The Government of National Unity said in a statement that the presidential council doesn't have the right to suspend Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush, and hailed the minister's efforts as the coun-

ty's chief diplomat. It pointed to her work at an international conference held in the capital of Tripoli last month with the aim of resolving the country's thorniest issues ahead of general elections. The government said that naming members of the government and suspending or investigating government officials are duties exclusive to the prime minister. The presidential council, a three-member body serving as the country's president until one is elected, late Saturday suspended Mangoush and barred her from traveling abroad. It accused the minister of not coordinating foreign policy decisions with the council. The council did not elaborate on the circumstances behind the decision.

US finally reopening borders after 20 months for fully vaccinated

AFF ■ WASHINGTON

The United States reopens its land and air borders Monday to foreign visitors fully vaccinated against Covid-19, ending 20 months of restrictions on travel from around the globe that separated families, hobbled tourism and strained diplomatic ties. The ban, imposed by former president Donald Trump in early 2020 and upheld by his successor Joe Biden, has been widely criticized and become emblematic of the upheavals caused by the pandemic. The restrictions were particularly unpopular in Europe and US neighbors Canada and Mexico. In an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus, US

borders were closed after March 2020 to travelers from large parts of the world, including the European Union, Britain and China, India and Brazil. Overland visitors from Mexico and Canada were also banned. The months of restrictions affecting hundreds of millions of people helped fuel both personal and economic suffering brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. "It's been so hard," Alison Henry, 63, told AFP. "I just want to see my son." The British woman plans to fly Monday to see her son in New York, after 20 months of separation. Families on both sides of the Atlantic are eager to finally reunite with their loved ones. Although travel from the

United States to Europe has been possible since the summer, foreign US residents holding certain visas have had no guarantee of being able to reenter the country. To cope with surging demand, airlines have increased the number of transatlantic flights. They also plan to use larger planes, as the easing of restrictions represents a major boost for a sector plunged into crisis by the pandemic. Along the border with Mexico, many cities in the big US states of Texas and California have seen significant economic struggles due to anti-Covid trade restrictions. Local economies are also impatiently waiting for a return to normalcy.

COP26 CLIMATE SUMMIT

India signs up sustainable agriculture action agenda

PTI ■ LONDON

India is among 27 countries to sign up to a sustainable agriculture action agenda at the conclusion of the first week of the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, laying out new commitments to make farming more sustainable and less polluting.

The 'Sustainable Agriculture Policy Action Agenda for the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture and Global Action Agenda for Innovation in Agriculture' was among the highlight action pledges to be clinched by the participating countries at the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on Saturday.

The countries laid out new commitments to change their agricultural policies to become more sustainable and less polluting, and to invest in the science needed for sustainable agriculture and for protecting food supplies against climate change.

"If we are to limit global warming and keep the goal of 1.5 degree Celsius alive, then the world needs to use land sustainably and put protection and restoration of nature at the heart of all we do," said Alok Sharma, the Indian-origin UK Cabinet minister, in his role as the President of COP26.

"The commitments being made today show that nature



and land use is being recognised as essential to meeting the Paris Agreement goals, and will contribute to addressing the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Meanwhile, as we look ahead to negotiations in week two of COP, I urge all parties to come to the table with the constructive compromises and ambitions needed," he said.

Others besides India to sign up to the action plan include Australia, Uganda, Madagascar, Tanzania, Vietnam, Nigeria, Lesotho, Laos, Indonesia, Guinea, Ghana, Germany, Philippines, Ethiopia, UK, Colombia, Costa Rica, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Spain, Switzerland and the UAE.

The announcement follows Ocean Action Day on Friday of over 10 new countries signing up to the "30by30" target to protect 30 per cent of the world's ocean by 2030.

The countries include India, Bahrain, Jamaica, St Lucia, Sri Lanka, Saudi

Arabia, India, Qatar, Samoa, Tonga, Gambia and Georgia, with the target now supported by over 100 countries.

Among other developments from week one of the COP26 climate summit, the World Bank will commit to spending USD 25 billion in climate finance annually to 2025 through its Climate Action Plan, including a focus on agriculture and food systems.

The conclusion of the first week, which opened with the World Leaders Summit attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was marked by a massive protest march by environmental activists in Glasgow on Saturday.

Swedish activist Greta Thunberg joined thousands at the "Global Day of Action for Climate Justice" march, the biggest so far during the COP26 summit which took place alongside hundreds of similar events around the world.

After a brief break on Sunday, the climate talks will resume on Monday and conclude at the end of the summit next Friday.

India says its solar energy capacity increased 17 times in 7 years

Now at 45 GW

PTI ■ GLASGOW

India on Sunday told the UN climate summit here that its solar energy capacity stands at about 45 gigawatts after it increased 17 times in the last seven years, asserting that although the country represents 17 per cent of the global population, its historical cumulative emissions are only 4 per cent.

India said this while giving a presentation on its third Biennial Update Report (BUR) during the 11th Facilitative Sharing of Views (FSV) at the ongoing COP26 climate summit here.

The BUR was submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in February.

The key highlight of the discussion on India's third BUR was the achievement of 24 per cent reduction in emission intensity of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the period of 2005-2014, and the significant increase of its solar programme.

Making a statement on behalf of India, J R Bhatt, Adviser/Scientist in the Ministry of Environment, highlighted that India represents 17 per cent of the global population but its historical cumulative emissions are only 4 per cent, while current annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emis-



sions are only about 5 per cent.

"This is complemented by the fact that India is particularly vulnerable to climate change. However, India is nevertheless taking several mitigation actions, spanning across the entire economy and society and has progressively continued decoupling of its economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions," said Bhatt.

In the last seven years, India's installed solar energy capacity has increased 17 times, he said, adding that the solar energy capacity now stands at about 45 gigawatts.

All the Parties commended India's efforts on the BUR and its climate actions, including recent announcements of new measures.

There were questions about India's multilateral efforts to combat climate change, including the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

India responded by saying that disaster risk is increasing in developing countries, and

US backs India-UK led solar Green Grids Initiative

PTI ■ LONDON

The US has partnered with the UK and India-led Green Grids Initiative of a global energy grid launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.

At a meeting of the Steering Committee of the Green Grids Initiative - 'One Sun One World One Grid' (GGI-OSOWOG) earlier this week, US Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm said that the US is excited to be back in the climate conversation and to partner with the new initiative.

"All the energy humanity uses in a year is equal to the energy that reaches the earth from the sun in a single hour," said Granholm.

"The GGI-OSOWOG is focusing on the two most important pieces of the puzzle. We at the US Department of Energy are happy to be a partner with GGI-OSOWOG," she said.

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) under India's presidency and the UK's COP26 Presidency had launched GGI-OSOWOG during the World Leaders' Summit of COP26 on Tuesday.

