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LOVE TO ENTERTAIN: GUNAJI
10 VIVACITY

Death rains on Kerala, toll mounts to 26

Military, NDRF out; PM assures CM of all help

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The toll taken by heavy rain, flooding, and landslides rose to 26 in Kerala on Sunday even as hundreds of personnel from the Army, Navy, the Indian Air Force (IAF), the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the local administration were trying to save lives and ferry trapped people to safety.

The State Revenue Minister K Rajan said the rescue workers have recovered 15 bodies from the debris and slush of the landslides that had hit various places in Idukki and Kottayam districts on Saturday.

"The rescue workers have recovered 15 bodies till now. This includes 12 bodies from Koottickal in Kottayam, one body from Peerumedu, and two which were recovered yesterday from Kanjar in Idukki district," Rajan told *PTI*.

Idukki District Collector Sheeba George said three bodies were recovered from Kokkayar in Idukki district on Sunday, a hilly region that was heavily hit by Saturday's devastating landslides.

Fishermen fishing from the overflowing Kumari dam following heavy rain in Kanyakumari district on Sunday PTI

"The search is on for five missing people," she said. Officials said the bodies of three children buried under slush were recovered after intense rescue efforts. The children, aged eight, seven and four, were found holding on to each other, officials said.

While the Army, Navy and the IAF have stepped in to help the civil administration, the NDRF has decided to deploy 11 teams to carry out rescue operations.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Pinarayi Vijayan and offered all possible help from the Centre to tackle the devastation.

"Spoke to Kerala CM Shri @vijayanpinarayi and discussed the situation in the wake of heavy rains and landslides in Kerala. Authorities are working on the ground to assist the injured and affected," Modi tweeted. "I pray for everyone's safety and well-being," he said.

Expressing his condolence to the bereaved families, he said, "It is saddening that some people have lost their lives due to heavy rains and landslides in Kerala. Condolences to the

India to host NSAs' meet on Af situation

New Delhi so far reluctant to extend invitation to Taliban

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As a major stakeholder in ensuring peace in Afghanistan, India is likely to host next month a meeting of the National Security Advisers (NSA) of the countries in the neighbourhood including Pakistan. However, New Delhi is so far reluctant to extend the invitation to Taliban.

The meeting is likely to be held in the second week of November here in person between the NSAs of countries, including Uzbekistan, Pakistan China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Incidentally, Russia has invited India to take part in dialogue in Moscow where representatives of the Taliban will also be present. India has accepted the invitation for the talks on October 20. A Joint Secretary level officer of the Indian Government may be present in the meeting. This will be for the second time that India will meet the Taliban on an international platform.

The first official contact between New Delhi and the Taliban was on August 31 when the Ambassador of India to Qatar, Deepak Mittal, met

Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, the head of Taliban's political office in Doha. The meeting took place at the Indian Embassy in Doha at the request of the Taliban.

Sources said here on Sunday India has invited Pakistan NSA Moeed Yusuf for the proposed meeting of the NSAs. However, Islamabad is yet to confirm its participation. Also, Pakistan has all along insisted that talks on Afghanistan must have the presence of the Taliban.

Sources said the meeting between the NSAs was in the pipeline even before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. The corona pandemic delayed the crucial meet regarding that nation.

Confirming the Indian participation in the forthcoming talks in Moscow, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said two days back, "We have received an invitation for the Moscow format meeting on Afghanistan on October 20. We will be participating in it."

Last week, Russian President Vladimir Putin's special representative on Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, said Moscow had invited representatives of the Taliban to international talks on Afghanistan on October 20.

After Kabul's fall in August, India raised questions on the lack of inclusivity in the new Taliban regime, rights of minorities, women and children, and also voiced concern on terrorism emanating from Afghanistan.

CAPSULE

SINGHU LYNCHING: 3 SENT TO POLICE REMAND

Chandigarh: Three people allegedly involved in the lynching of a labourer at the farmers' protest site at Singhu border were remanded to six days in police custody as the Haryana Police set up two Special Investigation Teams to probe the incident.

17 MISSIONARIES KIDNAPPED IN HAITI

San Juan (US): A group of 17 US missionaries, including children,were kidnapped by a gang in Haiti on Saturday, according to a voice message sent to various religious missions by an organisation.

JAISHANKAR IN ISRAEL, TO HOLD HIGH-LEVEL TALKS

Tel Aviv: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said that he is looking forward to a "great visit" as he arrived here on a five-day official trip during which he will hold talks with the country's top leadership to mutually prepare a roadmap for further enriching the strategic ties.

BODY OF SECOND PILOT FOUND AFTER 75 DAYS

Jammu: The body of the second pilot of an Army helicopter that crashed into the Ranjit Sagar Dam lake has been recovered after a gap of 75 days. According to a Jammu -based Defence PRO, Lt-Col Devender Anand, "persistent efforts by Indian Army and Navy for 75 days which were going on day and night to recover the body of Capt Jayant Joshi has finally succeeded and body has been recovered from the lake bed using hi-tech equipment".

MeT red alert for heavy rain; Badrinath yatra halted

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Badrinath yatra, one of the famous Char Dham yatras, has been halted at Pandukeswar while the Uttarakhand Government on Sunday urged all devotees undertaking Char Dham yatra to postpone it by a day or two due to incessant rainfall and drop in temperature as the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for heavy to very heavy rains in the State for the next three days.

Keeping in view of heavy rainfall, the State Government has decided to close the State on Monday while there will be a ban on trekking, mountaineering, and camping activities in the high altitude areas of the State till Tuesday as a precautionary measure. Higher reaches of Kedarnath also received snowfall after incessant rainfall on Sunday.

The IMD has issued a red alert for heavy to very heavy rains in all the 13 districts of Uttarakhand for October 17, 18 and 19 and advised people not to move anywhere for at least two days.

'Final call on kids' vaccination for Covid on scientific rationale'

Says task force chief after need for vaccinating kids questioned

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government will take a final decision on vaccinating children and adolescents against coronavirus on the basis of overall scientific rationale as well as the supply situation of vaccines available for those below 18 years, Covid Task Force head Dr VK Paul said on Sunday. His comments came after a few experts said that there was no need to vaccinate healthy kids.

Dr Paul also cautioned that even though infections are coming down and the second wave is subsiding, it will not be fair now to say that the worst is over since many countries have seen more than two waves.

Covid Task Force head Dr VK Paul

Currently, three vaccines — Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V — being administered in the country are only for those above 18 years of age. All of them are two-dose vaccines.

Zydus Cadila's indigenously developed needle-free Covid-19 vaccine ZyCoV-D is set to become the first vaccine that will be available in India for those in the age group of 12-18 years. It has received Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA).

Sidhu writes to Sonia, presses 13-point agenda

Says Punjab's last chance for resurrection; meets Channi

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

A day after Congress chief Sonia Gandhi suggested the party leaders in Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting to not use the media route to reach her, cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu on Sunday asked for an audience with her to press for 13-point agenda while emphasising that this was "Punjab's last chance for resurrection and redemption".

In another important development, Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Sunday evening held a meeting with Navjot Sidhu, who has been upset over several key appointments in the State Government. The meeting came days after Sidhu and Channi had separate meetings with the party high command, including Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi.

It has been learnt that Sidhu has been asked by the party high command to meet Channi to take a call on the Congress campaign in the State. Among other issues, the two leaders were to discuss several key issues, besides finalising a company that would carry out the party's campaign in the state.

The All India Congress Committee's observer Harish Chaudhary, and Cabinet Minister and Punjab Congress general secretary Pargat Singh were also present in the meeting. Till the filing of the report, the meeting was underway.

Earlier in the day, Sidhu, shared his October 15 letter to Sonia on Twitter, highlighting issues the State Government "must deliver upon". He sought a meeting with her to present his "Punjab Model", the 13-point agenda, which can be included in the 2022 poll manifesto.

The letter assumes significance as it came days after Sidhu had a meeting with Congress' national vice-president Rahul Gandhi and other senior party leaders in New Delhi, and on the day he met Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi at Chandigarh late in the evening.

It also assumes significance as ambiguity prevails over Sidhu's resignation on September 28 over the key appointments in the Channi-led State Government, including that of State Advocate-General and the State police chief. While the State party affairs general-secretary in-charge Harish Rawat has maintained that the high command received no resignation, Sidhu went public to declare his resignation.

Chhattisgarh to have Tea-Coffee Board

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel announced the formation of a 'Chhattisgarh Tea Coffee Board' on Sunday.

The Agriculture Minister will be the Chairman while the Vice Chairman will be the Industries Minister, he said.

The Board is being constituted with the aim of providing maximum benefits to the local farmers and workers engaged in processing and promoting tea-coffee cultivation in the state, the Chief Minister was quoted as saying in an official communication.

He said that in the next three years, tea and coffee will be cultivated in at least 10,000 acres of land.

At present tea is cultivated and processed in Jashpur district in the northern part of Chhattisgarh. The coffee is grown in Bastar district.

INSTITUTIONS OF NATIONAL REPUTE WILL PROVIDE TECHNICAL GUIDANCE AND EXPERTS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR WILL HELP OUT

Institutions of national repute will provide technical guidance and experts from the private sector will help out.

Petrol, diesel cost 30% more than ATF as price hiked again

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol and diesel prices on Sunday were hiked again by 35 paise a litre and the auto fuels now cost a third more than the rate at which aviation turbine fuel (ATF) is sold to airlines.

The fourth straight day of 35 paise per litre hike sent petrol and diesel rates to record highs across the country. The price of petrol in Delhi rose to its highest-ever level of ₹105.84 a litre and ₹111.77 per litre in Mumbai, according to a price notification of State-owned fuel retailers. In Mumbai, diesel now comes for ₹102.52 a litre; while in Delhi, it costs ₹94.57.

With this rise, petrol is now at ₹100-a-litre mark or more in all State capitals while diesel has touched the 100-mark in over a

dozen States. Diesel crossed the ₹100-a-litre mark in Bengaluru, Daman and Silvassa.

Petrol used in two-wheelers and cars now costs 33 per cent more than the price at which ATF is sold to airlines. ATF in Delhi costs ₹79,020.16 per kilolitre or ₹79 per litre. The costliest fuel is in the border town of Ganganagar in Rajasthan where petrol comes for ₹117.86 a litre and diesel for ₹105.95.

2 labourers shot dead by ultras in Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Two more non-local labourers from Bihar were shot dead by terrorists near Wanpoh area of South Kashmir's Kulgam district late on Sunday evening. Another critically-injured labourer was rushed to the nearby hospital in a pool of blood and was undergoing treatment at a local hospital.

This is the third-consecutive attack on labourers and street vendors since October 5 in Kashmir Valley.

In a tweet Kashmir Zone Police said, "Terrorists fired indiscriminately upon non-local labourers at Wanpoh area of Kulgam. In this terror incident, two non-locals were killed and one was injured. Police and security forces have cordoned off the area."

Official sources said that the terrorists fired indiscriminately on Raja Reshi Dev and Jogindar Reshi Dev, both from Bihar — leaving them dead on the spot while wounding one another person. The injured man was shifted to GMC Anantnag. The injured has been identified as Chun Chun Reshi Das son of Teju Das of Bihar.

Reacting to the attack, Srinagar Mayor Junaid Azim Mattoo tweeted, "In the strongest of terms condemn yet another barbaric terror attack in Kulgam resulting in the death of two non-local workers. Madness! Senseless and barbaric! My heart goes out to the families of the two deceased and I pray for the recovery of the third injured victim."

It's 'All About Alcohol' in India's first liquor museum in North Goa

ANI ■ PANAJI

India's first museum dedicated to alcohol has opened its doors to "spirited" enthusiasts in Goa. The museum "All About Alcohol", set up by local businessman Nandan Kudchadkar, is in North Goa's Candolim village.

The museum houses hundreds of artefacts linked to feni, including large, traditional glass vats in which the local cashew-based alcohol used to be stored centuries ago.

The idea behind the museum was to make the world aware of Goa's rich heritage, especially the story of feni - the strong local drink, Kudchadkar, who is a collector of antiques, said.

"When I thought of creating a concept like this, the first thought that came to my mind was whether there is an alcohol museum in the world. There is absolutely no place where you can see the kind of stuff pertaining to alcohol anywhere in the world. If you go to Scotland, they are very happy about their waters, about their drinks, etc. Similarly, in Russia, the people feel happy to showcase the drinks they have," he said.

"When we come to India, we project alcohol differently. Following my instincts, I decided to set up India's first museum dedicated to alcohol," he said.

"One of our prominent drinks is Kaju Feni and it has been put on display here. This drink is fermented naturally. For Goans, the consumption of alcohol was a symbol of hospitality," Armando Duarte, CEO, Alcohol Museum said.

"The amount of information preserved here is amazing. I am dazed and awestruck with the place. The amount of information, they have kept here for visitors to see is super amazing," a tourist said.

the pioneer
RAIPUR | MONDAY | OCTOBER 18, 2021

Punjab CM launches 'Mera Ghar Mere Naam' scheme

TO CONFER PROPRIETARY RIGHTS ON PEOPLE LIVING WITHIN 'LAL LAKIR'

PNS ■ DINANAGAR (GURDASPUR)

In a major reprieve for millions of families, especially from weaker and underprivileged sections of society, Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Sunday launched "Mera Ghar Mere Naam" scheme to confer proprietary rights on the people living in the houses within the 'Lal Lakir' of villages and the cities.

Channi, addressing the gathering during State-level function, envisioned that the scheme will give much-needed succour to all the people, especially that of needy and underprivileged strata. "Earlier, this scheme was launched only for the residents of villages, but now it is being extended to the eligible residents of the cities within the 'Lal Lakir'," said Channi, who was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and Revenue Minister Aruna Chaudhary.

He said the Revenue Department has been mandated to undertake drone survey of such residential properties, both in rural and urban areas, for digital mapping.

The Chief Minister said subsequently, all the eligible residents, after proper identification or verification, will be given the property cards (sanads) to confer proprietary rights upon them in a time bound manner. Prior to this, the beneficiaries will be given a time of 15 days to file their objections, and in case no reply is received from them, the property card will be issued which will serve the purpose of registry against which they can avail loans from the banks or even sell their properties thus enhancing its monetary value.

- The scheme will give much-needed succour to all the people, especially that of needy and underprivileged strata
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- Anyone, regardless of caste, creed, and religion will get the benefit of the Government's waiver scheme. Out of 72 lakh consumers, nearly 52 lakh across the State will be benefited from it

The Chief Minister added another path breaking scheme, Basera, is providing relief to people residing in slum areas outside the Lal Lakir by giving ownership rights to them.

"By coming Deepawali, the State Government will ensure proprietary rights to people under this scheme," he said.

The people residing in the houses in old localities (mohallas) since long time, generation after generation, will also be covered under the scheme, he added.

He elaborated, "All the power connections, which have been disconnected in the State due to non-payment of bills, will be reconnected by Deepawali. Anyone, regardless of caste, creed, and religion will get the benefit of the Government's waiver scheme. Out of 72 lakh consumers, nearly 52 lakh across the State will be benefited from it."

The CM said though he has very little time, he is working overtime to ensure that people are benefited from the State Government's development-oriented schemes.

'MAIN PRIORITY AS CM IS TO RESTORE CONG WORKERS' HONOUR AND DIGNITY'

Striking an emotional chord with Congress workers, the CM said a new era of Congress workers and elected representative's rule has been ushered in the State. "As the Chief Minister, my major thrust will be to restore the honour and dignity of Congress workers. Every Congress worker is now the Chief Minister of Punjab as I have decentralised all the powers in State," he said.