The Steering Committee of GGI-OSOWOG comprises five members besides India and the UK - the US, Australia and France - and has been set up

to deliver the vision of One Sun One World One Grid under which 80 countries have resolved to combine their efforts to create more interconnected grids, endorsing the 'One Sun Declaration'.

Energy Secretary Granholm told the meeting this week that the US is focusing on next-generation technologies to ensure solar panels and grids are consistently efficient across markets and geographies.

"The US is interested in helping countries that do not have access to electricity by leveraging the power of the sun," she said.

Following the leader-level events of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on Monday and Tuesday, each country's delegates and officials have been participating in a series of meetings to finalise the way forward to tackle climate change by the end of the summit on October 12.

The Indian team includes Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupendra Yadav and chief negotiator Richa Sharma.

"We must return to the sun to save the earth. As the world progresses to achieve new heights economically and socially, solar energy will power the transition," said Yadav.

Elon Musk tweets to ask if he should sell some Tesla stock

New York: Tesla CEO Elon Musk is asking on Twitter whether he should sell 10 per cent of his stock in the electric-vehicle company amid pressure in Washington to increase taxes on billionaires like him.

Some Democrats have been pushing for billionaires to pay taxes when the price of the stocks they hold goes up, even if they don't sell any shares. It's a concept called "unrealized gains," and Musk is sitting on a lot of them with a net worth of roughly USD 300 billion.

"Much is made lately of unrealized gains being a means of tax avoidance, so I propose selling 10 per cent of my Tesla stock," he tweeted Saturday afternoon. "Do you support this?"

By 5:40 pm Eastern time, a little more than two hours after Musk's initial tweet, 54 per cent said yes out of a total of 876,189 votes.

Much of Musk's wealth is held in shares of Tesla, which does not pay him a cash salary. "I only have stock, thus the only way for me to pay taxes personally is to sell stock," he tweeted.

Musk, who is known for his sometimes flippant tweets, said he would "abide by the results of this poll."

Total tax on petrol down to 50%, diesel to 40% after duty cuts

New Delhi: The total incidence of taxes on petrol has come down to 50 per cent and that on diesel to 40 per cent following a reduction in excise duty by the Central Government, and by a slightly higher proportion in States that have also cut local sales tax or VAT on the fuel.

Incidentally, the Congress-led Government in Punjab on Sunday announced a reduction in Value Added Tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel, making them cheaper by ₹10 and ₹5 per litre respectively in the State. The new rates will be effective from midnight. Currently, petrol and diesel rates in Punjab are ₹106.20 and ₹89.83 per litre respectively.

The retail price of petrol and diesel is decided after adding central excise, commission paid to dealers and value-added tax (VAT) to basic oil prices. The basic oil price is the prevailing international benchmark rate plus freight.

On November 1, prior to the duty cuts, central excise of ₹ 32.90 a litre and VAT of 30 per cent in Delhi made up for 54 per cent of the retail selling price of diesel, according to price build-up of the fuel available from state-owned fuel

retailers. This, after the ₹5 per litre reduction in excise duty, has come down to 50 per cent in Delhi. Two dozen states and UTs have matched the central government's excise cuts with a VAT reduction. And, in those states, the percentage of taxes in retail price will be marginally lower. Delhi has not yet lowered the VAT. Similarly, on diesel, the central excise duty of ₹31.80 per litre and 16.75 per cent of VAT plus air ambience charges of ₹250 per kilolitre, brought the total incidence of taxation in Delhi to 48 per cent.

This, after the ₹10 a litre cut in excise duty, has come down to 40 per cent in Delhi. In cases that have cut VAT, the incidence will be even lower.

Basic price, which includes the cost of oil plus freight, varies between ₹52.01 a litre in Chennai to ₹59.89 in Ladakh. On top of this, the central government charges an excise duty of ₹27.90 which is paid at the factory gate (refinery in this case). Thereafter, the state governments levy different rates of local sales tax or VAT. Rajasthan has the highest VAT on petrol of ₹30.51 a litre, followed by Maharashtra with ₹29.99, Andhra

Pradesh (₹29.02) and Madhya Pradesh (₹26.87). The lowest VAT of ₹4.93 a litre is levied in Andaman & Nicobar. Similarly, the basic price of diesel varies from ₹52.13 a litre in Chennai to 59.57 in Ladakh. On top of this, the central government charges an excise duty of ₹21.80.

The highest VAT of ₹21.19 a litre is levied in Andhra Pradesh, followed by ₹21.14 in Rajasthan and ₹20.21 in Maharashtra. Himachal Pradesh levies the lowest VAT of ₹4.40 a litre, and Andaman & Nicobar charges ₹4.58. Petrol pump dealers are paid ₹3.85 per litre commission on petrol and Rs 2.58 on diesel. Petrol prices have been further reduced by as much as ₹8.7 per litre and diesel ₹9.52 in BJP-ruled states and Union Territories - from Ladakh to Puducherry - after they matched the central government's announcement of a cut in excise duty with slashing of VAT.

Buckling under pressure, the Union government had last week cut excise duty on petrol by ₹ 5 per litre and that on diesel by ₹10 a litre to give reprieve to consumers battered by record-high retail fuel prices.

Maruti Suzuki India keeping close watch on commodities' price movement to fix vehicle prices

New Delhi: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India is keeping a close watch on the price movement of commodities, which had touched an 'unprecedented' high in the second quarter, to fix its vehicle prices in the future as it has not fully passed on the impact to consumers, according to a senior company official.

The company is hoping for a softening of commodity prices, which also move cycles, having "sort of reached the peak".

"Material cost is an important cost in the overall cost structure for any OEM (original equipment manufacturer). Normally, 70-75 per cent of the total cost of an OEM is material cost.

In the second quarter, our material cost to net sales ratio had gone up to a very high figure of 80.5 per cent. This is unprecedented," Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Director (Marketing and Sales) Shashank Srivastava told PTI.

When asked if the company will hike prices of its vehicles, especially around the new year as is usually done, he said, "We have to carefully monitor the situation because we haven't passed on even the past increases of commodity prices into our (vehicle) price hikes."

Srivastava added that the

company has taken a price hike of about 1.9 per cent at the beginning of September but "we have to carefully watch the direction of the commodity price movement in the future".

He further said the peak of commodity prices was in Q1 of the ongoing fiscal but the effect of it comes to the OEMs like Maruti Suzuki with a lag of one quarter.

"So, the effect of that peak had come to us in the second quarter," he said, adding that the commodity prices have been increasing dramatically in the past one year.

He said, "Starting from May 2020, almost all commodities that are related to automobile production have increased."

Steel, which was Rs 38 per kg, went up to about Rs 72 per kg, although it has come down a little bit. Copper, which was at USD 5,200 per tonnes, also went up to USD 10,400 per tonnes, he added.