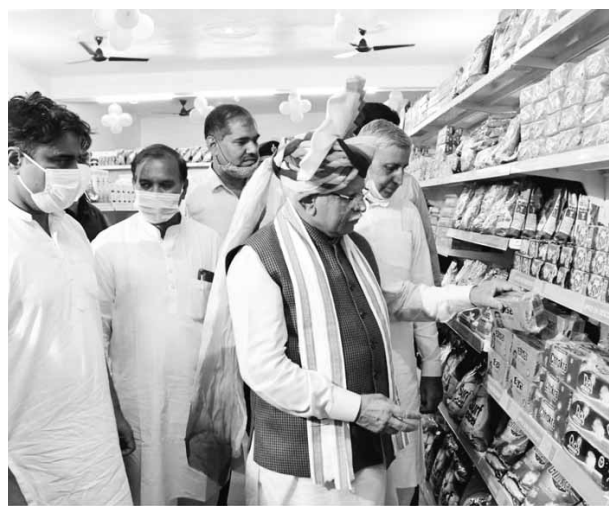
PUNJAB POLICE FULLY CAPABLE OF FOILING ANY CROSS BORDER TERRORISM ATTEMPT

Asserting border residents are country's brave-heart patriots, Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa said that by enhancing BSF's jurisdiction, the Centre is posing serious question mark over their patriotism and integrity which cannot be tolerated.

Randhawa said the Punjab Police is fully capable of foiling any attempt aimed at destabilising State through cross border terrorism or drug trade. At same time, he also lambasted the Modi Government for curtailing the Border Area Development fund started by Manmohan Singh Government thereby jeopardising the development of border areas.

Haryana CM inaugurates 71 Har-Hith stores across State

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH



Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday inaugurated as many as 71 Har-Hith stores across the State and announced that the State Government aims to open 5,000 more such stores.

"550 products of 60 companies manufacturing domestic products have been made available at these stores," the Chief Minister said after inaugurating a Har-Hith store in Farrukhnagar town in Gurugram district. He also became the first customer of that store as he bought the goods from there.

Khattar said the State Government has set a target of providing employment to a member of every family of the State by the year 2025 and to achieve this goal no stone would be left unturned for creating new dimensions of self-employment.

He said Har-Hith stores have been inaugurated simultaneously at 71 places in the State. While on the one hand youth are getting employment opportunities from these stores, on the other people will get pure, certified and quality goods at affordable rates near their homes, he said.

The Chief Minister said that such a store would be opened in an area having a population of 3,000 in rural areas and 10,000 in urban areas. People will get direct and indirect benefits from these stores. Apart from MSMEs, small industrial units and cooperative sector units, quality products prepared by the Self Help Group of women will be made available at these stores at a price lower than that in the market, he added.

Khattar added all the goods will be sold through computerised system. The local markets in rural areas are almost closed and now people have to go to the city to get the daily need items. With the opening of these stores, people will get good quality goods in the village itself.

He said after this, Vita booths would also be opened across Haryana.

The CM also informed that the account of every family has been prepared through Parivar Pehchan Patra. On the same basis, schemes have been started for the families by identifying them.

He also said having a means of employment gives satisfaction to a person and his energy is channelised n the right direction. To make the youth of the state skilled, the government has opened the country's first skill development university in Dudhola village of Palwal district in Haryana, he said.

Khattar also said the land under cultivation has become small and apart from doing animal husbandry, fisheries etc. farmers should adopt diversification of crops and should grow mushrooms or vegetables etc. instead of traditional crops, to increase their income.

The standards of below poverty line (BPL) families have been changed. Now any family, whose annual income from all sources is up to Rs 1.80 lakh, will also come under the purview of BPL, whereas earlier the income limit was Rs 1.20 lakh per annum, he added.

3 accused in Singhu border lynching sent to 6-day police custody

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Three accused allegedly involved in the Singhu border lynching case were on Sunday remanded to six days in police custody after being produced before a local court in Sonipat district.

The Haryana Police also set up special investigation teams (SIT) to probe the murder case. Narain Singh, a member of the Sikhs' Nihang order, was arrested on Saturday while two more Nihangs, Govind Preet Singh and Bhagwant Singh from Fatehgarh Sahib had surrendered on Friday before the Sonipat Police in connection with the lynching case.

The three accused were produced before a court in Sonipat which remanded them to six days in police custody. The police had sought remand of the accused on the ground that they have to reconstruct the crime scene, recover weapons and clothes of the accused, besides interrogating them.

Another accused in the case, identified as Sarabjitt Singh, who was nabbed by police from Sonipat's Kundli on Friday, has already been sent to seven-day police custody by court.

The body of deceased Lakhbir Singh was found on Friday tied to a barricade at the Singhu border with a hand chopped off and multiple wounds caused by sharp-edged weapons. Lakhbir, a labourer from Chima Khurd village in Punjab's Tarn Taran district was allegedly killed by a group of Nihangs for desecrating a Sikh holy book.

The mortal remains of the victim were cremated at his native village in Tarn Taran district amid tight security in the presence of his family members on Saturday evening.

A group of Nihangs address the mediapersons

Meanwhile, a special investigation team headed by IPS officer Mayank Gupta, who is the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Kharkhoda, Sonipat, will investigate the videos of the incident which were circulating on social media while another SIT led by Deputy Superintendent of Police, Sonipat, Virender Singh will carry out the overall probe into the case.

After the murder, few videos from the farmers' protest site at Singhu border had gone viral on social media. In a video clip, the Nihangs were seen standing near a body and were heard in the clip saying the man has been punished for desecrating a holy book of the Sikhs. The Nihangs are a Sikh order, distinguished by their blue robes and often seen carrying spears.

The lynching case has sparked outrage across the nation and also triggered calls for action to clear the farmers' protest sites on Delhi's borders where farmers have been camping since last November demanding scrapping of the three central farm laws.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha had on Friday distanced itself from the incident and said "both the parties to the incident", the Nihang group and the victim, have no relation with the Morcha.

AAP sends list of transport mafia to Punjab Minister, asks why no action

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Sharing a list of transport mafia in a letter to Punjab Transport Minister Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday asked him why no action was taken against 5,000 permits of private buses which have been increased five times.

Sending proofs through a letter to Warring that how the transport mafia of political leaders looted Punjab's exchequer during the rule of Akali and the Congress Government and how it was emptied, AAP's Punjab spokesperson and RTI activist advocate Dinesh Chadha said the bus permits issued by the Transport Department specify the limits of permits for government buses and private buses.

"For example, in 1990, the quota for public and private permits on state highways was 50:50 percent. But since then, with the connivance of the Akali and the Congress government, the transport policy had been violated to issue permits to politicians beyond the private quota," he said, adding to abolish the Government quota indirectly, the permits of private buses were increased five times and one permit was increased 10 times.

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- AAP leader also pointed out that the High Court also made it clear in its December 2012 judgment that these illegal increases in permits to benefit private buses are bound to eliminate Government buses

Chadha, along with the letter, sent the list of bus permits of Orbit and New Deep Transport as evidence and informed the Minister that Orbit's 32 kms route from Muktsar to Malout has been extended six times to 147 kms till Moga, the 56 kms route from Ferozepur to Muktsar has been extended 10 times to 147 kms, the 190 kms route from Raman to Ludhiana has been extended to 277 kms till Jhugian Garhshankar, among others.

Similarly, Jaito-Gidderbaha 100 kms route of New Deep Bus has been made 328 kms and Bathinda-Mehma 138 kms route has been made 237 kms. "These are just a few examples of looting of public exchequer by making about 5,000 such illegal additions," he added.

AAP leader also pointed out that the High Court also made it clear in its December 2012 judgment that these illegal increases in permits to benefit private buses are bound to eliminate Government buses. "However, to date, no action has been taken on these nearly 5,000 illegal permits and no action has been taken against the officials and leaders responsible for these permits," he added

The party demanded that the Transport Minister should immediately revoke thousands of such permits and file cases against the officials and politicians responsible for this.

Channi: Govt committed to ensure holistic development in State

PNS ■ HOSHIARPUR

Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Sunday asserted that despite less time, all out efforts would be made to realise the people's dreams by fulfilling the remaining promises made to them.

Reiterating his Government's firm commitment to ensure holistic development in the State and welfare of all sections of the society, Channi said judicious utilisation of time would be done to achieve the goal for betterment of the State.

Channi, in his address during a function held at local MLA and former Minister Sunder Sham Arora's residence, said the State Government was working round the clock to ensure overall development and timely completion of ongoing infrastructure works as urban development is a crucial component of holistic growth.

All basic amenities in urban areas will be provided to the people in the urban areas keeping in view their future needs, said Channi, adding that there was no dearth of funds for the same.

Announcing Rs 10 crore for Hoshiarpur to be given within next few days, the Chief Minister said that his Government was already making best use of available time so as to touch new heights of success and glory in the State as per people's aspirations.

Pointing out, the Chief Minister also announced that Hoshiarpur would get state-of-the-art Biodiversity and Sports Park at a cost of Rs five crore to further develop flora and fauna in the region.

"Foundation stone of this Park and the upcoming Medical College would be laid shortly. However, the classes of this Medical College would commence from the next academic session. All the necessary directions have already been issued to expedite the process for tender floating so that its construction could be started at the earliest," he added.

Extending a healing touch to the children, who lost their parents during COVID-19 pandemic, Channi handed over packets containing daily use items and some cash to them.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister also went to the residences of MLA Arun Dogra and MLA Pawan Kumar Adia, where he met the families of both MLAs and interacted with them. Later on, the Chief Minister also visited MLA Dr Raj Kumar Chabbewal's residence.

The Chief Minister, accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and Revenue Minister Aruna Chaudhary, also paid obeisance at Swami Jagat Giri Ashram in Pathankot. Channi, who attended the Satsang while sitting amongst the people, announced a grant of Rs 51 lakh for Ashram, road widening project that leads to the Ashram, and also laid the foundation stone of a hostel in MKM Public School at Ashram premises.

"Special focus is being laid to strengthen the education and health sectors for ensuring affordable quality healthcare and education to the weaker sections of the society so that young minds from the unprivileged part of the society can contribute towards society's development," he said.

Commuters wade through amid heavy rain in Gurugram, Haryana, on Sunday PTI

WARRING'S SURPRISE VISIT AT AMRITSAR ISBT

Dept impounds 20 unauthorised pvt passenger buses

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Continuing his crackdown against the illegal buses and improving the state's transport system, Punjab Transport Minister Amarinder Singh Raja Warring on Sunday visited Shaheed Madan Lal Dhingra ISBT, Amritsar, and City Center, where most of the passenger buses were parked illegally. On Warring's instructions, officers of the Department impounded 20 unauthorised buses of private operators, including one bus of the Orbit Aviation, due to incomplete documents, in and around the ISBT premises.

Warring, addressing the mediapersons, made it clear that the "government tax evasion, plying of illegal buses, and bus mafia will not be tolerated. Every bus, which would ply on the roads of the State, would have to pay tax".

He informed that PUNBUS and PEPSU are earning profit of Rs 40 lakhs per day after the strictness against illegal and unauthorized private buses and bus mafia, and "I am trying to increase daily income of the department by Rs one crore".

Warring also directed the officers of the Transport Department that besides inspecting the taxes of buses, trucks and other vehicles, they should also ascertain current conditions, including the age, pollution level, and safety of the vehicle for ensuring that these vehicles do not endanger anyone's life on the roads.

The Transport Minister also reprimanded the officials for lack of cleanliness at the bus stand and cleaned it himself at many places, saying that in public places like bus stands, cleaning of buses is as important as cleaning of one's own house, and warned authorities that "such negligence would not be tolerated in future".

Interacting with the passengers at the bus stand and in buses, Warring informed that as many as 842 new buses would be added in the fleet of Government buses so as to provide better facilities to the passengers of the State.

SC STUDENTS' SCHOLARSHIP SCAM

AAP accuses Punjab Govt of trying to save former Min Dharamsot

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Accusing the Punjab Government of trying to save former Minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot who had allegedly embezzled crores of rupees in SC students' post-matric scholarships, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday said that the action taken by Social Welfare Minister Raj Kumar Verka to register a case against some officials was just an attempt to deceive the people.

The party asked Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi led State Government when and what action would be taken against the former Minister Dharamsot, "responsible for ruining the lives of lakhs of SC students in Punjab".

"Like the Captain Government of the Congress party, the Channi Government is defending former Minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot, who was usurping the scholarships of SC students. The Congress party has certainly changed the Ali Baba of its government, but there has been no change in the intention and policy of the Congress government to save the scammers," said AAP's Punjab senior leader and the Leader of Opposition in Vidhan Sabha Harpal Singh Cheema.

Instead, they are trying to shield former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh's partner Sadhu Singh Dharamsot from legal action by pretending to take action against some officials

— HARPAL SINGH CHEEMA

Cheema said after the formation of the new Cabinet, the new Minister Raj Kumar Verka had promised to immediately investigate the scholarship scam and take strict action against the culprits, but now even the Minister has backed down from taking action. "Instead, they are trying to shield former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh's partner Sadhu Singh Dharamsot from legal action by pretending to take action against some officials," he added.

The AAP has been demanding action against former Minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot and other officials involved in scholarship scam for a long time and the party volunteers struggled for this from the streets to the Assembly, said Cheema adding that the Channi Government was taking action against some officials in the name of pretence but was avoiding taking legal action against Dharamsot, who was the minister of the department.

the pioneer

RAIPUR | MONDAY | OCTOBER 18, 2021

Four newborns die at GMCH

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Health Minister T.S. Singh Deo on Sunday rushed to Ambikapur following the death of four newborns at a government medical college and hospital in Surguja district.

The deaths took place at the Government Medical College Hospital (GMCH), Ambikapur, located around 300 km away from Raipur.

Hospital authorities had told the media that there was nothing "unusual" about the deaths as the babies had birth-related complications and were underweight.

"One baby died on October 15 late night while three others died the next morning. All four neonates, aged 4 to 28 days, were referred from other hospitals," an official of GMCH said.

"Two of the babies were suffering from birth asphyxia while others were underweight," the official said.

According to hospital sources, the parents of one of the deceased babies accused the hospital staff of negligence. The other parents then joined them.

A statement from the Health Minister said he has cancelled a visit to Delhi because of the deaths.

Chhattisgarh Urban Administration and Development Minister Shivkumar Dahariya, who is in-charge Minister of Surguja district, also rushed to Ambikapur after a directive from the Chief Minister.

Muria Durbar is example of democratic traditions: Baghel

STAFF REPORTER
JAGDALPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday said that Muria Durbar has a splendid history and it is a beautiful example of democratic traditions.

He was attending the Muria Durbar held in Sirhasar as part of the 75-day-long Bastar Dussehra festival.

The Chief Minister announced the recruitment of a clerk and a peon for the Temple Committee as well as renaming the Government Engineering College located here after Veer Jhada Sirha.

He said at Muria Durbar, kings, subjects, officers and employees all sit together and discuss the problems of the village and society.

He said Bastar Dussehra has many specialties due to which people from all over the country and abroad view it every year.

The Chief Minister said that Bastar is the only place where besides worshiping the deities, people eat, sing and dance with their Gods.

'Post office schemes are for safer returns'

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

People should invest in post office liquid asset investment which is much safer with 7 percent returns. People can also join Public Provident Fund and senior citizen scheme gives better returns, Postmaster General (Chhattisgarh) Ramchandra Jayabhaye said on Sunday.

He was speaking to the media to commemorate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' as part of the National Post Week 2021 from October 11 to 17.

He said the post office is a safer option of investment though some schemes fetch lower returns. Now, the services of updating and application filing for Aadhar card and for Permanent Account Number (PAN) for income tax return are available.

The Chhattisgarh government has signed a MoU with the Postal Department for delivery of license and Vehicle Registration documents, he added.

He accepted that frauds take place in the postal department too. But in Chhattisgarh this comes to 100 cases, a small figure. FIRs are registered and the consumer is duly given relief after due process.

CM embraces tribal culture during Bastar tour

STAFF REPORTER
JAGDALPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday wholeheartedly embraced the colours of tribal culture during his tour to the Bastar region.

He tried his hand at bow and arrow and later encouraged the folk artists by playing the Turhi besides dancing to the beats of the Mandar with folk dancers.

Members of various tribal communities welcomed the Chief Minister by presenting him a Khumri, a traditional turban and a bow and arrow as per tradition.

Two held for trying to sell leopard skin

STAFF REPORTER
DHAMTARI

Chhattisgarh Police arrested two persons for trying to sell a leopard skin valued at Rs 10 lakh in Dhamtari district, an officer said on Sunday.