Besides, the prices of other precious metals like palladium, platinum and rhodium have also gone up by up to almost two-three times.

"It does show that there has been a huge, unprecedented increase in commodity prices and still continue to be high, although in the precious metal, there have been some softening in the last couple of weeks," Srivastava said.

SOPs on IT rules needed as 'guardrails' for consumers, investors; Govt will deliver on it: Rajeev Chandrasekhar

New Delhi: Standard Operating Procedures -- which will provide further clarity on the new IT and intermediary rules -- are required as "guardrails" for consumers and investors, and the Government would certainly deliver on it, Minister of State for IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar has said.

The SOPs involve inter-ministerial consultation and are about "sensitising" many ministries, Chandrasekhar said, adding those conversations are already on.

In an interview to PTI, Chandrasekhar further said the IT Ministry is also planning a massive outreach next year in form of a dialogue with public, consumer forums, academia, industry and others on the fast-evolving online space and what more needs to be done to ensure that internet is open, safe and trusted.

Chandrasekhar said the outreach by the IT Ministry will be "broad-based" and across various states. These dialogues will happen "where

power of internet is transforming lives of people."

While the IT Ministry has been regularly engaging with stakeholders on various issues, it will now "start spreading out and meeting citizens from all across the country in a much more organised manner about what their expectation from the internet is, and what more the government can do to empower users."

To a question on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to IT and intermediary rules, the minister asserted that the internet momentum must continue and therefore, it is in the nation's interest to have an open, safe, trusted and accountable internet and policies around that.

"So the SOPs, which are part of clarifying the rules and the policies, are required as guardrails for investors and guardrails for the consumers and we will deliver on that," he said but declined to specify a timeline.

FinMin to start process for appointment of MD, DMDs of ₹ 20k cr NaBFID

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry will soon start the process for the appointment of managing director (MD) and deputy managing directors (DMDs) of the newly set up ₹ 20,000 crore development finance institution NaBFID, to catalyse investment in the fund-starved infrastructure sector.

Last month, the government appointed veteran banker K V Kamath as the chairperson of the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) for three years.

According to sources, the finance ministry will soon inti-

mate the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) about the appointment of MD and DMDs of NaBFID.

The Bureau will issue advertisements and undertake a selection process, sources said.

The BBB is the headhunter for state-owned banks and financial institutions.

The MD, DMDs and whole-time directors would not hold office after attaining the age of 65 years and 62 years respectively.

As per the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Act 2021, the institution would have one MD and not more than three DMDs.

NTPC celebrates Raising Day

New Delhi: Speaking on the occasion of NTPC's Raising Day, R K Singh, Union Minister (Power, New & Renewable Energy) said "NTPC is a special company; it is the largest provider of energy to our country, the most important input for growth."

In his address, Singh shared Company's achievements, expertise, future goals and also discussed about NTPC's role in leading India's energy transition. Singh also appreciated NTPC for passing on approximately 4500 crore to states in last financial year by optimising energy charges.