Raghunath Nishad (22) and Vimal Yadav (26) were caught from Lolardai temple near Barari-Kukrel village, Dhamtari Superintendent of Police Prafull Kumar Thakur told The Pioneer.

Nishad hails from Odisha while Yadav is a resident of Gariaband district.

The two men were heading towards Barari village on a motorcycle to sell the skin on Saturday when they were caught.

BJP demands compensation of Rs 1 crore

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh should provide Rs 1 crore and Rs 50 lakh respectively for the death of one person and injuries to16 people when a speeding car ploughed into a crowd proceeding to immerse a Durga idol, the BJP said on Sunday. A judicial probe should also be ordered.

Like in the case of Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh where farmers who got killed were given compensation, in Chhattisgarh also Rs 1 crore should be given to the kin of the deceased, Chhattisgarh BJP Bhatapara MLA Shivratan Sharma told the media.

He said it was not clear how the killer vehicle got through a barrier and hit the procession.

'BADAL to play key role in preserving Bastar's culture'

STAFF REPORTER
JAGDALPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday said the newly established Bastar Academy of Dance, Art and Language (BADAL) will play an important role in preserving and promoting the tribal culture of Bastar.

He was addressing the public dedication function of the new building of the academy being constructed in Asna village at the outskirts of Jagdalpur, the district headquarters of Bastar region.

The Chief Minister said: "The BADAL Academy will play an important role in the preservation and promotion of folk dance, local dialects, literature and craftsmanship of Bastar."

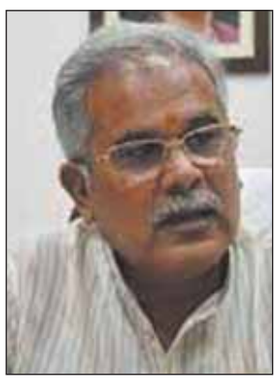
"Through this academy, knowledge about various tribal cultures of Bastar will be passed on to the next generation," he said.

The three buildings built in the campus of BADAL Academy have been named after the martyrs of Bastar region -- Jhada Sirha, Gendsingh and Gundadhur.

On this occasion, an MoU was signed between BADAL Academy and Indira Kala Sangeet Vishvavidyalaya, Khairagarh. Both institutions have agreed to work together for preservation and promotion of folk dance and folk music.

CG Police to coordinate with Odisha over drug smuggling

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR



Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday ordered Chhattisgarh Police to hold a meeting at the earliest with Odisha Police to stop the smuggling of drugs from Odisha.

Baghel also directed the police to set up checkposts equipped with CCTV cameras in border areas and to be manned by a sufficient number of armed personnel, an official communication said.

He gave the order to the Director General of Police and Special Director General of Police (Naxal Ops) in this regard.

Baghel also asked District Collectors and Superintendents of Police to make permanent infrastructure and check posts equipped with CCTV cameras in areas bordering Odisha.

"Set up checkposts equipped with CCTV cameras in border areas and to be manned by a sufficient number of armed personnel"

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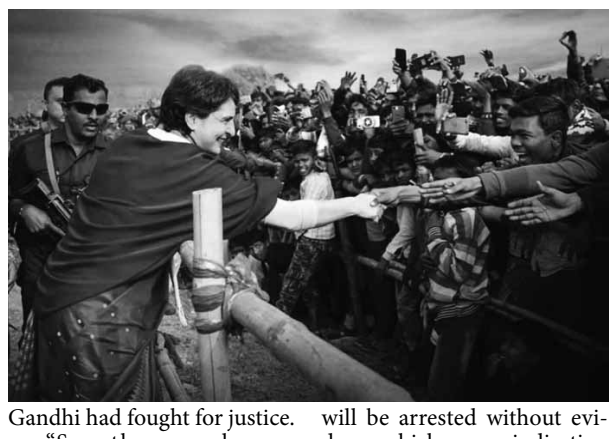
Punia: Priyanka to be face of Cong poll campaign in UP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will be the face of the Congress' election campaign in Uttar Pradesh, the party's newly-appointed campaign committee chief P L Punia said on Sunday, October 15, 2021, asserting the AICC general secretary is the most popular political figure in the state at present.

Punia, who on Friday was named as the head of the key 20-member election campaign committee of the Congress for the UP polls next year, noted that very rarely has the Congress announced a chief ministerial face and said that not having declared one till now will not hamper the party's chances as it already has a personality like Priyanka Gandhi to lead the charge against the BJP.

It is a direct contest between the Congress and the BJP in the UP polls as both the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party have "fallen behind" and were "not in the fight anymore", Punia told PTI in an interview.

Punia said Priyanka Gandhi has fought for truth on all issues and when the Lakhimpur Kheri incident happened, she immediately left to meet the family of the victims, and was detained in Sitapur, but remained determined in her quest for justice.

He said she was "successful" in her struggle and went to Lakhimpur Kheri and Bahraich to met the families of the victims.

Punia said earlier also — be it Sonbhadra, Unnao or Hathras incidents — Priyanka Gandhi had fought for justice.

"So, the people are impressed by her and currently in the entire state, no politician is more popular than Priyanka Gandhi. As far as around whom the campaign will be centred, we are fortunate that Priyanka Gandhi is available for (campaigning) all the time," he said.

There are always demands from other states for Priyanka Gandhi to campaign and hold one or two meetings, but in UP she is available 24X7, Punia said. "Priyanka Gandhi ji hi humara ek chehra hongi jinke ird-gird poora election campaign chalega (the election campaign will be revolve around Priyanka Gandhi)," he said.

Punia also said the Lakhimpur Kheri incident and justice for farmers would be important issues in the elections, asserting that the way the farmers were "trampled upon", was a condemnable incident.

"What was more appalling was that those in power gave protection to the perpetrators (of the crime). Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said no one will be arrested without evidence which was an indication that seeking arrest of the Union minister's son is wrong," Punia said.

Chief Minister Adityanath and Union minister of state for home Ajay Mishra were both "guilty" of protecting the accused in the case, he alleged.

Punia said "real justice" will be done when the minister is removed and pointed out that a high level delegation under Rahul Gandhi has also met President Ram Nath Kovind to press for this demand.

Asked if having not declared a CM face till now would hamper the Congress' chances in the UP polls, Punia said the Congress rarely declares a CM face whether it is Uttar Pradesh or other states.

"People talk about a CM face as votes are sought on that face, for us the biggest face is that of Priyanka Gandhi and the affection that people have for her cannot be matched by any person who is declared a CM face. So for us we have such a personality who will be helpful for us in polls in every way," he asserted.

Prices of onions, tomatoes cheaper than last year: Govt data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As vegetable, diesel and petrol prices are skyrocketing across India, the Government on Sunday came out with data claiming prices of onion, tomato and potato are cheaper than last year. Presently, fruits such as apple, papaya, pineapple, orange and banana are cheaper than tomatoes and other green vegetables in metro cities. Most of the fruits are being sold between ₹50 and 60 a kg while tomato and leafy vegetables including palak (spinach), maithi patta fenugreek leaves are being sold between ₹80 to ₹100 a kg in the local vegetable markets. Dhania (coriander) prices have crossed ₹200 a kg.

The ministry of consumer affairs on Sunday said onion prices are being stabilised with the release of buffer stock, while efforts are on to soften the rates of tomato and potato. Onion stocks are being released in the market on the first-in-first-out basis in a calibrated manner from the last week of August in a bid to moderate prices and ensure minimum storage loss, it said.

"As a result of which the retail price of Onion in Delhi is viz ₹44 kg as on 14.10.2021. Similarly in Mumbai, Kolkatta and Chennai are ₹45 kg, ₹57 kg and ₹42 kg respectively. The All India retail prices of Onion on 14.10.2021 is ₹37.06 per kg while the All India wholesale price of Onion is ₹3002.25 per quintal," the ministry said.

According to the ministry, till October 12, 2021, a total of 67,3567 MT has been released in major markets such as Delhi, Kolkata, Lucknow, Patna, Ranchi, Guwahati, Bhubaneshwar, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Kochi and Raipur. In addition, Grade-B onions (stocks which are below the Fair Average Quality - FAQ) are disposed in local markets in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

"Apart from releasing in the market, the Department of Consumer Affairs has offered onions from the buffer at Rs.21/kg to all the States and UTs for lifting from the storage locations. This would enable States/UTs to take up, by themselves, market interventions either through direct supply to retail consumers through retail outlets or release in key markets to bring down prices. The stocks are also available for supply to Central/States agencies involved in retail marketing either at ex-storage rate of Rs.21/kg or at landed price after including transportation costs. SAFAL has been offered at landed price of ₹26/kg," it said.

Onion buffer has been maintained by the department under the Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) with the objective of effective market intervention to moderate prices. In 2021-22, against the target of building 2 LMT Onion buffer a total of 2.08 LMT was procured from Rabi-2021 crop during April to July, 2021.

Similarly efforts are being made to soften the prices of potato and tomato. The retail price of Potato and Tomato in Delhi are ₹20 and ₹56 kg respectively. The All India Retail price of Potato and Tomato are ₹21.22 kg and ₹41.73 kg respectively. The All India Wholesale price of Potato and Onion are ₹1605.46 per quintal and ₹3361.74 per quintal respectively.

Decide applicability of RTI Act to Intelligence, security agencies: SC to Delhi HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed the Delhi High Court to decide the applicability of the Right to Information (RTI) Act to intelligence and security organisations of the Government while setting aside its order directing a department to furnish information to an employee on seniority and promotions.

A bench of Justices MR Shah and AS Bopanna said the high court passed the directions without deciding the objection of the government department that the RTI Act was not applicable to it.

"It is the specific case on behalf of the Department that the RTI Act was not applicable to the organisation/department. Despite the above and without deciding such an objection, the high court has directed the appellant to furnish the documents sought under the RTI Act without deciding the applicability of the RTI Act. That will be putting the cart before the horse," the bench said.

The apex court said the high court ought to have decided the issue with respect to the applicability of the RTI Act to the organisation or department first.

"We direct the high court to first decide the issue with respect to the applicability of the RTI Act to the appellant organisation/department and thereafter decide the stay application/LPA. The aforesaid exercise shall be completed within a period of eight weeks," the bench said in its recent order.

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by the Centre against the 2018 decision of the high court which directed the department to provide information to the employee within 15 days.

The counsel appearing on behalf of the Centre had told the high court that the Department from which information was sought is exempted as per Section 24(1) of the RTI Act, 2005. Therefore, the order of the CIC is illegal and contradictory to the provisions of the Section 24 of the RTI Act.

Section 24 of the RTI Act exempts certain intelligence and security organisations from the ambit of the transparency law except for information "pertaining to allegations of corruption and human rights violations".

The high court had said that since the employee was facing prejudices regarding seniority, he sought information mentioned above and that the information neither hampers with intelligence nor security nor secrecy of the petitioner organisation.

"Though the petitioner organisation is kept away from RTI Act, but that is not regarding the information to its employee, if any of his rights have been denied.

The information sought by the respondent from the petitioner does not come under Section 24 of the Act," the high court had said.

L-e-T funding Hazi Baba Trust to convert schools in Af into madrassas

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistani terror group Lashkar-e-Tayabba's front Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation is funding a little known Hazi Baba Trust to convert regular schools in Afghanistan into madrassas with a view to radicalise young students for carrying out terrorist action in that country and beyond.

While Taliban did not have problems with modern education but just wanted to ensure that the schools must respect Islam and Islamic values. However, Taliban does not have much funds and has approached Pakistan for funding. But Islamabad did not officially fund the Taliban and instead funded the Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation (FIF) for radicalisation activities in Afghanistan, sources said.

However, the Falah-e-Insaniyat distorted the Taliban's stand on fusion of modern education with Islamic values into converting the regular schools purely into madrassas.

The FIF has begun converting the schools in certain provinces there into madrassas.

While the educational institutions are at the brink of collapse, the terror groups like the LeT, an affiliate of Al Qaeda, is seeking to ramp up funding in the garb of imparting Islamic education. The real motive, however, is to create a cadre of radicalized youth from Afghanistan to perpetuate the terror network there and send them to countries like Malaysia and Indonesia to further the LeT agenda there, the sources said.

The donations are also layered by the FIF through shell Non-Governmental Organisations to portray the outfit as charity fronts.

Al Qaeda and ISIS have in the past registered shell NGOs and recruited their cadres to man these social welfare organisations and deputed them to other countries for terror activities. These terror groups have in the past spotted and recruited people in other countries in lieu of humanitarian relief.

Founder President of Afghanistan Republican Salvation Front (ARSF) and counter-terrorism analyst of Afghan origin Dr Ajmal Sohail said, "This a dangerous trend as the gains made in the past two decades will be negated through disruption of schools granting modern education. There is a need to check the trend and keep the schools and madrassas segregated."

The Taliban must ensure due diligence while apportioning relief materials and funds to the NGOs so that they are not exploited as fronts for radicalisation and recruitment. Background checks should be undertaken before funding and allowing activities by the NGOs.

4.9 cr registrations on e-SHRAM within 2 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday said the number of registrations has crossed the 4-crore mark on the e-SHRAM portal in less than two months of its launch. Odisha, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh are at the forefront of this initiative with highest number of registrations.

Workers in diverse occupations such as construction, apparel manufacturing, fishing, gig and platform work, street vending, domestic work, agriculture and allied and transport sector have registered on the portal, the Ministry of Labour and Employment said in a statement.

In some of these sectors, an overwhelming proportion of migrant workers are also engaged, it stated. All workers in the unorganised sector, including migrant ones, can now take the benefits of various social security and employment-based schemes through registration on the e-SHRAM portal.

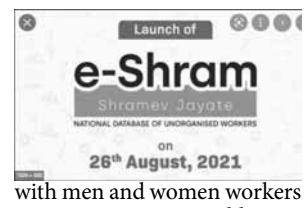
As per latest data, 4.09 crore workers have registered on the portal. Of these, around 50.02 per cent beneficiaries are female and 49.98 per cent are male.

Unorganised workers to get digital e-SHRAM card after registration

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After registration at e-SHRAM Portal, the unorganised workers shall receive a digital e-SHRAM card and they can update their profiles/particulars through portal or mobile app. They will have a Universal Account Number (on eSHRAM card) that will be acceptable across the country and now they will not be required to register at different places for obtaining social security benefits. If a worker is registered at the e-SHRAM portal and meets with an accident, he/she will be eligible for ₹2 lakh on death or permanent disability and ₹1 lakh on partial disability.

It is encouraging that equivalent proportion of men and women have been part of this drive, it stated. There has been weekly improvement in the registrations by gender,



with men and women workers registering at comparable proportions.

Minister for Labour and Employment, Bhupender Yadav said that by registering, the unorganised workers will be able to get the benefits of government schemes easily.

The Ministry said putting this number into perspective must be with caution as smaller states and Union territories (UTs) understandably have lesser number of registered workforce. Also, this drive needs to gain momentum in states and UTs such as Meghalaya, Manipur, Goa and Chandigarh, it said.

This registration would facilitate delivery and accessibility to crucial welfare programmes and various entitlements meant for the workers in the unorganised sector and employment. For online registrations, individual workers can use e-SHRAM's mobile application or the website. They can also visit the Common Service Centres (CSCs), State Seva Kendra, Labour Facilitation Centres, select post offices of the Department of Posts and Digital Seva Kendras to register themselves.

The largest number of workers registered is from agriculture and construction, given the sheer volume of these two sectors in employment generation in India. Besides, workers from diverse and different occupations like domestic and household workers, apparel sector workers, automobile and transport sector workers, electronics and hardware workers, capital goods workers, education, healthcare, retail, tourism and hospitality, food industry and many more have registered at this portal.

Around 65.68 per cent of these registered workers are in the age group of 16-40 years and 34.32 per cent are in the age group of 40 years and above.

The social compositions of these workers include Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and General Castes with almost 43 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively from these categories and 23 per cent and 27 per cent being from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, respectively.

Arthritis: Timely treatment can prevent major complications

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Contrary to the common belief that arthritis mostly affects elderly people, age is no barrier to this condition as babies who are just six months old, or people who are 80, are equally vulnerable, warn health experts.

Arthritis is any inflammation of the joint which causes damage to the joint resulting in pain, deformity and disability.

In fact, every one person out of four in the country is plagued with one or another type of arthritis. And a matter of concern is that there has been an exponential rise in such cases particularly among women and youth, says Dr Kiran Seth Consultant, Rheumatology, Metro Hospital & Heart Institute, Noida.

She said that arthritis is more a symptomatic indication of another ailment as over 200 diseases can hide behind symptoms of arthritis. Some of them are juvenile idiopathic arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus and gout, osteoarthritis and ankylosing spondylitis. "If not treated in time, arthritis can impact eyes, skin, lungs and many other important body organs," said Dr Seth stressing on prompt diagnosis and early treatment which would help in reducing the risk factors. She was sharing her views recently at an event held to mark World Arthritis Day. The theme for the day was "Don't Delay, Connect Today: Time2work".

Dr Seth who also heads Mission Arthritis India (MAI), an organization engaged in creating awareness about arthritis pointed out that RA has emerged as a major health problem in community health and in coming years, it is going to become a huge burden on society as well as the health system.

She rued that the Government is not serious about the long term health impact of the condition. This may backfire, she warned.

MAI President Ankur Shukla too lamented that the government is yet to bring the treatment for arthritis under the ambit of health insurance, as a result many patients are being left to fend on their own and many times due to delay in treatment face debilitating health conditions for lifetime.

He asserted there is a need to spread awareness about the condition among people. The MAI on its part has decided to hold a series of awareness campaigns on a large scale so that people are aware and take adequate and timely steps.

Not only are people unaware about arthritis, there are not many experts in the sector. For instance, rheumatoid arthritis affects approximately 1% of the population of India. However, for treating nearly a crore patients, the country needs at least 10 lakh rheumatologists, which are at an extreme shortfall at present.

BJP to hold meet on Oct 18 to discuss poll, Covid

NEW DELHI: The BJP's national office-bearers will meet on Monday, October 18, 2021, to discuss a host of issues ranging from the upcoming five state assembly polls to the farmers' agitation and the Covid-19 pandemic.

BJP president J P Nadda will chair the meeting which will be attended by all its leaders who hold organisational responsibilities at the national level besides its spokespersons.

The meeting assumes significance as it will take place after a considerable gap due to the Covid-19 pandemic and ahead of the party's national executive meeting next month.

Official sources said the party's campaign for the assembly elections will come up for extensive discussion in the meeting. The ongoing farmers' agitation against the three central agriculture laws, the recent violence in Lakhimpur Kheri in which eight persons, including four farmers, died and the murder of a Dalit at Singhu border, one of the protest sites, may also feature in the discussion, they said. PTI

SKM to stage stir today to seek sacking of Union Min Mishra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Sunday said 'Rail Roko' protests will be held across the country on October 18 to demand the dismissal and arrest of Union Minister Ajay Mishra in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri incident. The SKM said during the 'rail roko' protest, all train traffic will be stopped for six hours from 10 am till 4 pm on Monday.

In a statement, the umbrella body of farmer unions spearheading the farmers' agitation against the Centre's three agri laws, said "protests will only be intensified until justice is secured" in the Lakhimpur Kheri case.

"To press for its demand for MoS Home Ajay Mishra's dismissal and arrest, so that justice can be secured in the Lakhimpur Kheri massacre, SKM has announced a nationwide Rail Roko program on Monday. "SKM put out a call to its constituents to stop rail traffic for six hours on October 18, between 10 am and 4 pm. The SKM asks for this action to be taken up peacefully, without any destruction and damage of any kind to any railway property," it said.

Four of the eight people who died in the violence on October 3 were farmers, allegedly knocked down by a vehicle carrying BJP workers. Angry farmers then allegedly lynched some people in the vehicles.

The other dead included two BJP workers and their driver. Farmers have claimed that Ashish Mishra was in one of the vehicles, an allegation denied by him and Ajay Mishra who say they can produce evidence to prove he was at an event at that time. Ashish Mishra was arrested in the case on October 9.

The SKM also claimed that at effigy-burning events across Uttar Pradesh, several farmer leaders were put under house arrested while some were detained.

Recent flash floods, landslides clear sign of climate change: VP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday said there has been an increased frequency of extreme weather events in recent times which are a clear indication of changing dynamics of the climate.

"There has been an increased frequency of extreme weather events in recent times such as flash floods and landslides in different parts of the world. These are clear signs that climate change is real and it cannot be business as usual anymore," the Vice President said at a book release function.

'Nursery Rajyaniki Raraju' is a book on the life story of the late Palla Venkanna, who is credited with transforming the village of Kadiyam in Andhra Pradesh into a popular hub of plant nurseries.

To mitigate such weather events, Naidu said that, going forward, it is imperative that humans co-exist harmoniously with nature.

"We must balance our developmental needs with environmental protection and make sure everyone understands the importance of sustainable living. Meaningful development is possible only when it takes into account the cost on environment", Naidu added.

The Vice President called for a people's movement to protect the environment and urged people to voluntarily participate in various conservation activities.

In particular, Naidu called upon the youth to proactively lead environmental movements from the front and motivate others to adopt sustainable practices. "They should drive the point among people that if we take care of nature, nature in turn will take care of mankind", he said.

NOAKHALI TEMPLE ATTACK, MURDER

ISKCON devotees protest over temple vandalism in B'desh

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Protests erupted on Sunday in parts of Kolkata, days after a temple was vandalized and a devotee was killed at Noakhali in Bangladesh.

Members and devotees of International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) --- a popular Vaishnav organization associated with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and headquartered at Mayapur-Nabadweep in Nadia district with numerous branches world over --- on Sunday demonstrated outside the Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh two days after miscreants vandalised its temple at Noakhali in that country.

The devotees sang bhajans (religious songs) and held candle light demonstration seeking justice even as its members said they would continue to protest until the miscreants were arrested and punished.

Protest demonstrations were also held by BJP outside the ancestral house of Swami Vivekananda at Shimla Street in North Kolkata even as they demanded justice and wondered why the "so-called" secular parties were not coming out in protest against what happened in that country.

"ISKCON will continue to protest like this until justice is met and culprits are arrested … we will also appeal to the ISKCON followers all over the world to raise their voices against this attack or else this will continue to happen in future … The more important part of it is that despite protests and words of assurances from the powers that be the violence has not stopped," Radharaman Das a senior functionary of the ISKCON said.

He had earlier urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take the issue up with his Bangladesh counterpart Sk Hasina.

He said how hundreds of miscreants on Friday night attacked the ISKCON temple at Noakhali, vandalized deities and brutally assaulted devotees --- leading to the death of two persons.

However another version said that one person named Partho Das was killed in the attack.

"We have written to Prime Minister to look into the matter and we have also written to the United Nations to take note of the matter and send delegation to Bangladesh.

The ISKCON Twitter handle wrote, "It is with great grief that we share the news of an ISKCON member, Partha Das, who was brutally killed yesterday by a mob of over 200 people. His body was found in a pond next to the temple. We call on the Govt of Bangladesh for immediate action in this regard."

Meanwhile, the BJP upped the ante with a political statement wondering why "so-called secular parties like the Left and the Trinamool Congress are not raising their voices against what has happened in Bangladesh."

A senior State leader said "when one member of a minority community is touched in India all these parties come out on the streets but when a our temples are vandalized and men brutalized in Bangladesh no one utters a work … this is political hypocrisy … why no TMC or CPI(M) members are not protesting in Kolkata … is it because they fear loss of votes … do they think that Bengal's minority people are communal and anti-Indian." Neither of the parties preferred to react to BJP's remark.

Kashmiris not involved in recent civilian killings: Farooq

Srinagar: National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Sunday said Kashmiris were not involved in the recent civilian killings in the union territory and that these attacks were carried under a conspiracy to defame Kashmiris.

He also termed these incidents an attempt to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere in the union territory.

"These killings are unfortunate and done under a conspiracy. Kashmiris are not involved in these killings. It is an attempt to defame Kashmiris," Abdullah told reporters here.

The Lok Sabha member from Srinagar said these killings were an attempt to disturb the peaceful atmosphere in the valley.

Two non-locals were shot dead by militants in Srinagar and Pulwama districts of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday.

Before that, seven civilians, including four from minority communities, were killed by terrorists in Kashmir, triggering fear among the people in the Valley and criticism of the security apparatus by political parties. ***PTI***

Jolt for BJP in Maha as ex-State VP Bhaskarrao, ex-MLA join Cong

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Ahead of the by-poll to the Deglur-Biloli Assembly seat scheduled for October 30, the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday suffered a major jolt on Sunday, as its senior leader and former Chief Minister Ashok Chavan's brother in-law Bhaskarrao Patil-Khatgaonkar quit the BJP and joined the Congress.

Seventy-seven-year-old Khatagaonkar, who had quit the Congress and joined the BJP in the run-up to the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, returned to the Congress fold. Khatgaonkar and former MLA Omprakash A Pokarna and their supporters announced their entry to the Congress at a joint news conference they addressed at Nanded in Marathwada region.

Khatgaonkar's decision to quit the BJP came within days after the BJP nominated Subhash Sabne, a former Shiv Sena MLA who recently joined the main Opposition party in the state. Khatgaonkar, who was the former state BJP vice president, was unhappy within his party for quite some time and the party's decision to name Sabne as its candidate for October 30 by-poll triggered his exit from the JP Nadda-led party.

The Deglur-Biloli by-poll has been necessitated after the death of sitting Congress MLA Raosaheb Antapurkar a few months ago. The Congress has fielded Jitesh Raosaheb Antapurkar, the son of the deceased MLA, as its candidate against the BJP's nominee Sabne.

It may be recalled that Chief Minister and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray had – speaking at the Dussehra rally in Mumbai on Friday -- had taken a dig at the BJP – which "prides itself as the World's largest political party", for fielding a former Shiv Sena candidate in the Deglur-Biloli Assembly by-poll. "See the irony, the world's largest political party has to import candidates even for an Assembly by-poll," he had said.

Welcoming the Khatgaonkar's decision to quit the BJP and join the Congress, his brother-in-law Ashokrao said: "Khatgaonkar's entry to the Congress has come a s big boost to our party in not just Nanded but the entire Marathwada region". He also welcomed the entry of former MLA Pokama and other workers to the Congress.

A three-time MP (1998, 1999 and 2009), three-time MLA (1990, 1995 and 2004) and two-time state minister, Khatgaonkar is late S B Chavan's son-in-law and former Chief Minister and current State Minister Ashok Chavan's brother-in-law. He had severed his more than four-decade-long association with the Congress and joined the BJP ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

The BJP had virtually annexed Chavans' home turf of Nanded when the BJP's Prataprao hikhalikar trounced Ashokrao – as junior Ashok Chavan is known in the state political circles --in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Ashokrao's defeat in the Lok Sabha polls was extremely significant, considering that barring four terms, Nanded was under the control of the Congress since 1952. While late S B Chavan represented the constituency twice (1980 and 1984), Ashok Chavan himself was elected to Lok Sabha once in a bye-election in 1987, following the resignation of his father.

Late Union Home Minister S B Chavan's son-in-law and Ashokrao's brother-in-law, Khatgaonkar has represented the Nanded Lok Sabha constituency thrice (1998, 1999 and 2009).

Incidentally, Ashokrao was incidentally one of the two Congress candidates (out of its 26 candidates) who had been elected to Lok Sabha in 2014 polls from Maharashtra in the face of a fierce Modi wave.

Body of second pilot found in Ranjit Sagar lake after 75 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The body of the second pilot of an Army helicopter that crashed into the Ranjit Sagar Dam lake has been recovered after a gap of 75 days.

According to a Jammu-based Defence PRO, Lt-Col Devender Anand, "Persistent efforts by the Indian Army and Navy for 75 days which were going on day and night to recover the body of Capt Jayant Joshi has finally succeeded and body has been recovered from the lake bed using hi-tech equipment".

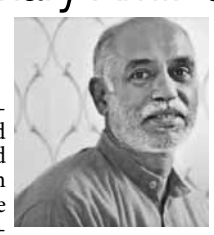
Earlier, the body of senior pilot Lt Col AS Bath was recovered from the lake bed on August 15.

The family members of Captain Jayant Joshi had recently appealed to the Supreme Commander of the Indian armed forces to direct the army authorities not to call off the search operation without recovering his body.

Defecne PRO Lt-Col Devender Anand said, "Due to the vast expanse and depth of the dam, search and rescue team was using state of the art multi-beam sonar equipment to scan the lake bed and based on the inputs received, the remotely operated vehicle having robotic arm along with the professional divers were launched to search the area. During a similar search on 17 Oct 2021, the body was detected at a depth of 65-70 mtr and immediately the ROV was launched to recover the body.

Cultural luminary Amir Chand dead

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI



Amir Chand, the 56-year-old cultural wing head of Sanskar Bharati, passed away at Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh late Saturday. He was on an official mission to Arunachal Pradesh when the end came. The oxygen level dipped to its lowest level and despite all efforts by the medical fraternity the level could not be brought back to normal.

An RSS pracharak, cultural activities were his forte. Travelling across the nation, he exhorted all Sanskar Bharati activists to encourage and inspire traditional artistes and artisans who were faced with uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Abhijit Gokhale, all India organising secretary, Sanskar Bharati, said the entire fraternity of arts have lost an iconic figure with the untimely demise of Amir Chand. "We are shocked by his passing away at such a young age. Artists, art and cultural world has lost a guardian as well as saviour," said Gokhale.

He had endeared himself to the activists of Kerala and had asked for the revival of the State's rich past in traditional arts like Koothu, Koodiyattam etc which despite being in UNESCO's intangible heritage list were not getting due recognition.

"It was shocking news for cultural activists of Kerala. Amir Chandji had that unique capability of establishing personal relations with all traditional artistes in the State whom he had met. He was concerned about their difficulties and had assured all of them that he would take up their causes," said Lakshminarayanan, Sanskar Bharati's south zone chief.

Pema Khandu, chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, paid homages to the mortal remains of Amir Chand before transporting the body from Tawang to Varanasi. Chand hailed from Baliya in Uttar Pradesh and was a friend of former Prime Minister S Chandrasekhar. Last rites would be performed at Balia on Monday.

Backed by BJP, Nitin Agarwal all set to be elected UP Assembly Dy Speaker

Lucknow: Nitin Agarwal, who was elected as a legislator on the Samajwadi Party ticket but then cozied up to the ruling BJP, is all set to be the deputy speaker of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly with the support of the saffron party.

A miffed Samajwadi Party, which has fielded Narendra Verma as its official candidate for the contest that is taking place just months ahead of the 2022 assembly polls, hit out at the BJP, accusing it of trying to sabotage democracy, and asserted that the post should traditionally go to the Opposition party.

After the election on Monday, Uttar Pradesh will get its first Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly after a gap of over 14 years. In the 2017 Assembly polls, the BJP had won 304 seats in the 403-member UP Legislative Assembly and its majority in the House will ensure Agarwal's victory.

According to sources, Samajwadi Party had moved the Speaker seeking disqualification of Nitin Agarwal from the Assembly 5-6 months and around 15-20 days back the Speaker rejected the petition.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and UP BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh were present during the filing of nomination on Sunday by Nitin Agarwal, whose father Naresh Agarwal had quit the SP and joined the BJP in 2018.

"The BJP has followed all parliamentary traditions. The post is (generally) reserved for the principal Opposition party. You (SP) were not able to give a candidate, and when a candidate came, it was Nitin Agarwal, and we are supporting him. We have come here to give respect to the parliamentary traditions," Adityanath later told reporters.

Reacting to the opposition's criticism, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna said Nitin Agarwal became an MLA on an SP ticket, and even today is an SP MLA.

All the parliamentary traditions were followed. And if there are two candidates in the fray, there will be voting," he said.

Nitin Agarwal wore a blue 'patka' bearing the 'Jai Shri Ram' slogan at the time of filing his nomination. His father and former UP Minister Naresh Agarwal was also present.