CSB Bank								
Formerly The Catholic Syrian Bank Ltd.								
NOR/LD/SEC/ 470 /2021-22			Northern Zone , Delhi, 05.10.2021					
Registered A/D								
Notice under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 r/w Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002								
1. M/s Allied Stamping, A Sole Prop. Firm through its Prop. Mr Atul Uppal Office Address :- Plot No 27, Gali No 6E/ South End, Saurpur, Industrial Area, Sohna Road, Faridabad, Harayana- 121005.			2. Mr Atul Uppal, S/o. Mr V K Uppal Prop of M/s Allied Stamping R/o. House No 1371/GF Sector 16, Urban Estate, Faridabad, Harayana- 121002.					
3. Mrs Saumya Uppal, W/o. Mr Atul Uppal R/o. House No 36B, Sector-11 B, Faridabad-121002			4. Mr Akshay Uppal, S/o. Mr Atul Uppal R/o. House No 36B, Sector-11 B, Faridabad-121002					
Dear Sir/Madam								
1) We, CSB Bank Limited having its Registered Office at Thrissur, Thrissur District, Kerala State, having its Zonal Office at Delhi and one of its branches at Faridabad (hereinafter referred to as "The Bank") serve upon you the following statutory notice under section-13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.								
2) At your request, Faridabad branch of the Bank granted the following credit facilities to M/s Allied Stamping, Prop. Mr Atul Uppal on obtaining necessary advance documents and security agreements. Details of the loan/credit facilities are shown below:-								
S. No.	Name of Borrower	Name of Guarantor	Nature of Credit Facility	Original Limit (In Lakhs)	Additional/ Enchanced Limit (In Lakhs)	Aggregate Limit (In Lakhs)	Date of Sanction	Outstanding as on 30.09.2021 (In Lakhs)
1.	M/s. Allied Stamping, Prop. Mr Atul Uppal.	1) Mrs Soniya Uppal 2) Mr Akshay Uppal	A. Cash Credit Limit	Rs 25.00	--	Rs 25.00	12/10/11	Rs 125.63
			1st Enchancement of C.C. Limit	Rs 25.00	Rs 25.00	Rs 50.00	06/03/12	
			2nd Enchancement of C.C. Limit	Rs 50.00	Rs 48.00	Rs 98.00	01/11/13	
			3rd Enchancement of C.C. Limit	Rs 98.00	Rs 22.0	Rs 120.00	01/08/14	
2.			B. Working Capital Term Loan (Under GECL Scheme)	Rs 24.00	--	Rs 24.00	20/10/20	Rs 24.85
				Total (A+B)		Rs 144.00		Rs 150.48
3) You may please note that security interests in respect of the following assets were created in favour of the Bank:-								
a) Mortgage by deposit of title deeds of all that part and parcel of Double Storied Industrial Building constructed on the Plot of Land admeasuring 403.33 sq. Yards, out of total area 605 sq yds. (2/3 share), forming part of Khsasra No. 12/22/2.23, 13/2/2.3/1, situated at Revenue Estate of Mauja Sarapur, Saurpur Industrial Area, Teshil Ballabgarh, Distt. Faridabad, Harayana now know as Plot No. 27, Gali No. 6E/Sarapur, Industrial Area, Sohna Road, Faridabad, owned by Mr Atul Kumar Uppal alias Mr Atul Uppal, S/o Mr V. K. Uppal more fully described in the Schedule - A hereunder. (Scheduled property is hereinafter referred to as the "Secured Asset").								
b) Hypothecation of all produce, goods, stocks, plant, machinery, fixtures etc, book debts and any other movable assets, belonging to the Borrowers or to be acquired by the Borrowers which now or hereinafter from time to time brought in, stored or by in or about the Borrowers premises or godown at Double Storied Industrial Building constructed on the Plot of Land admeasuring 403.33 sq. Yards, out of total area 605 sq yds. (2/3 share), forming part of Khsasra No. 12/22/2.23, 13/2/2.3/1, situated at Revenue Estate of Mauja Sarapur, Saurpur Industrial Area, Teshil Ballabgarh, Distt. Faridabad, Harayana now know as Plot No. 27, Gali No. 6E/Sarapur, Industrial Area, Sohna Road, Faridabad more fully described in the Schedule - B hereunder. (Scheduled property is hereinafter referred to as the "Secured Asset").								
4) You all have failed and neglected to pay and committed default in repayment of the aforesaid secured financial assistance, in violation of the stipulations in sanction terms of loan documents and security documents. Accordingly, the Bank has classified the loans/financial assistance as "Non-Performing Assets" (NPA) as defined in Section-2(o) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 on 30.07.2021.								
5) As stated above, M/s Allied Stamping, Prop. Mr Atul Uppal, Mr Atul Uppal, Mrs Soniya Uppal and Mr Akshay Uppal as Borrower / Guarantor/Mortgagor are jointly and severally liable to pay Rs. 1,25,63,814.83/- (Rupees One Crore Twenty Five Lakh Sixty Three Thousand Eight Hundred fourteen and Eighty Three Paise Only) as on 30.09.2021 in Cash Credit Limit and Rs. 24,85,380/- (Rupees Twenty Four Lac Eighty Five Thousand Three Hundred Eighty Only) as on 30.09.2021 in Working Capital Term Loan (Under Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line Scheme) with future interest @ 12.74% per annum in C.C.Limit and @9.25% p.a. In WCTL (GECL) with monthly rests w.e.f. 01.10.2021 plus applicable penal interest till the date of repayment of the dues in full and other costs and expenses, if any.								
6) The Bank is a "Secured Creditor" as defined under Section-2(d) of the Act								
7) Under the above circumstances, the Bank has become entitled to issue this notice under Section 13(2) of the Act. We, therefore, require you by this notice issued under Section 13(2) of the Act to discharge your aforesaid liability to the Bank in full within sixty days from the date of this notice, failing which the Bank as a Secured Creditor, shall be constrained, without prejudice to any of the Bank's other rights and remedies, to take recourse to various measures prescribed under Sub section (4) of Section 13 of the Act and in particular:-								
a) to take possession of all or any of the Secured Asset and transfer them by way of lease, assignment or sale for realizing the secured assets;								
b) to takeover management of the Secured Asset and transfer them by way of lease, assignment or sale for realizing the secured assets;								
c) to appoint any person to manage the Secured Assets; and or								
d) To require at any time by notice in writing, any person who has acquired any of the secured assets from the borrower and from whom any money is due or may become due to the borrower, to pay the secured creditor, so much money as is sufficient to pay the secured debt.								
8) You are also hereby put to notice that you shall not, after receipt of this notice, deal with the Secured Assets in any manner whatsoever to the prejudice of the interests of the Secured Creditor without the prior written consent of the Bank, in compliance of Section-13(13) of the Act. As per Section-29 of the Act, if any person contravenes or attempts to contravene or abets the contravention of the provisions of the Act or any rules made thereunder, he/she shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or with both.								
9) Further, please note that in the event of your failure to discharge the liability in full within 60 days from the date of this notice and Bank takes any action under Section 13(4) of the Act, you shall be liable to pay to the Bank all costs, charges, and expenses incurred by the Bank in that connection. In case the dues to the Bank are not fully satisfied with the sale proceeds of the Secured Asset, the Bank shall proceed for recovery of the balance from you personally, jointly and severally and from other persons liable to the Bank.								
10) Your attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.								
11) This notice is issued without prejudice to the bank's rights, remedies and contentions that will be raised/has been raised in the proceedings to be initiated/pending before Debt Recovery Tribunals/Courts/Appellate Tribunals/Authority and also Bank's right to recover the dues from any other security furnished to the bank in respect of the aforesaid liability.								
SCHEDULE-A								
Mortgage by deposit of title deeds of all that part and parcel of Double Storied Industrial Building constructed on the Plot of Land admeasuring 403.33 sq. Yards, out of total area 605 sq yds. (2/3 share), forming part of Khsasra No. 12/22/2.23, 13/2/2.3/1, situated at Revenue Estate of Mauja Sarapur, Saurpur Industrial Area, Teshil Ballabgarh, Distt. Faridabad, Harayana now know as Plot No. 27, Gali No. 6E/Sarapur, Industrial Area, Sohna Road, Faridabad, owned by Mr Atul Kumar Uppal alias Mr Atul Uppal, S/o Mr V. K. Uppal as per Document No 1307 dated 30.04.2007.								
Bounded:								
East: By Vacant Plot.								
West: By M/s Dev Enterprises								
North: By Rasta/Gali No 6E.								
South: By M/s Venus Manufacturing.								
SCHEDULE -B								
(Details of Hypothecation)								
Hypothecation of all produce, goods, stocks, plant, machinery, fixtures etc, book debts and any other movable assets, belonging to the Borrowers or to be acquired by the Borrowers which now or hereinafter from time to time brought in, stored or by in or about the Borrowers premises or godown at Double Storied Industrial Building constructed on the Plot of Land admeasuring 403.33 sq. Yards, out of total area 605 sq yds. (2/3 share), forming part of Khsasra No. 12/22/2.23, 13/2/2.3/1, situated at Revenue Estate of Mauja Sarapur, Saurpur Industrial Area, Teshil Ballabgarh, Distt. Faridabad, Harayana now know as Plot No. 27, Gali No. 6E/Sarapur, Industrial Area, Sohna Road, Faridabad								
Yours faithfully								
Sd/-								
(Authorised Officer), CSB Bank Limited								
CSB Bank Limited, Regd. Office: Thrissur Zonal Office, G-36, Mezzanine, Floor, Connaught Circuit, New Delhi- 110001, e-mail: northernzone@csb.co.in								



Managing disasters in hills

BABER NAFICE records a major cloudburst as witnessed by the victims from Doda and Honzar, Jammu & Kashmir, who also suggest ways to combat it better in future

Just like another day, the mountainous village of Honzar in Dachhan Tehsil in Kishtwar district in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was approaching dawn when the entire village was hit by a deadly cloudburst around four in the morning on July 28, 2021. It washed away ten houses, one school building, a food storage while leaving several dead and missing. Three months later, villagers are yet to overcome the losses.

"Everything was normal. Clouds were hovering in the sky. Never had we imagined our beautiful land would turn into a heap of sand," said 21-year-old Omar, a local from the village. According to him, the locals tried to save the lives of people but could not succeed. By the time the administration reached their village after covering a long distance of approximately 120 kilometres from Kishtwar town, the situation had already gone from bad to worse.

"Teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) reached our village after three days, by the time the weather had cleared up. We had many expectations from the administrations," he added.

The residents of this remote village believe that in order to be self-depen-

dent and protect themselves during such extreme events, they should be provided with effective disaster preparedness training, which will provide them the necessary skills to respond immediately to the disasters their region is prone to. They will be able to hold the ground till arrival of the rescue teams.

Abdul Majeed, a teacher at the school destroyed in the disaster, described how helpless he felt during the cloudburst without any disaster preparedness training. "Several lives were lost in front of my eyes which neither the administration nor I could save. I appeal to the administration to strengthen our capabilities that will prepare us to undertake rescue operations in the future," expressed Abdul with misty eyes.

Ashfaq Hussain Tantre, a 50-year-old resident from the village, pointed out how the unavailability of a strong infrastructure in their village makes it even more difficult to save lives during times of crisis. "We don't have basic facilities like roads and networks. We carry patients on our shoulders and trek for several kilometers in these serpentine hills to reach the nearest Public Health Centre (PHC) located at Dachhan, approximately two hours from Honzar. Without the basic infra-



structure, how do we save our lives when natural hazards hit the village?" He explained how it took so long to inform the district information officer about the calamity since there is no network in the region.

Ashfaq and several alike wait for the administration to take notice of the plight and assist them for future. "Since the village is prone to such natural hazards and we have witnessed cloudburst events several times in the past, we had appealed the administration to help us find a solution," Ashfaq added.

In this regard, Sheikh Zafarullah, the District Development Councillor (DDC) of Marwah, said, "Ababeel, an

organisation based in Doda that works towards providing emergency assistance and disaster relief, had come forward to serve the people of Honzar village. District administration should contribute actively in building capacities of such organisations to ensure our future is safe."

Those found in critical condition were taken to the district hospital on the third day as informed by the DDC. According to him, these people would have not suffered so much if they were aware of the mitigation, prevention and preparedness strategies of dealing with a cloudburst.

He further added that a week

before the cloudburst, hundreds of acres of land were destroyed due to flood in Naw Bachi village in Marwah block.

One of the ways for quick emergency assistance could be allotting one aircraft in each district by the administration during monsoon when such events have high probability of occurrence. "Even though the administration had sent aircraft to rescue people, it took time to take permissions that ultimately delayed the entire process. Allotting district specific aircraft for emergency assistance can make the evacuation quicker and effective," DDC suggested.

A village like Honzar, which is deprived of basic amenities, has a tough geography and faces extreme weather conditions, requires not only a development strategy but a strong disaster risk reduction and management approach. It is important to recognise the potential role of local community members in managing local disaster events. By providing them the technical knowledge, skills and medium to intervene during such disaster situations, the loss of lives can be reduced. This, of course, needs to be supported by strong road and health infrastructure.

—Charkha Features

Preserving moral ecology

Ethics and morality have become endangered, states RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI



We often hear about the news of a certain kind of species of an animal or bird being declared as endangered by the Ministries and governments across the world. As a result of which, worldwide campaigns are launched for creating awareness about the need to make action-plans for their protection and conservation.

But, surprisingly, never has adequate attention been paid to the fact that in the present disturbed moral ecology characterised by the environment of corruption, climate of crime, high spurts in mental pollution, the severe droughts in the minds of men which have become barren of love and sympathy and the in-roads made by pernicious elements, through the electronic media into the workplace and the home — the natural habitats of man — the ethically sound elite class and the morally strong middle class have become an endangered species.

The invasion of the audio-visual means of communication or entertainment, the primacy of the idiot-box and, of course, social media, have really endangered these species. The print-media, which is the promoter of popular culture, is also tilted towards agitations, sensations, strikes, social and economic storms, entertainment — good and bad — and 'hot news'. The educational content is thin and the stuff that should build up a moral climate or maintain ethical ecology is rare. So, their readers are often swayed by sensational news, group-pressures and pseudo-culture and thus form a vulnerable group. The readers are in constant danger of being victims of those predators who invade their minds by slanderous propaganda or who tempt them through various advertising tactics.

There is still a large section in the society who still believes in reading books or magazines in physical format rather than digital. As a result of this, the publishers come out with a variety of magazines/books every few days and do lots of publicity campaigns to grab more and more eyeballs. However, at the end of all this, the simple policy that rules the market is that 'one who entertains well will sell well', irrespective of whether they are educating or influencing the reader in a positive way. And we are all very much aware what kind of material is sold most on stalls and book-shops.

In short, this kind of reading material has almost extinguished people's appetite for ethical education. There is, thus, the need to take steps to whet the appetite of people for moral elements. There is also the need for the print and the electronic media to forge a meaningful alliance with people and institutions that can build ethical interpretations on news and views. There is the need for innovation and co-ordinated strategy for the protection of the spiritually less developed people and the intellectually unsafe and hapless people on whom all kinds of entertainment material is foisted.

We should not forget the fact that there was a time when India had pride of place in the comity of nations because of its moral and spiritual stature but now it is way behind. As things stand at present, people say that it is difficult to find business and ethics or legal and medical practise and morals going together. People firmly following moral norms in the face of heavy odds have now become a vanishing tribe. There is, hence, the need to have moral and spiritual centres dotting the entire landscape of the country so as to protect and promote the moral atmosphere. Remember, if we don't act now, it would be too late.



We often get so caught up in our daily lives that we forget to slow down and live in the present moment. Mindfulness can be as simple as observing our breath... it can be as effortless as taking a few moments to look around and notice trivial details about our surroundings. Mindfulness is also in eating slowly, in walking with full attention, it can also be experienced in doing only one thing at a time. So, you see, mindfulness is not something esoteric for which we need to give up our worldly life. Instead, it deserves to be an integral part of our modern lives, because it helps improve our productivity and quality of life.

Here are simple techniques in which we can build our mindfulness practise for better stress management, and good health:

❑Meditation

Find a spot in your house, preferably where there isn't much clutter to start your practise. You can even sit outdoors in nature, with little or no distraction. Take a few deep breaths and with each exhalation, gently relax your body. Now choose an object of meditation, such as your breath, a flower, a deity or anything that appeals to you. With each breath, practise maintaining your focus on your chosen object. It's natural for the mind to drift, and each time it does so, bring it back to your chosen object. You can spend up to 20-30 minutes in meditation at a time. The key is to keep it effortless and not try too hard to keep your attention. Regular practise can increase your concentration and it is also a powerful stress reliever.

❑Mindful walking

One can practise mindful walking anywhere and everywhere, be it in the garden, around the house, on the beach, or any place of your preference. Firstly, feel the ground beneath you and focus on each step. Be mindful of the grounding sensation your feet have while they move on the surface. Try to notice every sound around you, whether it's of the flowing wind, birds chirping or the trees swaying. Feel the breeze against your hair and skin, while being conscious of every sen-

Here and now

We do not need to give up wordly life to be mindful, says NAMITA PIPARAIYA suggesting ways to consciously incorporate it



sation. Gently breathe in and breathe out, and feel the fresh air. This can be a great start to the day or one can even practise this by just taking a break amidst their busy schedule.