"I have submitted four sets of nomination papers. Those who have proposed my name are Congress MLA from Harchandpur Rakesh Pratap Singh, BSP MLA from Purva Anil Singh, Cabinet ministers Suresh Khanna,

Swami Prasad Maurya and Ashutosh Tandon, Minister Chhatrapal Singh, and MLA Rajpal Verma," Nitin Agarwal told PTI.

After filing the nomination papers, the MLA told PTI that he has not formally joined the BJP.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav attacked the BJP over Agarwal's nomination.

"Which party does the candidate put up by the BJP belong to? What can be expected of a Government which inaugurates already inaugurated projects and lays the foundation stone of the projects for which the foundation stone has already been laid?" he asked. ***PTI***

Khadi exhibition in Varanasi inaugurated

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A State of the art Khadi exhibition displaying the exquisite handcrafted products from 20 Indian States was inaugurated in Varanasi on Sunday. Hon'ble Minister of State for MSME, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma, inaugurated the exhibition in presence of Chairman KVIC Vinai Kumar Saxena and local MLAs at Rudrakhsh International Convention Centre in Varanasi.

On Sunday, KVIC also organized a "Khadi Kareegar Sammelan" (Khadi artisans' conference) that was attended by over 2,000 Khadi artisans, mostly women, from Varanasi and 12 adjoining districts like Prayagraj, Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Ghazipur, Sonbhadra, etc.

A total of 105 stalls have been set up by Khadi Institutions from States like Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Leh-Ladakh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Bihar, West Bengal and others. A number of Khadi institutions, PMEGP units and several SFURTI clusters from various States have also set up their stalls.

A range of exquisite Khadi products including the premium High Altitude Honey from Jammu & Kashmir, a wide variety of Kashmiri and Rajasthani woolen shawls, Muslin fabric from West Bengal, a variety of silk fabric from West Bengal and Bihar, Koti Shawls from Punjab, leather products from Kanpur, terracotta pottery from Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the widely acclaimed hand-knotted carpets of Mirzapur and Prayagraj are the biggest attractions in the exhibition. This is the second such exhibition organized by KVIC in Varanasi since the Covid-19 lockdown.

'Sun rays to illuminate sanctum sanctorum of Ram temple in Ayodhya

New Delhi: The Ram temple in Ayodhya will be built in such a way that the sun rays will fall on the idol of Ram Lalla and illuminate its sanctum sanctorum on every Ram Navami, said a member of the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirath Kshetra Trust.

The design will be inspired by the 13th century Sun temple at Konark in Odisha, he said.

Work is underway on a proposal to design the temple in a way that the sun rays beautify Ram Lalla's idol in the sanctum sanctorum on every Ram Navami and consultation with scientists, astronomers and technologists is going on in this regard, Kameshwar Choupal, member of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust told PTI.

Choupal said, "The Sun temple at Konark in Odisha is an example where the sun rays reach inside the temple. In such a situation, all the technical aspects and state-of-the-art technology are being considered regarding how the rays of the sun reach the sanctum (of Ram temple)".

The member said a committee consisting of experts from the National Institute of Building Construction, including Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, IIT Mumbai, and IIT Roorkee, has been formed to focus on the technical aspects related to the construction of the temple.

Another senior official of the trust said, "The construction work of Shri Ram temple is going on at a fast pace. Efforts are being made (to ensure) that by December 2023, the construction of the sanctum sanctorum should be completed and people can have darshan."

He informed that the first phase of foundation has been completed, while the second phase will be over by mid-November.

During the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, several aspects, including geological, geographical and ecological conditions, are being taken into consideration, he said.

Chaupal said according to the geological classification, Uttar Pradesh is prone to earthquakes and there is a river near the temple complex while the entire area comes under the Himalayan region.

"From November 15, the work of construction of the plinth (the base part of the pillar) will also start. The construction of pillars and overhead structure on the plinth is expected to start from April 2022," he said.

Some changes have been made in the earlier model regarding the construction of the temple, Chaupal said, adding that three floors would be constructed now instead of the two planned initially.

Chaupal informed that the temple will have a museum, archives room, research centre, auditorium, gaushala, tourist centre, administrative building, yoga centre and other facilities. ***PTI***

Mumbai logs zero Covid death for 1st time since pandemic outbreak

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

For the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic on March 26, 2020, the country's commercial Capital on Sunday recorded zero Covid-19 deaths.

On a day when Mumbai recorded zero Covid-19 deaths, as many as 367 people tested positive for the pandemic, while 518 fully recovered patients were discharged from the various hospitals in the metropolis.

Expressing his happiness over the zero Covid-19 deaths in the metropolis, Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal said: "This is great news for all of us in Mumbai. I salute Team MCGM for their spectacular performance. I also profusely Thank Team Media for its unflinching support and trust in Team MCGM"

"Let us all keep the mask on our face and let every citizen of Mumbai get vaccinated if some of us haven't yet!. I appeal to everyone to help us keep Mumbai safe," Chahal said."As high as 97 per cent eligible citizens of Mumbai have received a single dose of vaccination and 55 per cent of Mumbaikars are fully vaccinated now," the BMC chief said.

Meanwhile, there are currently 5902 active cases in the metropolis. Though the situation has vastly improved in the city in recent months, Mumbai remains the worst Covid-19 affected city in the country. The city has so far recorded a total of 7,51, 659 positive cases and 16,180 deaths since the outbreak of the pandemic 20 months ago.

In a related development, Maharashtra recorded 29 deaths and 1,715 fresh infections on Sunday.

With 29 fresh deaths reported on Sunday, the total number of deaths in the state increased from 1,39,760 to 1,39,789, while the total infections -- with 1,715 new cases – went up from 65,89,982 to 65,91,697.

As 2,680 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 64,16,998 to 64,19,678 . The recovery rate in the state rose from 97.38 per cent to 97.39 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 29,627 to 28,631. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 2.12 per cent.

Pune with 8,039 active cases emerged as the first in the state in terms of maximum number of "active cases" in the state, while Mumbai with 5,902 stood second in the state, followed by Thane (3,734), Ahmednagar (3,181) and Satara (1204).

Of the 6,10,20,463 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 65,91,697 have tested positive (10.8 per cent) for Covid-19 until Sunday.

Currently, 2,20,474 people are in home quarantine while 965 people are in institutional quarantine.

Rahul slams Govt over rising fuel prices

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday took a dig at the Government over the increasing prices of petrol and diesel, alleging that there was "destruction for all" and development of "rising prices".

Tagging a media report which claimed that if the Government had not hiked taxes, petrol would have been ₹ 66 per litre and diesel would have been ₹55 per litre, Gandhi alleged that the government was indulging in "tax extortion".

"'Sabka vinash, mehengaai ka vikas' (destruction for all, development of rising prices)," Gandhi tweeted in Hindi using the hashtag 'TaxExtortion'.

Petrol and diesel prices on Sunday were hiked again by 35 paise a litre.

The fourth straight day of 35 paise per litre hike sent petrol and diesel rates to record highs across the country.

The price of petrol in Delhi rose to its highest-ever level of ₹ 105.84 a litre and ₹111.77 per litre in Mumbai, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. In Mumbai, diesel now comes for ₹102.52 a litre; while in Delhi, it costs ₹94.57.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also attacked the Government over rising prices, saying the BJP has hiked NPK (fertiliser) price by ₹275 and NP (fertiliser) price by ₹20.

"With daily hikes, the government has made the diesel prices cross ₹100. Under the BJP rule, workers and farmers are reeling under the burden of rising prices, while only Modi's friends are getting richer," she said in a tweet in Hindi. ***PTI***

A crane being used to lift an idol of Goddess Durga after immersion to prevent pollution in River Ganga, in Kolkata on Sunday PTI

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Hands-on approach

Rahul will have to face electoral bullets if he becomes the Congress president again

It can now be said that Congress matriarch Sonia Gandhi has done everything she could to protect son Rahul. Whether that can stem the prospects of the party from dwindling further is another story. The Saturday meeting of the Congress Working Committee was unique. It witnessed, for the first time in recent memory, a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family forced to take note of growing dissent in the party organisation and handle it differently from the past when disciplinary action was the standard remedy. How times have changed. The dissidents make a large, powerful group and throwing them out would mean ejecting the entire second rung leadership. The Family runs the show thanks to irrational allegiance to the leadership that stills dissent beyond a point. Sonia Gandhi did not confront the dissidents. She reasoned with them. She explained to them that their main grouse – lack of a full-time president – was groundless as she was a "full-time" and "hands-on" president. She thus shielded them from her son who left the presidency after the 2019 election debacle and has since been reluctant to be anointed again. She then sought patience from them to await the next president. Probably, him again. They wanted an elected president and they will get one, she told them, backing her word with a time-bound organisational election schedule. What she has managed to do in the process is show exemplary shrewdness in steering the dawdling ship in the rough seas by keeping intact all hands on the oars.

From her point of view, son Rahul's high point after becoming Congress president in December 2017 was the party forming four State Governments, including one in a coalition, after the assembly elections in 2018. He quit the following year. Rahul was not president when Congress was whipped in West Bengal. He would not be there either when the Congress fights in Uttar Pradesh. The Presidential elections would pass him by too. Sonia obliquely told them that Rahul's was not a case of power without responsibility because she was the "hands-on" power. If the dissidents had an issue, they would have to deal with her, not Rahul. As much as the dissidents would have wanted an elected leader to take responsibility for failures, they were unable to tell her that to her face. And by the time they thought of doing so, Sonia Gandhi came up with aretort cloaked in reasonableness. However, Rahul, if he is president again, will have to bite the electoral bullet in December 2022 in Gujarat and four key States in 2023. So, the 2019-2022 breather does not help him before taking on Narendra Modi in 2024. Sonia realises the ultimate irony of the Congress: The dynasty may demand a Gandhi to be president but the legacy of the party demands striving for the Prime Minister's post and nothing else. There is the minor issue of the two demands converging somewhere.

PICTALK

Debris collects on Lower Lake after the end of Navratri, in Bhopal PTI

An evil plot

The Durga Puja attacks in Bangladesh are designed to throw the country back into chaos

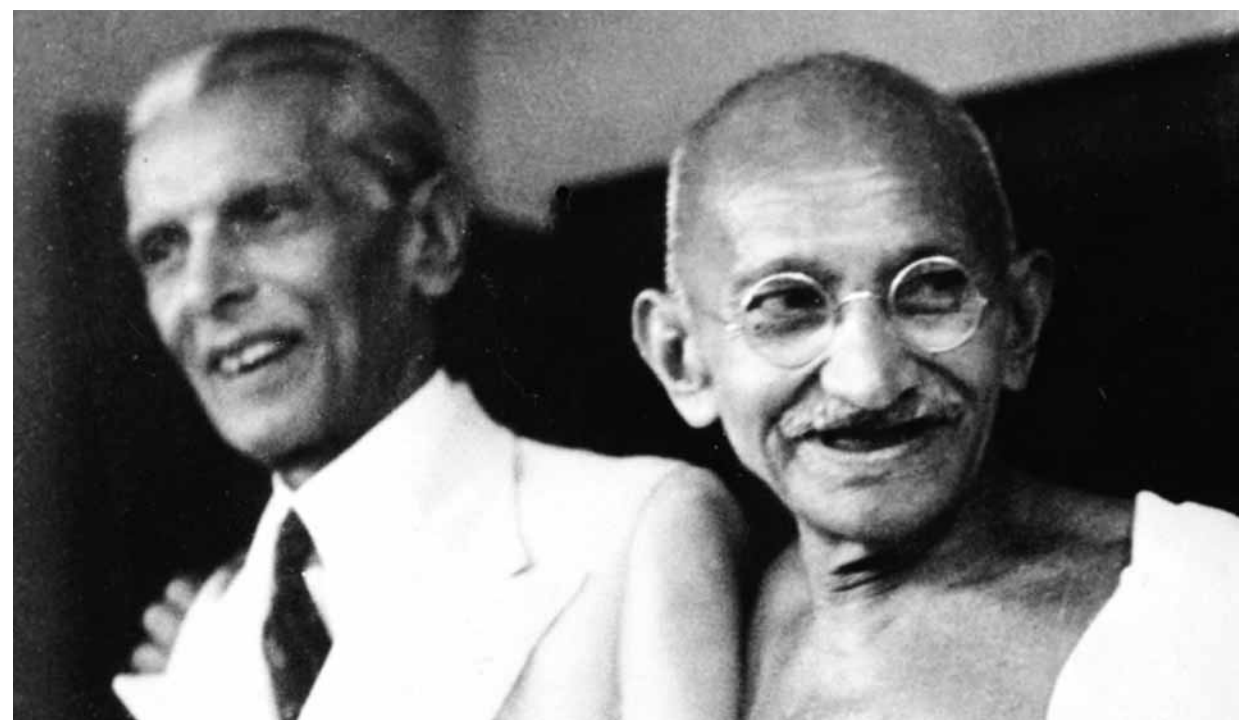
It is disturbing news again from a neighbour, Bangladesh. Hindu temples have been vandalised and at least three people lost their lives in the violent clashes in the People's Republic of Bangladesh. This is one of the biggest disruptions in interfaith harmony of the country that is making remarkable strides on the economic front. Sheikh Hasina's Government has been in power for quite some time. However, religious fanaticism has been on the rise in Bangladesh. It validates what writer Tasleema Nasrin has been warning about Muslim fundamentalism in the country. That the religious bigots chose Durga Puja as the occasion to rupture the social fabric of the country speaks volumes about their designs. It can have a spillover, multiplier effect and reaction in bordering India and thus it could snowball into a major issue. This would neither be good for Hasina's Government nor for her country that needs peace to prosper. If Bangladesh burns, it will be pulled back to the old days of economic hardships and misery. The Bangladesh Government has deployed the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in 22 districts after the attacks. This shows that the incidents are neither isolated nor unplanned.

So far, three people have been killed during clashes between Muslim bigots and the police at Hajiganj sub-district in Chandpur. One person died later in the hospital of injuries. The police have so far detained 43 people in connection with the violence. This is one of the biggest challenges that the ruling Awami League party is facing right now. It has a daunting task to protect the Hindu minorities while not antagonising the majority of Muslims. This indeed is a tight ropewalk for Sheikh Hasina and her party. Hindus are 10 per cent of the 169 million, largely Muslim, population. The Awami League, which led the struggle for independence, harped on the Bangla language movement, not religion. But later it fell out with the military, which consolidated its position by supporting religious fundamentalists. In 1977, Zia-ur-Rahman dropped secularism. Later in 1988, General Ershad made Islam the State religion and hobnobbed with the fundamentalists, laying the foundation of the current rise of religious extremism. The sporadic violence has claimed several lives ever since, though this time it is more organised and designed to garner maximum mileage.

Jinnah: Divider of the subcontinent?

PRAFULL **GORADIA**

The recent killings in Kashmir by Pakistan-backed terrorists remind us of what India would have been enduring had there been no Partition



Who wanted Partition? Who needed Pakistan? Certainly, the Khoja, Memon and Bohri businessmen did. They preferred competing with the Punjabi farmer than the Parsis and Banias, Marwari, Gujarati, Chettiars or whichever other traditional trading communities in India. The Habibs, for example, were big grain traders in Bombay. Their junior partner Ratanlal Gandhi once asked the senior Habib why they financed the Muslim League when all their business and property was in and around Bombay? Habib's answer to Gandhi was that it was much easier to flourish against farmers than businessmen *banias*.

Others keen on Partition were the radical Muslims, wherever they were in India. An educated League leader of Madras — Mohammed Ismail — was a leading supporter not only of Partition but also an exchange of population, which meant that all Muslims ought to go to Pakistan and non-Muslims to remain in India. Ismail himself did not leave Madras. Yet another group of supporters were the students, past and present of Aligarh University which was described by M.A. Jinnah as "the arsenal of Pakistan". For the rest, Muslims were interested but were unsure and therefore lukewarm. Punjab had a Muslim majority with a Muslim Premier and ruled by the Unionist Party led by Sir Sikander Hayat Khan and his successors. These leaders saw no future in Partition as Punjab enjoyed Muslim rule with the whole of the Indian market freely available to their province.