❑Practise Yoga

Practising Yoga is an incredible activity to slow down your pace and take time to focus on your body movements and breathing. Adding Yoga into



your daily routine helps create a stronger connection between the mind and body. One can take a short 10-15 minutes break and do some light moving and stretching to improve their quality of life. When the goal is improving mindfulness, your practise should be slow with stretches held for a longer period with full breath awareness.

❑Pranayama

Choose any one pranayama practise and do it consistently — equal breathing and alternate nostril breathing are both very good techniques suitable for most people. Conscious and deep breathing benefits an individual both physically and mentally. This practise will keep you energised throughout the day and stimulate feel-good thoughts in your mind, helping you in calming stress and anxiety.

Mindfulness practises are extremely helpful in both maintaining and managing your physical and mental health. The simplest way is to turn oneself into a keen observer of the surroundings and the events around us. And then you can progress into activities like pranayama, Yoga and meditation.

(The author is the founder of Yoganama and a Yoga and Ayurveda lifestyle specialist.)

“The goal of life is to make your heartbeat match the beat of the universe, to match your nature with Nature.” —Joseph Campbell

ESTROGEN MAY PROTECT FROM ALZHEIMER'S

The drop in estrogen levels that occurs with menopause brings decline in the gray matter volumes (GMV) in key brain regions that are also affected in Alzheimer's disease. But a new study suggests that greater cumulative exposure to estrogen in life, for example from having had more children or from having taken menopause hormone therapy, may counter this brain-shrinking effect.

The findings, in *Neurology*, come from an analysis of personal histories, MRI scans and cognitive tests on 99 women in their late 40s to late 50s. Researchers estimate that nearly two thirds of those living with Alzheimer's in the United States are women.

"Our findings suggest that while the menopause transition may bring vulnerability for the female brain, other reproductive history events indicating greater estrogen exposure bring resilience instead," states the study's senior author, Dr Lisa Mosconi.

FACTORS TO HELP PREVENT DEMENTIA

Many people develop Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia as they get older. However, others remain sharp well into old age, even if their brains show underlying signs of neurodegeneration.

Among these cognitively resilient people, researchers have identified education level and amount of time spent on intellectually stimulating activities as factors that help prevent dementia. A new study by MIT researchers shows that this kind of enrichment appears to activate a gene family called MEF2, which controls a genetic program in the brain that promotes resistance to cognitive decline.

The researchers observed this link between MEF2 and cognitive resilience in both humans and mice. The findings suggest that enhancing the activity of MEF2 or its targets might protect against age-related dementia.

"Understanding this resilience mechanism could be helpful when we think about therapeutic interventions or prevention of cognitive decline," says Li-Huei Tsai, director of MIT's Picower Institute for Learning and Memory.

REPURPOSING CO2 CAN REDUCE EMISSIONS

While a very small percentage of the atmosphere, carbon dioxide plays a vital role in sustaining life on our planet. However, if this delicate balance is disrupted, excess carbon dioxide can pose a formidable threat to our environment and the living beings that reside within.

A team of researchers in the Artie McFerrin Department of Chemical Engineering at Texas A&M University recently published a comprehensive review article on how carbon dioxide can be isolated through reduction reactions and then transformed into value-added chemicals for fuels, thereby providing a path to repurpose excess carbon dioxide.

People are looking into innovative ways to mitigate global warming and minimise our impacts on the environment," said Denis Johnson, the first author on the study.

"Through scientific advancements, such as our own, we remain hopeful that one day we may be able to start reversing what has already been done," he added.



NEW APPROACH TO TREATING MENTAL ILLNESS

In a pilot human study, researchers from the University of Minnesota Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital show it is possible to improve specific human brain functions related to self-control and mental flexibility by merging artificial intelligence with targeted electrical brain stimulation.

Alik Widge, MD, PhD, and the senior author of the research published in *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, stated, "An example might include a person with depression who just can't get out of a 'stuck' negative thought. Because it is so central to mental illness, finding a way to improve it could be a powerful new way to treat those illnesses."

The findings come from a human study conducted among 12 patients undergoing brain surgery for epilepsy. The team developed algorithms, so that after stimulation, they could track patients' cognitive control abilities, both from their actions and directly from their brain activity.



SENSE OF SMELL - A RAPID WARNING SYSTEM

The ability to detect and react to the smell of a potential threat is a precondition of our and other mammals' survival. Using a novel technique, researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden have been able to study what happens in the brain when the central nervous system judges a smell to represent danger. The study, which is published in *PNAS*, indicates that negative smells associated with unpleasantness or unease are processed earlier than positive smells and trigger a physical avoidance response.

"The human avoidance response to unpleasant smells associated with danger has long been seen as a conscious cognitive process, but the study shows for the first time that it's unconscious and extremely rapid," says the first author Behzad Iravani, researcher at the department of Clinical Neuroscience, Karolinska Institutet.



India out as New Zealand clinch semi-final spot

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

India were sent packing from the T20 World Cup after a clinical New Zealand clinched a facile eight-wicket triumph over Afghanistan in their final Super 12 game to claim the last available semifinal spot here on Sunday.

India's slim hopes hinged on Afghanistan upstaging the Black Caps as that would have brought the Net Run Rate into equation and opened the doors for Virat Kohli's men, who only have themselves to blame for the ouster now.

The Kiwis were favourites to win on the day and they hardly put a foot wrong, chasing down a small target of 125 in just 18.1 overs to join England, Australia and Pakistan in the last-four stage.

Sunday's result renders India's final league engagement against Namibia inconsequential. The team was outplayed in its first two Super 12 matches by Pakistan and New Zealand, which proved to be its undoing.

The side did bounce back for wins over Afghanistan and Scotland but the damage done by the previous two defeats was far too much.

Kane Williamson's men, who won four of their five Super 12 matches, will be up against either England or Australia in the semifinals.

Openers Daryl Mitchell (17), caught behind by the Mohammad Shahzad off Mujeeb ur Rahman, and



Martin Guptill (28), who became Rashid

Khan's 400th wicket in T20 cricket, were the only New Zealand wickets to fall in the afternoon match.

Williamson (40 not out, 42 balls, 3 fours) looked unhurried during his knock and his half-century partnership for the third wicket with Devon Conway (36 not out) guided the team home.

They negotiated the spin threat posed by Rashid, Mujeeb and

Mohammed Nabi quite well to ensure that there was no drama.

Conway got over a tentative start and hit Nabi for two boundaries in the 14th over to speed up the chase after a brief lull.

Earlier, New Zealand pacers, led by Trent Boult (3/17), dished out a clinical performance to restrict Afghanistan to 124 for 8 in their final Super 12 match of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

Afghanistan, who needed to win to keep their semifinal hopes alive,

reached the total mainly due to the efforts of Najibullah Zadran (73 off 48 balls). Zadran stood out in a rather tepid display by the rest of his team-mates.

He struck six fours and three sixes during his brilliant innings.

The Kiwi pace trio of Boult, Tim Southee (2/24) and Adam Milne (1/17) did not give anything away in the initial overs as the Afghan batters struggled to get going and in trying to force the pace of their innings.

Ish Sodhi (1/13) and Jimmy

Neesham (1/24) were the other New Zealand wicket-takers. Neesham conceded only two runs from the final over of the Afghanistan innings. The left-handed Zadran rescued Afghanistan with a 59-run fifth wicket stand with captain Mohammed Nabi (14). The team was placed at 56 for 4 in 10 overs when the two got together and dug their heels in. However, there was very little support for Zadran from the other batters.

A flurry of wickets after the fall of Nabi, including that of Zadran, ensured that Afghanistan did not get to a mid-dling score. Boult sent back Zadran and Karim Janat (2) in the 19th over as the Kiwis took control of the match.

Afghanistan got off to a poor start, losing the openers inside the first four overs.

Shahzad (4) was the first to go in the third over when his uppercut off Milne flew to wicketkeeper Devon Conway, who leapt high to complete a good catch on the second attempt. The wily Boult struck the second blow, getting Hazratullah Zazai when the batter's attempted flick took a leading edge for an easy catch to Mitchell Santner, leaving Afghanistan at 12 for 2. Soon, it became 19 for 3 when Rahmanullah Gurbaz was leg-before to Tim Southee for 6. Zadran and Gulbadin Naib (15) staged a mini recovery for Afghanistan with a 37-run partnership for the fourth wicket during which the former came up with some good shots.

Scoreboard	
AFGHANISTAN (BATTING)	NEW ZEALAND (BOWLING)
Najibullah Zadran (73)	Trent Boult 4 (17, 3wkt)
Gulbadin Naib (15)	Tim Southee 4 (24, 2wkt)
Mohammad Nabi (14)	Ish Sodhi 2 (13, 1wkt)
Total 124 (8 wickets, 20 overs)	

NEW ZEALAND (BATTING)	AFGHANISTAN (BOWLING)
Kane Williamson (40)	Rashid Khan 4 (27, 1wkt)
Devon Conway (36)	Mujeeb Ur Rahman 4 (31, 1wkt)
Martin Guptill (28)	Gulbadin Naib 1.1 (9, 0wkt)
Total 125 (2wickets, 18.1 overs)	

Scoreboard	
PAKISTAN (BATTING)	SCOTLAND (BOWLING)
B.Azam (66)	C.Greaves 4 (43, 2wkt)
S.Malik (54)	H.Tahir 4 (24, 1wkt)
M. Hafeez (31)	S.Sharif 4 (41, 1wkt)
Total 189 (20 wickets, 20 overs)	
SCOTLAND (BATTING)	PAKISTAN (BOWLING)
Richie Berrington (54)	Shadab Khan 4 (14, 2wkt)
George Munsey (17)	Shaheen Afridi 4 (24, 1wkt)
Michael Leask (14)	Haris Rauf 4 (27, 1wkt)
Total 117 (6 wickets, 20 overs)	

points table			
Group A			
Team	Matches	NRR	Points
England	5	+2.464	8
Australia	5	+1.216	8
South Africa	5	+0.739	8
Sri Lanka	5	-0.269	4
West Indies	5	-1.641	2
Bangladesh	5	-2.383	0

Group B			
Team	Matches	NRR	Points
Pakistan	5	+1.583	10
New Zealand	5	+1.162	8
India	4	+1.619	4
Afghanistan	5	+1.053	4
Namibia	4	-1.851	2
Scotland	5	-3.543	0

Indian chief curator dies ahead of Afghan-NZ game

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

The Abu Dhabi cricket stadium's Indian chief curator, Mohan Singh, was found dead in his room on Sunday hours before the T20 World Cup game between Afghanistan and New Zealand here.

According to UAE Cricket sources, the 45-year-old, who hailed from Uttarakhand, was suffering from depression and was found hanging in his room, hours after inspecting the pitch for the clash that New Zealand won by eight wickets to enter the semifinals. Both Abu Dhabi Cricket and the International Cricket Council paid tributes to him but did not reveal the cause of death. He is survived by his wife and daughter who will be reaching Abu Dhabi soon.

Rashid Khan reaches 400 wickets in T20 cricket

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Afghanistan's premier leg-spinner Rashid Khan picked up his 400th wicket in competitive T20 cricket during the team's T20 World Cup match against New Zealand here on Sunday.

The 23-year-old spinner reached the milestone when he bowled New Zealand opener Martin Guptill with a wrong'un in the ninth over of the Kiwi innings, even as the batter

tried to go for a slog sweep at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium. Rashid achieved the feat in his 289th T20 match.

Only three other bowlers have crossed the 400-wicket mark in T20 cricket. Dwayne Bravo, the first to reach the feat in 364 matches, also became the first bowler to cross 500 T20 wickets. The West Indies all-rounder, who has just announced his international retirement from the format, has 553 wickets from 512 matches

Match 42 ICC T20 WORLD CUP 2021

Nov 8, 7:30 pm IST

India vs Namibia

Dubai International Stadium

ICC Rank 3

ICC Rank 15

Never played a T20 match against each other

KBK SportsGraphics

Malik sizzles in Pakistan's 72-run win

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Playing international cricket since the last century, when some of his current teammates were not even born, Shoaib Malik on Sunday showed them the way with an astonishing 18-ball 54 to set up Pakistan's 72-run mauling of Scotland in the T20 World Cup.

It was the tournament's joint fastest half-century alongside India opener K L Rahul's 18-ball 50, which also came against Scotland, as Pakistan stopped the



Scots at 117 for six after posting an imposing 189 for four.

As her Indian tennis player wife Sania Mirza

watched from the stands, Malik, 39, blasted six sixes during his whirlwind unbeaten knock, which overshadowed skipper

Babar Azam's fourth half-century of the tournament.

Batting first, Pakistan pummeled 129 runs in the back 10 after limping to 60 for two at the halfway stage.

With the ball, the in-form team did what was expected of them in their last Super 12 engagement to set up a semifinal date with Australia. Pakistan blazed their way into the last four with five wins from as many outings, underlining their credentials as one of the firm favourites.

Thanks to Malik's blitz, Pakistan scored 43 runs in

the last two overs, including 26 in the final six balls bowled by Chris Greaves.

Coincidentally, it was at this very venue that Malik made his One-day International debut in October 1999, against West Indies. His first Pakistan captain, Wasim Akram, retired from the game nearly two decades ago. Meanwhile Babar, who once again donned the role of the accumulator, became only the third batter to score four half-centuries in a T20 World Cup.