Similarly, Bengal was in two minds and not clearly for Pakistan. One, to support Partition or to follow the reasoning of Punjab; two, to have a united Bengal as a third separate dominion, apart from Pakistan and India. Sir Abdul Rahim, Fazlul Rahman and Sarat Bose met several times to discuss the issue. Jinnah quietly supported the idea as did the Communist Party of India. The truth was no one could visualise the concept and shape of Pakistan. Not even Jinnah; he retained his magnificent bungalow Marble House on Malabar Hill with the intent of spending his winters there. No one foresaw that relations between the two dominions would be perpetually hostile.

Hindus abhorred the idea of their motherland's division. Visionaries like Dr BR Ambedkar and Dr Munje of the Hindu Mahasabha realised that the coexistence of the two communities was difficult, and therefore not beneficial. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru came to realise this truth in 1946 when widespread rioting began in August of that year. Punjab had witnessed bloodshed and looting but elsewhere it was business-as-usual. Jinnah was himself not a committed Muslim. His grandfather had converted to the faith led by Sir Aga Khan called Ismaili Khojas. This denomination was declared by the Bombay High Court in 1861 as half Muslim and half Hindu because of its inheritance laws. The family continued to call themselves Jinnahbhai. It was in England, where he was studying to become a barrister that he slightly altered his surname and passport to Jinnah; the 'bhai' was dropped. He enjoyed pork sandwiches as well as a sun-downer (whisky) on most evenings.

> JINNAH HAD TO DELIVER REVENGE ON GANDHI, AND BEGAN WITH RIOTS TO WHICH THE MAHATMA HAD NO ANSWER

Jinnah knew the cards could be loaded against him. Dead against the grain of his constitutional nature, he ordered the Great Calcutta Killing on 16 August 1946, in the hope that the riots would be retaliated against and spread in the country. Killings in Punjab alone were not sufficient. Moreover, time was running out for him. He either knew or suspected that his lungs were infected with tuberculosis (TB), which until the post-World War II period, was a fatal disease. And sure enough, TB took Jinnah's life in September 1948. He had to settle scores with Gandhi, first for resorting to taking politics to the streets and villages (which Jinnah could not cope with), and later in 1928, ignoring him at the Calcutta session of the Congress. Jinnah kept avoiding the prefix 'Mahatma' and addressing Gandhi as 'Minister'! The audience did not let Jinnah speak unless he addressed Gandhi as Mahatma. There must have been similar other incidents before 1928. Jinnah had to deliver revenge to Gandhi and began with riots to which the Mahatma had no answer except touring the affected areas and conducting prayer meetings. Nor did he have a counter-strategy. Even Patel, Nehru and others in the Congress couldn't think of how to counter the League. Non-violence could not cope with brutality and violence.

Jinnah was more a brilliant advocate than a leader. He is reputed to have suits tailored at the famous Saville Row in London but until he was elected the life president of the Muslim League in 1935, he had no *chudidar*-pyjamas nor *sherwanis* (essential Muslim attire) as his brother and my grandfather's dear friend Ahmed told the latter. The brothers did not know how to perform *namaz*. As Ahmed told my grandfather, the brothers were culturally more Parsi and less Muslim.

(This is part one of a series on Muhammad Ali Jinnah's role in India-Pak Partition.)

(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

STALIN SHOWS THE WAY

Sir — The unprecedented and mammoth victory of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in the local body elections is indeed a recognition the people have given to the Tamil Nadu Government, particularly for the implementation of several public welfare schemes in such a short time by the charismatic Chief Minister MK Stalin. Though the main Opposition AIADMK and its allies, particularly the BJP, tried to tarnish the image of the new Government on implementation of the election promises made by the DMK, people refused to fall into their trap, realising the sincerity with which the new Government was trying to fulfil their election promises despite the empty coffers the earlier corrupt AIADMK regime has left for them.

Looking at the manner in which Chief Minister Stalin is conducting himself, people believe that he would never let them down and make the State regain its past glory and become the number one State in the country again in all key parameters. Realising the trust of the people in them, the leaders and cadres of the DMK should also realise their responsibilities and perform their duty honestly keeping only the welfare of the people supreme in their mind.

Tharcius S Fernando | *Virugambakkam*

DID NOT SEE THAT COMING

Sir — The Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh lauded the former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for her leadership in times of war and said it was a positive experience in harnessing women power for national development, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. His comments in such a positive approach in the era of bitter political rivalry reminds of similar sentiments expressed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee who called Indira Gandhi 'Durga' for leading the nation to victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

Gone are the sweet memories of the yesteryears when the first Prime Minister of India congratulated his political rival young Atal Bihari Vajpayee for his maiden speech in the Parliament, forecasting a great politician of the future in him. The former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had sent a gift parcel of *Dhoti-Kurta* to a prominent parliamentarian Prakashvir Shastri, as a token of request to wear Indian attire on his first foreign trip. Such moments of political bonhomie are very rare in India's current political spectrum. Country's welfare is no longer the vision but only individual interest is what the politicians seek. Had the ethos of such leaders been alive, India's social, political and economical state would have been far better.

Subhash Chandra Agrawal | *Delhi*

GOOD TO HAVE DHONI BACK

Sir — They say age is just a number. And that statement fits in perfectly for MS Dhoni, who led the Chennai Super Kings to victory in the IPL 2021. What is incredible is the way the yellow brigade bounced back after a supremely disappointing season in 2020, where they became the first team to be knocked out of the play-offs and, for the first time ever in the history of the tournament, failed to make it to final four. But CSK's triumphant return this season, with pretty much the same squad, has shown why Dhoni has been so successful over the years despite being one of the oldest players in the tournament.

Just recently, Mahendra Singh Dhoni became the first player in the world to captain a team in 300 T20 games across various competitions during his side's IPL clash against KKR. Also, few days ago, India's T20 World Cup squad was announced with former skipper MS Dhoni reuniting the 'men in blue' as the side's mentor. MS Dhoni's appointment as India's mentor was a way to use his experience in the T20 World Cup. MS dhoni is once again ready to contribute to the team and this comes as no surprise that he has decided not to charge a dime for mentoring the men in blue.

Shashank Patil | *Ujjain*

Vaccination drive in full swing

The recent release of the COVID-19 anthem in the beautiful voice of Kailash Kher by the Union Health Ministry — to mark the 100 crore vaccination target — is absolutely a victory for India in terms of mass vaccination records. At the same time, we know that this is not the end of the pandemic as about only 30 per cent of the population has been fully vaccinated yet. The lyrics *"tike se bacha hai, tike se bachega desh"* are somewhat true when it comes to life saving causes. There was a time in India when vaccination drives for other pathogen based diseases failed miserably. Taking into consideration the size and diversity of India's population, vaccination of 100 crores is itself a record for us.

Such songs will not only help in removing vaccine hesitancy and controversies around India's domestically produced COVID vaccines, but also set an example before the world about India's potential in the medical and healthcare sector. It will develop a nationalist sense in every Indian that we are not lagging in the fight against the COVID-19. As Indians, we should celebrate the 100 crore vaccine mark, but at the same time we also must encourage people to get vaccinated and follow the COVID protocols. The whole world is eagerly waiting for the day when there would be zero COVID-19 cases; however, that can be achieved only by the efforts of the authorities and the support of the citizens.

Kirti Wadhawa | *Kanpur*

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

We have come a long way on the roadmap that Dr Abdul Kalam had laid out for India.

Union Minister — Hardeep Singh Puri

The way we produce, consume and waste food is taking a heavy toll on our planet...and costing us trillions of dollars a year.

UN Secretary General — Antonio Guterres

My fans have lapped up every track of mine and it's this unwavering support that pushes me to better myself with every track.

Singer — Darshan Raval

The IPL gives India an edge over other teams and makes it one of the big favourites to win the T20 World Cup.

Former India cricketer — Suresh Raina

All the party members are unanimous that Rahul Gandhi should take over as president of the Congress.

Congress leader — Ambika Soni

FIRST COLUMN

BETWEEN ROUTINE AND INNOVATION

Routine is one of the two legs of human existence, innovation is the other

VINAYSHIL **GAUTAM**

Life is full pf paradoxes. The celebrated doers, thinkers, writers have a way of capturing what they have seen as the' truth' and verbalising it. Sometimes the 'truths' are easy to understand, sometimes abstruse. Mark Twain reportedly said, "Never fail to pay yourself a compliment; it may be your only chance to get one". This is a straight forward quip with a touch of humour and irony. Some of his other, reported, quotes are a little more complex and perhaps difficult to comprehend. For instance,"For each one kills the thing he loves". One has, at times, tried to make sense of the second quote. Some claim that they can approximate what he could have meant. That is another story. The central part of this narrative is to focus on common place remarks which capture some truth in life. One of my favourite quotes is, "Keeping up with the routine is far more demanding than trying hands at innovation". When this remark is used in a public forum, sometimes, one gets reactions which total up to saying, "routine is routine, what is difficult with keeping up with it". The truth of life is that one lives in an era where amongst the buzz words, 'innovation', perhaps, tops the list. People are never tired of pleading for 'innovation' or trying to put it across as the ultimate need of life. It is a need. One does not know whether it is the

'ultimate' need or not. Of course, innovation is necessary. That is also how, change could take place to keep pace with changing requirements. However, many empiricists have found that scope for practice of innovation is bounded in many ways. This includes real world realities or time needed for the body to rejuvenate. These are two limiting items, among several constants, which cannot and will not change. It is keeping up with the routine that is so essential to keep the body as a functioning and an effective system. Similar is the story in collective living or routine of livelihood. One may move from cash to bitcoins, but the reference point of an intermediary, referred to as 'money' as a medium of exchange of goods, services, etc., is a constant. Thus, it is that life of innovation is bound by the domain of operation of the subject, nature of material, etc. It is the 'routine' which also provides formidable challenges.

The body needs a given number of hours of rest in a 24-hour cycle to repair its cells, rest its organs and unwind the stresses. This is best serviced through regular habits. Usually, the period for rest is supposed to come somewhere between sunset and sunrise, if it is in the tropical zones. The human body attuned to a 24-hour cycle needs a minimum of 6-8 hours rest. This may vary from one point of the life cycle to another, say between youth and old age. However, the range of variation remains limited. Routine is one of the two legs on which human existence walks. The other is innovation. In the interest of holistic living, almost equal thought needs to be given to the maintenance and improvement of servicing the routine requirements of life. Since the other leg on which human life moves is innovation, that too is important. As of now, it appears that the challenges and the needs of innovation are fairly well recognised. The challenges and the needs of routine need equal thought and servicing. A life well balanced, between thought through routine (serviced with determination) when balanced by innovative thinking and action, provides a good charter of success and effectiveness.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant. The views expressed are personal.)

Why is Taiwan at the mercy of China?

NISHTHA **KAUSHIKI**

Beijing might resolve to disable Taiwan's communications and operational systems, making the resistance very low and a war relatively bloodless

Historically, China has clashed with the former Soviet Union and Vietnam, intervened in the Korean War, and waged a full-fledged war with India in 1962 despite adopting the foreign policy 'principles of peaceful coexistence'. Today, Beijing has increased its strategic footprints worldwide, especially in Africa, through UN Peace Keeping Operations. Its support to the Taliban has been a cause of worry to many liberal states. Additionally, it is involved in disagreements and maritime territorial disputes in the South and East China Sea and boundary disputes with India and Taiwan.

Concerning India, the Galwan valley clashes and border incursions along with President Xi Jinping's state visits to India strategically communicated its intent to be recognised as an economic and military power. Recent border intrusions in two states simultaneously- Uttrakhand and Arunachal- and negatively commenting on the Indian Vice President's Arunachal visit raise questions about China's intent. A refusal to disengage beyond a certain point with India apart from repeatedly stressing its "peaceful reunification" of Taiwan by intruding into the air defence zone reflects its high running aspirations to be recognised as a great power. Further, its opaque debt trap policies pose severe challenges to the liberal world order.

The last few decades have seen China's financial and military growth which has translated into its aspiration to fulfil its 'China Dream' and has ignited its desire for hegemony. Beijing aims to attain a 'droit de regard" or "special interests" in its neighbouring areas in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean region.

The questions that many ponder are will China use force against India or Taiwan? Is there a military conflict in waiting, a few days or months from now? The answer is most probably yes, but in accordance with China's suitability and its place of preference. The reason is not related to its insecurity viz-a-viz India or the U.S., but instead from its current perceived 'rightful place'. China is a classic case of misplaced nationalism. It firmly believes that once it can showcase its power well, it will gain entry into the 'great power club'. Such an objective aims to achieve appreciation and an increase in the rank of its social status. The use of force is thus an instrument, the effectiveness of which goes beyond the horizons of financial prosperity, military armaments and security. From a geopolitical perspective, high status brings with itself benefits such as deterrence from other more enormous powers merely by power projection and an acquired ability to influence the decisions of its neighbouring countries. New objectives such as norm-setting constitute the temptations of using force in foreign relations. Thus, a military conflict for social status remains a strong possibility.

During the pandemic, as China faced international isolation, it stopped with a Galwan' clash' and kept relatively low on the question of Taiwan. As the world re-opens, those possibilities are narrowing down. Further, owing to its OBOR non-performing debts and its domestic economic crisis, apart from its financial commitments towards militarisation, there are fears that the 'bubble' can burst at any point of time. To divert its people's attention and gain another five years at the helm of the affairs in 2022, Xi might resort to force and deliberately brush aside negotiations and meaningful talks.

> IF THE US DISPLAYS ITS WILLINGNESS TO GET INVOLVED IN HOSTILITIES, CHANCES OF CHINESE HESITATION FOR A FULLBLOWN MILITARY CONFLICT ON MULTIPLE BORDERS WILL INCREASE. THAT COULD MAKE INDIA A POTENTIAL TARGET THAT WILL TEST THE US COMMITMENTS

From another dimension, how China and Russia perceive the US withdrawal from Afghanistan is also important. Beijing had raised questions about States in South and East Asia placing their trust in America and had belittled its withdrawal in multiple statements. The decline in American commitments in finance and military may lead China to think about the feasibility of using force against its neighbours- India or Taiwan. Of the two, India has the power of responding in military terms and can ensure strong support from its European and American allies. At a strategic level, China might not want to give Russia a choice between India or itself. The Chinese stalemate with aggressive posturing will continue. However, a repeat of 'Galwan' and possible brinkmanship in various other Eastern sectors can be resorted to by China in March or April 2022, given the upcoming cold months. PLA soldiers are not physically fit to fight in high altitude zones. A full-fledged war with India might not be its intention, and it would continue to contain India through its hybrid warfare or by using Pakistan against it. Taiwan probably will be an immediate target because of several factors. It has mild winters suitable for PLA soldiers, limited conventional offensive capabilities, and a lack of an institutionalised agreement with the US for security. Further, its non-membership in the UN, leading to its disability to speak for itself in case of open hostilities and limited outreach to the world countries also increases its risk of inviting Chinese aggression. In tactical terms, these limitations of Taiwan make it suitable for the Chinese area of action. To avoid international criticism of its Taiwan hostilities, Beijing might resolve to strike the command, control, communications and intelligence node and possibly disable the operational systems, making the resistance very low and war a relatively bloodless phenomenon leading to a "peaceful reunification". Such a move will send strategic signals beyond its immediate peripheries.

Moreover, it might also run a risk to hedge upon the world opinion in which no country would like to disrupt the essential supply chains because of the level of financial interdependencies with China. The warning to Germany and other European countries against adopting trade practices detrimental to its interests could also be associated with its posturing challenges. A territory that will be relatively easy to capture and does not escalate into a significant war guides us to the Chinese concept of "local war under high-tech conditions" as outlined by the previous president Jiang Zemin. Thus, given the calculations that Beijing might have, there are considerably fewer chances that the Taiwan takeover might spill over into regional conflicts.

However, given the formalisation of AUKUS as a reinforcing organisation, the element of force might be less, and the spillover will also depend upon the US response. If the US displays its willingness to get involved in hostilities, chances of Chinese hesitation for a full-blown military conflict on multiple borders will increase. That could make India a potential target that will test the US commitments. In case the US does not commit itself, India's Arunachal Pradesh may be the next target. The Chinese ability to carry out interoperability operations in space and cyber technologies through militarisation of its artificial intelligence apart from conventional and nuclear operations poses a high risk to the democratic countries. Consequently, such conflicts have high tendencies to spiral into major ones and once initiated, it becomes difficult to limit them into a 'local area' due to the intensity of the emotions involved.