Absence of gap became a factor: Arun

PTI ■ DUBAI

A day before his last match as India's bowling coach, Bharat Arun did admit that both toss and bubble fatigue contributed to India's indifferent performance in the T20 World Cup, where they lost to Pakistan and New Zealand in Super 12 stage.

Asked if the absence of a gap between IPL and T20 World Cup became a factor, Arun responded in the positive. "Being on the road for six months is huge ask. Players haven't gone home and I think they had a short break after the last IPL got suspended.

"They have been in a bubble for six months and that takes a huge toll, so specific to your question, may be a short break between IPL and World Cup could have done a lot of good for these boys," Arun said on the eve of India's final group league game against Namibia.

However, he was pretty



annoyed that in a tournament of this stature, toss played such a crucial role, as India, while batting first, looked a different outfit compared to the opposition who were helped in shot-making because of the dew-laden surface. "Toss played a very, very vital role and I believe in these kind of matches, toss shouldn't be of any consequence," he said. "Here toss gives unfair advantage and there is a huge change in batting in the first innings and batting in the second innings. That shouldn't be the case in short format like this," he said.

Shastri-Kohli partnership eyes winning end

PTI ■ DUBAI

Outgoing head coach Ravi Shastri and skipper Virat Kohli, who will lead the country for one last time in the shortest format, would aim to finish India's underwhelming T20 World Cup campaign on a positive note with a victory over Namibia in the team's final Super 12 match here on Monday.

Around 6:30 pm, New Zealand hit the winning runs against Afghanistan much to the disappointment of the Indian fans, who were hoping against hope that a miracle will happen under the blazing afternoon sun at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

The mood in the Indian camp was evident when BCCI's official media whatsapp group had a message for the journalists "The optional training session in the evening has been can-



celled."

It was understandable dejection as for first time since the 2012 edition of this event, India had failed to make the knockout stage of an ICC event.

The Indian players, who kept an eye on the TV watching Afghanistan battle it out against the Black Caps,

knew by the halfway stage of the game that all of them would now have to take the flight back to their respective cities on Tuesday, a welcome break from the bio-bubble but not in the way they would have liked.

Against Namibia, they will surely win it big and skipper Kohli would do a

world of good if he allows the likes of Rahul Chahar get a game and give Ishan Kishan another go. The senior players would gain precious little against the David Wieses of the world save for beefing up their individual statistics.

Very rarely has an Indian team played such an inconsequential game at an ICC event since its last league game in the 1992 World Cup against South Africa after already being out of the race for the semi-finals.

It's not the first time that India are out of a global tournament before the last four stage but never has it been so frustrating where one could clearly read the writing on the wall. India lost two crucial tosses, batted awfully in slightly, if not very, testing conditions and then on a dew-laden surface bowled atrociously.

BARCELONA SQUANDERS LEAD IN 3-3 DRAW

AP ■ BARCELONA

Xavi Hernández had plenty to like and much more to lament about Barcelona's wild 3-3 draw at Celta Vigo, when his soon-to-be team squandered a three-goal halftime lead.

Playing its final match under caretaker coach Sergi Barjuan before Xavi takes over as its new full-time manager, Barcelona roared out to a 3-0 lead after playing one of its best halves of the season.

But injuries to 19-year-olds Ansu Fati and Nico González, who were having inspired performances, and the resurgence of its defensive doubts helped lagoon Aspas lead Celta back with his second-half brace. Aspas capped the comeback with a second goal on one of the final kicks of the match when he scored from long range while Barcelona was hunkered down in its box



begging for the final whistle.

"We forgot we had to play the second half," said a dejected Frenkie de Jong, who provided Barcelona's only spark after halftime with a shot that hit the crossbar with the score at 3-2. "We need to show more character. This game was important to move up a bit in the table. It is a very hard blow."

Barcelona remained in ninth place in the Spanish league and with its horizon of success narrowing to simply securing a top-four finish to ensure its spot in the Champions League.

Bhaskar Bhatt set to be women's head coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Long-serving national youth coach Bhaskar Bhatt is all but certain to take over as the senior women's head coach before the world championships, for which Olympic bronze-medallist

Lovlina Borgohain will remain a direct selection despite the request for a trial by national gold-winner Arundhati Choudhary. In a conversation with PTI, Boxing Federation of India (BFI) Secretary General Hemanta Kalita said the decision to give Borgohain a direct entry in the 70kg category will not be revisited despite Choudhary's open letter, seeking a trial citing "the concept of fair play and need to prove oneself each time."

"There won't be any trials for the women's world championship

Harika draws with Paehtz, in joint third place

PTI ■ RIGA (LATVIA)

Indian chess ace Dronavalli Harika could not break through the defences of lower-rated German Elisabeth Paehtz in the 10th round to slip to joint third with 6.5 points in the FIDE Women's Grand Swiss chess tournament here.

Harika was up against Paahitz on the second board in a Alapin Variation of the Sicilian. The Indian GM got a promising endgame but missed her chance to put the German to a serious test.

After Harika opted for natural exchange of the bishops, the game quickly transitioned to a drawn rook ending. The two agreed to split a point on move 31 and both are on 6.5 points after the 10th and penultimate round.

China's Lei Tingjie confirmed her first place in the inaugural Women's Grand

Swiss following a draw with the top-seed Mariya Muzychuk. She is followed by compatriot Zhu Jiner in second place with seven points and five players with 6.5/10 are tied for third place.

Among the other Indian women, Vantika Agrawal and Divya Deshmukh scored wins over Nataliya Buksa and Jesse Nikki February, respectively.

Vantika is on six points, while Divya took her tally to four points after the 10th round.

Meanwhile, R Vaishali and Padmini Rout settled for draws against Antoaneta Stefanova and Elina Danielian respectively. In the Open event, young GM D Gukesh and the veteran Surya Shekhar Ganguly were the only winners in the round. K Sasikiran, who was among the leading pack for a few rounds.

Manika-Archana win women's doubles title in Slovenia

PTI ■ LASKO (SLOVENIA)

India's Manika Batra and Archana Kamath tasted their first major success as a pair by winning the women's doubles title at the WTT Contender Lasko here on Sunday.

The world number 36 pairing beat the 23rd-ranked combine of Melanie Diaz and Adriana Diaz from Puerto Rico 11-3, 11-8, 12-10. The India duo saved four game points in third set to seal the match.

Manika and Archana had to dig deep to beat China's Liu Weishan and Wang Yidi in the semifinals on Saturday.

"I am very happy to have won this title...It was fun playing throughout as I always enjoy playing doubles with Manika Di. She is playing really well and has a very strong presence on the table which allows me to play freely,"



Archana told PTI. In the women's singles,

Manika did well to reach the semifinals.