Taiwan is highlighting its plight on various world forums and simultaneously preparing for a full-scale Chinese invasion through military drills. Nevertheless, it largely remains a fault line in the security of the Indo-Pacific region.

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

POINT COUNTER POINT

GOA NEEDS TO BRING 'DURGA' FROM WEST BENGAL TO ELIMINATE THE 'BHASMASUR BJP GOVERNMENT' IN THE STATE.
—GOA FORWARD PARTY PRESIDENT
KIRAN KANDOLKAR

YOU CANNOT COMPARE DURGA WITH A HUMAN BEING, SOMEONE WHO COMMITTED ATROCITIES ON WOMEN AFTER THE BENGAL ELECTION RESULTS.
—GOA CHIEF MINISTER
PRAMOD SAWANT

Priyanka's broomstick message

While the Gandhi family has not been spared criticism for its handling of Punjab, little importance has been given to the limited options they had

NILOFAR **SUHRAWARDY**

Paradoxically, despite Congress base in Uttar Pradesh being extremely weak, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra appear to have acted wisely in leaving nothing to chance while responding to the Lakhimpur Khericase. Protesting against her detention in Sitapur, Priyanka displayed no qualms in picking up the broomstick to "clean" the guest-house, a video-clipping of which did not take long to go viral.

As of now, though they have received ample media-coverage, chances of these communication strategies translating into Congress faring well in UP Assembly elections are dim. But yes, they certainly subdued the noise about the Congress facing a crisis of weak leadership over the Punjab imbroglio. Congress has a lot at stake in Punjab but almost nothing in UP.

And this demands deliberation on yet another side of Congress-politics displayed in UP and in Punjab. Clearly, Congress is without any strong regional leader in UP. The situation is opposite in Punjab. Besides, the chances of BJP being pushed out of power soon in UP seem remote; the same may be said about it assuming power in Punjab. There is nothing puzzling about Congress facing a dilemma in Punjab, when viewed through "democratic" lens. It is debatable whether Congress high command "erred" or not in giving too much importance to regional leaders like Navjot Singh Sidhu. Democratically speaking, perhaps, Congress

leaders could not afford to ignore the manner in which Sidhu was raising his voice and also receiving media coverage.

Yet, it seems, the Gandhi siblings chose not to yield to all political tantrums of Sidhu. This was reflected in opting for a least expected person to take over from Captain Amarinder Singh as CM — Charanjit Singh Channi. It is possible, negative criticism faced by Congress leaders, due to Sidhu's style of politicking, have made the Gandhi siblings wiser about not yielding too much political space to party politicians fond of making too much noise and gaining media coverage.

Besides, media attention can never be a guarantee to earning electoral support. Presumably, this reality cautioned the Gandhi family in choosing not to concede to Sidhu's desire of succeeding the Captain as chief minister. That would have only angered the Captain further, whose wife Preneet Kaur is a Congress MP from Patiala. While expressing concern over her husband being "humiliated", she specified that she is not leaving the Congress "as of now". In addition, Congress leaders cannot be oblivious of the strong support enjoyed by Captain amidst the protesting farmers and in Punjab. Negative campaigning indulged against him by Sidhu and his political camp is not likely to turn voters against Captain.

Captain has not refrained from sending alarm signals to Congress high command through his meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah and a possible meeting with PM Narendra Modi. The prospects of BJP making any gains in Punjab on its own are limited. Nevertheless, the party leaders will be delighted if Congress fails to return to power.

In all probability, Captain is least likely to reveal his actual political plans till the very last minute. He will keep his cards close to his chest and meticulously observe Sidhu's "tactics", with his priorities likely to be decided by the latter's success or failure.

Notwithstanding all the criticism faced by Congress leadership about their "handling" of the Punjab crisis, there is another angle to explore. Democratically speaking, would it have been fair on their part to sideline Sidhu?

In all probability, the situation may have worsened, perhaps led to a more pronounced split within the Punjab Congress. The same has apparently been averted with the resignation of Captain. Similarly, the selection of his successor may also be viewed as an astute strategy.

While the Gandhi family has not been spared criticism for its handling of the Punjab crisis, little importance has been accorded to the limited options they had. Interestingly, in UP, their handling of Lakhimpur Kheri case has earned them laurels. Their moves, particularly of Priyanka, have certainly gone a long way in enhancing their democratic image.

However, they had no option but to lead the protest in UP. Any decision of theirs to step aside may only lead to intra-party bickering at all levels. The party crisis witnessed in Punjab may be replayed in all States and at the national level. Also, if instead of the Gandhi siblings other party members had stepped forward in Lakhimpur-Kheri, the Congress moves would not have probably attracted much attention.

(The writer is a senior journalist and author. The views expressed are personal.)

the pioneer
RAIPUR | MONDAY | OCTOBER 18, 2021

Jaishankar in Israel, to hold high-level talks

PTI ■ TEL AVIV

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said that he is looking forward to a "great visit" as he arrived here on a five-day official trip during which he will hold talks with the country's top leadership to mutually prepare a roadmap for further enriching the strategic ties besides exploring new areas of bilateral collaboration.

This is Jaishankar's first visit to the country as the External Affairs Minister.

"Shalom Israel! Arrived on my first visit as External Affairs Minister. Looking forward to a great visit," he said on Twitter.

Jaishankar was received at the airport by Israel's Ambassador to India Naor Gilon, Chief of Protocol at Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Gil Haskal and India's Ambassador to Israel Sanjeev Singla.

The External Affairs Minister would call on President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid during his standalone visit.

He will also be holding talks with leading academics from all over Israel, business community leaders and interacting with the Indian Jewish community.

Jaishankar will also be visiting places of historical significance to India, demonstrating its long-term presence in the region and constructive role played in shaping the history of the region.

The visit will kick off with the External Affairs Minister paying tributes to brave Indian soldiers, who laid down their lives in the region during the World War I at the Talpiyot cemetery in Jerusalem.

About 900 Indian soldiers are interred in cemeteries across Israel in Jerusalem, Ramle and Haifa.

The heroics of the Indian soldiers have prominently come to light here during the past two decades and the story of liberation of the northern coastal city of Haifa, in what most war historians consider "the last great cavalry campaign in history", has become a household tale with its inclusion in the city's local history textbooks.

The Indian Army commemorates September 23 every year as Haifa Day to pay its respects to the three brave Indian Cavalry Regiments - Mysore, Hyderabad and Jodhpur Lancers - that helped liberate Haifa following a dashing cavalry action by the 15th Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade.

Captain Aman Singh Bahadur and Dafadar Jor Singh were awarded the Indian Order of Merit (IOM) and Captain Anop Singh and Second Lieutenant Sagat Singh were awarded the Military Cross (MC) as recognition for their bravery in this battle.

Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is greeted by the officials on his arrival in Israel PTI

Jaishankar lays wreath at cemetery for Indian soldiers in Israel

Jerusalem: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday began his five-day visit to Israel by laying wreath at a cemetery for Indian soldiers who laid down their lives in the region during the World War I in Talpiot, Jerusalem.

About 900 Indian soldiers are interred in cemeteries across Israel in Jerusalem, Ramle and Haifa. Jaishankar, who arrived here earlier in the day on his first visit to the country as the External Affairs Minister, laid wreath at the Talpiot Cemetery.

"Visited the Indian Cemetery at Talpiot as my first engagement in Jerusalem. Paid homage to the brave Indian soldiers who made the supreme sacrifie during World War I," he tweeted.

"I am deeply honoured to pay homage to the valiant sons of India who fought with bravery and courage in this land during WWI, bringing glory to themselves, their comrades and their motherland," Jaishankar wrote in the visitors book. ***PTI***

FIRST TIME SINCE COVID OUTBREAK

Mecca grand mosque drops social distancing

AFP ■ MECCA

The Grand Mosque in the Muslim holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia operated at full capacity Sunday, with worshippers praying shoulder-to-shoulder for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began.

Workers removed floor markings that guide people to social distance in and around the Grand Mosque, which is built around the Kaaba, the black cubic structure towards which Muslims around the world pray.

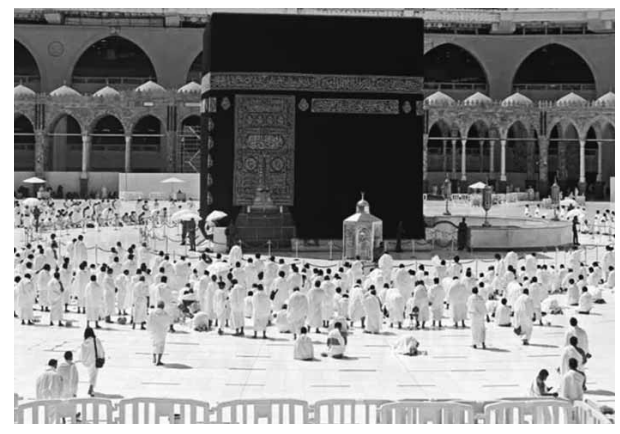
"This is in line with the decision to ease precautionary measures and to allow pilgrims and visitors to the Grand Mosque at full capacity," reported the official Saudi Press Agency.

Pictures and footage on Sunday morning showed people praying side by side, making straight rows of worshippers that are formations revered in performing Muslim prayers, for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic took hold last year.

While social distancing measures were lifted, the authorities said visitors must be fully vaccinated against coronavirus and must continue to wear masks on mosque grounds.

Also, the Kaaba remained cordoned off and out of reach.

Saudi Arabia announced in August it will begin accepting vaccinated foreigners wanting to make the Umrah pilgrimage.



The Umrah can be undertaken at any time and usually draws millions from around the globe, as does the annual Hajj, which abled-bodied Muslims who have the means must perform at least once in their lifetime.

In July, only around 60,000 inoculated residents were allowed to take part in a vastly scaled down form of the annual Hajj.

The Covid-19 pandemic hugely disrupted both Muslim pilgrimages, which are usually key revenue earners for the kingdom that rake in a combined $12 billion annually.

Hosting the pilgrimages is a matter of prestige for Saudi rulers, for whom the custodianship of Islam's holiest sites is their most powerful source of political legitimacy.

The once-reclusive kingdom began issuing tourist visas permitting foreign visitors to undertake more than just the pilgrimages for the first time in 2019 as part of an ambitious push to revamp its global image and diversify income.

Between September 2019 and March 2020, it issued 400,000 of them -- only for the pandemic to crush that momentum as borders were closed.

But the kingdom is slowly opening up, and has started welcoming vaccinated foreign tourists since August 1.

Saudi Arabia also announced that fully-inoculated sports fans will from Sunday be allowed to attend events at all stadiums and other sports facilities, reported SPA.

It has also said that masks in most open spaces are no longer mandatory.

Saudi Arabia has registered over 547,000 coronavirus cases and 8,760 deaths.

GLOBE TROTTING

BILL CLINTON TO BE RELEASED FROM HOSP

Orange (US): Bill Clinton spent a fourth night at a Southern California hospital where he is recovering from an infection but is expected to be released Sunday after making great progress, a spokesman said.

MILD QUAKE IN WEST NEPAL; NO DAMAGE

Kathmandu: A mild earthquake measuring 4.3 struck Nepal's western Gorkha district on Sunday, however no casualty or loss of property was reported, officials said. The epicentre of the tremor, which occurred at 4.09 am (03.54 IST), was located at Manabu village in the district, 145 km northwest of Kathmandu, according to the National Seismological Centre of Nepal.

COPTER CRASHES IN GERMANY, 3 DEAD

Berlin: Three people were killed when a helicopter crashed in southwestern Germany on Sunday, police said. The aircraft crash in a forested area near the small town of Buchen on Sunday afternoon, the news agency dpa reported.

MAN KILLS WIFE, 2 DAUGHTERS IN PAK

Peshawar: A 50-year-old Pakistani man allegedly shot dead his wife and two daughters on Sunday suspecting them of thievery, in the latest incident of 'honour killing' in the country, police said. The shooting occurred under the jurisdiction of Kalu Khan Police Station in Swabi district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, officials said. Jan Bahadur suspected his wife, daughters of stealing a newborn from the Mardan Medical Complex.

US religious group says 17 missionaries kidnapped in Haiti

AP ■ SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

A group of 17 missionaries including children was kidnapped by a gang in Haiti on Saturday, according to a voice message sent to various religious missions by an organization with direct knowledge of the incident.

The missionaries were on their way home from building an orphanage, according to a message from Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries.

"This is a special prayer alert," the one-minute message said. "Pray that the gang members would come to repentance."

The message says the mission's field director is working with the U.S. Embassy, and that the field director's family and one other unidentified man stayed at the ministry's base while everyone else visited the orphanage.

No other details were immediately available.

A U.S. government spokesperson said they were aware of the reports on the kidnapping.

"The welfare and safety of U.S. citizens abroad is one of the highest priorities of the Department of State," the spokesperson said, declining further comment.

Meanwhile, a senior U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States is in touch with Haitian authorities to try to resolve the case.

Haiti is once again struggling with a spike in gang-related kidnappings that had diminished after President Jovenel Moïse was fatally shot at his private residence on July 7, and following a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck southwest Haiti in August and killed more than 2,200 people.

Gangs have demanded ransoms ranging from a couple hundred dollars to more than $1 million, according to authorities.

Last month, a deacon was killed in front of a church in the capital of Port-au-Prince and his wife kidnapped, one of dozens of people who have been abducted in recent months.

At least 328 kidnapping victims were reported to Haiti's National Police in the first eight months of 2021, compared with a total of 234 for all of 2020, according to a report issued last month by the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti known as BINUH.

Gangs have been accused of kidnapping schoolchildren, doctors, police officers, busloads of passengers and others as they grow more powerful. In April, one gang kidnapped five priests and two nuns, a move that prompted a three-day protest, with Haitian now preparing for another protest scheduled for Monday to decry the lack of security in the impoverished country.

"Political turmoil, the surge in gang violence, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions – including food insecurity and malnutrition – all contribute to the worsening of the humanitarian situation," BINUH said in its report. "An overstretched and under-resourced police force alone cannot address the security ills of Haiti."

On Friday, the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to extend the U.N. political mission in Haiti.

The kidnapping of the missionaries comes just days after high-level U.S. officials visited Haiti and promised more resources for Haiti's National Police, including another $15 million to help reduce gang violence, which this year has displaced thousands of Haitians who now live in temporary shelters in increasingly unhygienic conditions.

Among those who met with Haiti's police chief was Uzra Zeya, U.S. under secretary of state for civilian security, democracy, and human rights.

"Dismantling violent gangs is vital to Haitian stability and citizen security," she recently tweeted.

Rescuers: Last Jew of Kabul making his way to Israel

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The man known as the last Jew of Kabul could soon be heading to Israel, after agreeing to grant his estranged wife a religious divorce in a Zoom call — a precondition for smooth entry to the Holy Land.

Zebulon Simentov, who fled Afghanistan last month after the Taliban takeover, landed Sunday in Turkey on what his rescuers say is a final stop before traveling to Israel, perhaps as soon as this week. It caps a weekslong odyssey that included an escape from his homeland as well as a videoconference divorce procedure meant to ensure he will not run into trouble with Israeli authorities.

Under Jewish religious law, a husband must agree to grant his wife a divorce, something he had refused to do for many years. Facing the prospect of legal action in Israel, where his ex-wife lives, Simentov, after resisting for years, finally agreed to the divorce last month in a special Zoom call supervised by Australian rabbinical authorities.

The Associated Press viewed part of the proceeding. During the sometimes chaotic discussion, conducted through an interpreter who struggled to explain the procedure, Simentov agrees to sign a divorce document known as a "get" after receiving assurances that he will not face trouble in Israel.

Rabbi Moshe Margaretten, whose nonprofit group Tzedek Association funded the journey, said Simentov had spent the last few weeks living quietly in Pakistan, an Islamic country that does not have diplomatic relations with Israel.

He said his group had looked into bringing Simentov to the U.S. but decided that Israel was a better destination both because of difficulties in arranging a U.S. entry visa and because Simentov has many relatives, including five siblings and two daughters, already in Israel.

"We are relieved we were successful in helping Zebulon Simentov escape from Afghanistan and now into safety in Turkey," said Margaretten, whose group has helped evacuate several dozen other people from Afghanistan. "Zebulon's life was in danger in Afghanistan."

Rabbi Mendy Chitrik, chairman of the Alliance of Rabbis in Islamic States, greeted Simentov at the airport in Istanbul on Sunday. He said he had an appointment to take Simentov to the Israeli consulate on Monday to arrange his entry to Israel. Under Israel's "Law of Return," any Jew is entitled to Israeli citizenship.

Russian filmmakers land after shoot aboard space station

In this photo taken from video footage released by Roscosmos Space Agency, Russian space agency cosmonaut Oleg Novitskiy, centre, actress Yulia Peresild, left, and film director Klim Shipenko sit in chairs shortly after the landing of the Russian Soyuz MS-18 space capsule, southeast of the Kazakh town of Zhezkazgan, Kazakhstan on SundayAP

AP ■ MOSCOW

A Soyuz space capsule carrying a cosmonaut and two Russian filmmakers has landed after a 3 1/2-hour trip from the International Space Station.

The capsule, descending under a red-and-white striped parachute after entering Earth's atmosphere, landed upright in the steppes of Kazakhstan on schedule at 0435 GMT Sunday with Oleg Novitskiy, Yulia Peresild and Klim Shipenko aboard.

Actress Peresild and film director Shipenko rocketed to the space station on Oct. 5 for a 12-day stint to film segments of a movie titled "Challenge," in which a surgeon played by Peresild rushes to the space station to save a crew member who needs an urgent operation in orbit. Novitskiy, who spent more than six months aboard the space station, is to star as the ailing cosmonaut in the movie.

After the landing, which sent plumes of dust flying high in the air, ground crews extracted the three space flyers from the capsule and placed them in seats set up nearby as they adjusted to the pull of gravity. They were then taken to a medical tent for examination.

All appeared healthy and cheerful. Peresild smiled and held a large bouquet of white flowers as journalists clustered around her. But she said she also felt a touch of melancholy.

"I'm feeling a bit sad today. It seemed that 12 days would be a lot, but I did not want to leave when everything was over," Peresild said on state TV.

The transfer to the medical tent was delayed for about 10 minutes while crews filmed several takes of Peresild and Novitskiy in their seats, which are to be included in the movie. More scenes remain to be shot on Earth for the film whose release date is uncertain.

Russia sees highest daily new Covid cases

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia is reporting its largest daily number of new coronavirus infections, more than 70% up on the number a month ago as the country faces a sustained rise in cases.

The national coronavirus task force on Sunday said 34,303 new infections were recorded in the previous day, compared with the 20,174 reported Sept. 19. The death toll of 999 was barely lower than the record 1,002 deaths reported on Saturday.

Russian authorities have tried to speed up the pace of vaccinations with lotteries, bonuses and other incentives, but widespread vaccine skepticism and conflicting signals from officials stymied the efforts. The government said this week that about 43 million Russians, or some 29% of the country's nearly 146 million people, are fully vaccinated.

Despite the mounting toll, the Kremlin has ruled out a new nationwide lockdown like the one early on in the pandemic that badly hurt the economy, eroding President Vladimir Putin's popularity. Instead, it has delegated the power to enforce coronavirus restrictions to regional authorities.

Some of Russia's 85 regions have restricted attendance at large public events and limited access to theaters, restaurants and other venues. However, daily life is going on largely as normal in Moscow, St. Petersburg and many other Russian cities.

The highest concentrations of cases are mostly in comparatively urbanized western Russia and in the developed areas along the Pacific Coast such as Vladivostok and Khabarovsk, but the sparsely populated Siberian region of Sakha and Chukotka in the extreme northeast also show high case rates of more than 150 infections per 100,000 people over a seven-day period.

2 migrants dead, 21 missing off Tunisia in shipwreck

AP ■ TUNIS

At least two migrants died and 21 have disappeared after their boat capsized on Sunday off the Tunisian coast in the Mediterranean Sea, Tunisian officials said. Seven others were rescued.

According to the spokesman at the court in Mahdia, a Tunisian port, coast guards were alerted by a survivor. Ferid Ben Jha told *The Associated Press* that all 30 migrants onboard were Tunisian citizens who wanted to cross the Mediterranean and reach Italy.

He said prosecutors have opened a criminal investigation into human smuggling.

A coast guard official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to talk publicly, said the shipwreck was probably due to bad weather and the boat being too small.

Somali-origin suspect in UK MP's murder held under Terrorism Act

PTI ■ LONDON

The suspect arrested in England's Essex following the killing of British Conservative MP Sir David Amess has been named as Ali Harbi Ali, a 25-year-old man of Somali heritage, now being held under the stringent Terrorism Act.

Amess, 69 and a member of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's ruling Conservative Party, died after being stabbed several times on Friday as he was meeting his constituents in at Belfairs Methodist Church in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.

Scotland Yard's Counter Terrorism Command officers have an extended period until Friday to question the suspect under the act.

According to reports, Ali was referred to the UK's counter-terrorism deradicalisation Prevent scheme some years ago, but was never a formal subject of interest to for the MI5 security services.

"The man was subsequently further detained under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and he is now being held at a London police station," the Metropolitan Police said.

"On Saturday, 16 October, detectives were granted a warrant of further detention at Westminster Magistrates' Court, allowing them to keep the man in custody until Friday, October 22, when the warrant expires.

"As part of the fast-paced investigation, officers have attended three addresses in the London area and conducted searches. One of these searches has concluded and the others are ongoing," the force said. The suspect was arrested on Friday at the scene of the attack and a knife used in the attack was recovered at the scene.

The incident has been formally declared as terrorism by Senior National Coordinator for Counter Terrorism Policing, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dean Haydon, and the Met's Counter Terrorism Command is leading the investigation.

UK Home Secretary Priti Patel, also an MP from Essex, ordered an urgent review of the security procedures for members of Parliament.

On Sunday, Patel said "immediate" security changes are being offered to MPs after the killing and they are being asked to share their whereabouts with the police.

Asked if MPs could get the kind of close protection that they receive in Westminster, the minister said: "All these issues and options are in consideration right now."

"We have all changed our ways of working because of changing concerns, threats in society.

Celebrities to join Prince William for Earthshot Prize award

AP ■ LONDON

Celebrities will join Prince William in London on Sunday for the inaugural awards ceremony of his Earthshot Prize, an ambitious environmental program aiming to find new ideas and technologies around the world to tackle climate change and Earth's most pressing challenges.

Judges including naturalist and veteran broadcaster David Attenborough, actor Cate Blanchett and singer Shakira are expected to attend the ceremony. Actors Emma Thompson, Emma Watson and David Oyelowo will join Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, in handing out the awards.

William and his charity, The Royal Foundation, launched the Earthshot Prize last year, inspired by President John F. Kennedy's 1962 "Moonshot" speech that challenged and inspired Americans to go to the moon.

The prize, to be awarded to five winners every year until 2030, is billed as the most prestigious of its kind. Each winner will receive a grant worth 1 million pounds ($1.4 million) to develop and scale up their ideas.

"We are alive in the most consequential time in human history," William said in a prerecorded short film. "The actions we choose or choose not to take in the next 10 years will determine the fate of the planet for the next thousand."

"Many of the answers are already out there," he added. "But we need everyone, from all parts of society. to raise their ambition and unite in repairing our planet."

The finalists include a 14-year-old student who proposes using solar energy to replace charcoal to power millions of roadside ironing carts in India; a land-based coral farm in the Bahamas to restore dying coral reefs.

MONETISATION OF ASSETS OF PRIVATISATION-BOUND CPSEs

FinMin to seek Cabinet nod for setting up company

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry will soon move the Cabinet to seek approval for setting up a company for transfer and subsequent monetisation of land and non-core assets of privatisation-bound CPSEs, an official said.

A special purpose vehicle (SPV) in the form of a company would be set up by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to hold these assets which would be monetised to fetch value to the exchequer, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said.

"We are talking about a company which will be there for many years, which will specialise in handling surplus land and non-core asset monetisation. We are expecting it shortly. As soon as we get Cabinet approval," Pandey told PTI. There are some CPSEs for strategic disinvestment and "we feel certain portion of land is not really worth going with the company and those assets could be monetised", he said. Cabinet nod, the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE), which is now under the Ministry of Finance, will be entrusted with doing the asset monetisation.

The government is targeting to conclude strategic sale of BPCL, Shipping Corporation of India, IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd, this fiscal.

In the 2021-22 Budget, the government announced the PSE (public sector enterprises) privatisation policy as per which all PSUs will be privatised, barring four strategic sectors of Atomic energy, Space and Defence; Transport and Telecommunications; Power, Petroleum, Coal and other minerals; and Banking, Insurance and financial services. In these strategic sectors, the Government will retain only a bare minimum number of PSUs.

SITHARAMAN TO CEOs OF MAJOR US GIANTS

'Opportunities galore for investors and industry stakeholders'

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Opportunities are galore in India for all investors and industry stakeholders with the current reset in the global supply chain and clear-headed and committed leadership in the country, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has told CEOs of top American companies.

Sitharaman arrived here on Friday after her visit to Washington DC where she participated in the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Sitharaman and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen also co-chaired the eighth ministerial meeting of the India-USA Economic and Financial Partnership Dialogue in Washington.

"With the current reset in the global supply chain and clear-headed India, I see opportunities galore in India for all investors and industry stakeholders," Sitharaman said during her address to global business leaders and investors at a roundtable organised by industry chamber FICCI and the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum here on Saturday.

Startups in India have grown tremendously and many are now raising money through capital markets. This year itself, more than 16 of them will qualify as unicorns, she said.

India has fully leveraged the potential of digitisation even during the most challenging times, the finance minister said. in the financial sector is enabling pushing the frontier of financial inclusion and fintechs are playing a key role in this area, she said at the roundtable, the Finance Ministry tweeted.

Sitharaman also met Mastercard Executive Chairman Ajay Banga and Mastercard CEO Michael Miebach, FedEx Corporation President and Chief Operating Officer Raj Subramaniam.

Govt seeks applications for 20 judicial, technical members at NCLT, NCLAT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has sought applications for a total of 20 positions of judicial and technical members at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) as well as the appellate tribunal NCLAT.

As many as 15 posts, including that of 9 judicial members and 6 technical members, are to be filled up at the NCLT. Besides, applications have been invited for 3 positions of judicial members and 2 of technical members at the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

The last date for submission of the applications online is November 12, according to public notices issued by the corporate affairs ministry.

In recent weeks, the government has been filling up vacancies at various tribunals, including NCLT and ITAT (Income Tax Appellate Tribunal).

Last month, at least 31 people were appointed as judicial, technical and accountant members at NCLT and ITAT.

On September 6, the Supreme Court said the Centre was testing its "patience" and "emasculating" tribunals by not appointing officials to the quasi-judicial bodies which are facing severe crunch of presiding officers as well as judicial and technical members. The apex court had also emphasised that it did not want any confrontation with the government.

Among other requirements for the positions at NCLT and NCLAT, the applicants should be at least 50 years old

Among other requirements for the positions at NCLT and NCLAT, the applicants should be at least 50 years old.

A person should have been a judge of a high court or a district judge for at least 5 years or has a minimum 10 years experience to be considered for the post of judicial member at the NCLAT.

In the case of a technical member, those who have been practising as a chartered accountant, cost accountant or company for at least 15 years will be eligible.

People with a minimum of 15 years as a member of the Indian Corporate Law Service or Indian Legal Service and holding the rank of Secretary or Additional Secretary to the central government can also apply.

Besides, individuals who have served for at least 5 years as a presiding officer of a labour court, tribunal or national tribunal constituted under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 will be eligible, according to a public notice.

Those with "proven ability, integrity and standing having special knowledge and professional experience, of not less than 15 years, in industrial finance, industrial management, industrial reconstruction, investment, accountancy..." will also be able to apply for the post of technical member at the NCLAT.

The principal bench of NCLAT is in the national capital and another bench is in Chennai.

India's coal import drops in Aug despite higher fuel demand from power sector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import registered a decline of 2.7 per cent to 15.22 million tonnes (MT) in August this year amid the country's power plants grappling with fuel shortages.

The country imported 15.64 MT of coal in the corresponding month last year.

According to data compiled by mjunction services, "Imports in August 2021 stood at around 15.22 million tonnes...Imports in August 2021 were also down by 2.7 percent over August 2020."

Mjunction CEO and MD Vinaya Varma attributed the decline in volumes to the steady increase in seaborne coal prices coupled with the initiatives taken by the domestic miners for import substitution.

However, he said, there is a spurt in demand from the power sector.

"What impact it will have on imports, given the volatility in international prices, is to be seen," he added. Of the total import during August 2021, non-coking coal was at 9.08 MT, against 10.33 MT imported during August last year. Coking coal imports were at 4.37 MT, up against 3.17 MT imported during August 2020.

India's coal imports during August 2021 through the major and non-major ports are estimated to have decreased by 6.71 per cent over July 2021.

Imports in July stood at 16.31 MT.

During April-August 2021, coal import stood at 92.49 MT, about 21.27 per cent higher than 76.27 MT imported during April-August 2020.During April-August 2021, non-coking coal import was at 60.85 MT as compared to 51.23 MT imported during April-August 2020.

Coking coal imports were recorded at 22.19 MT, against 14.38 MT imported during the same period last year. Coal India which accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output had earlier said that due to skyrocketing coal prices in international markets, all the consumers have been vying for domestic coal, hiking up the demand.Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi on Thursday said closure of some mines, and inundation of a few others due to monsoon led to the crisis but there is no need to panic as the situation is improving.

FPIs turn net sellers in capital markets; pull out ₹1,472 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) have turned net sellers in the capital markets in October so far, reversing the trend of net investments in the previous two months, due to depreciation in the rupee and global factors, experts said.

According to the depositories' data, FPIs have pulled out ₹1,472 crore from capital markets on a net basis in the current month so far.

A trend reversal was witnessed in the debt segment in October from the big buying in the previous two months when FPIs had invested ₹13,363 crore in September and ₹14,376.2 crore in August. In October so far, they pulled out ₹1,698 crore.

"This trend reversal in debt investment is due to the INR depreciation in October," said VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services. In equities, FPIs invested ₹226 crore on a net basis.

"FPIs who were sellers in banking stocks in the first half of September turned buyers in the second half. But they were sellers in software services throughout September. The strong performance by IT companies like Wipro, Infosys and Mindtree is likely to attract more flows into the segment, going forward," he added.

Himanshu Srivastava, associate director - manager research, Morningstar India said that as markets touched all-time highs and valuations soar, FPI would have preferred to stay on the sidelines, adopt a wait and watch approach and continue to book profits along the way.

"There continues to be a concern among FPIs with respect to the tapering of easy liquidity after the US Fed hinted of rate hike sooner than expected. Concerns such as rising oil prices and US bond yields and challenges to the Chinese economy have also been on their radar,

thus keeping them on tenterhook and preventing them from substantially investing in Indian markets," he added.

On the future of FPI flows, Shrikant Chouhan, head - equity research (retail), Kotak Securities said that Brent crude oil prices are trading at elevated levels and a sharp increase in energy prices can be a key headwind for the equity markets.

In addition, any increase in the rate by the US Fed Reserve in the near future, would also act a key headwind for overall flow in the emerging markets. Hence, FPI flows are expected to remain volatile in the emerging markets.

Gold ETFs attract ₹446-crore in Sept

INFLOW MAY CONTINUE IN COMING MONTHS ON FESTIVE SEASON DEMAND

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) attracted ₹446 crore in September and inflow may continue in coming months due to strong demand on the back of festival season in the country.

The was sharply higher than the net inflow of ₹24 crore recorded in the previous month. In July, the category saw a net withdrawal of ₹61.5 crore, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

With this, gold ETF category has received a net inflow of ₹3,515 crore so far. The segment witnessed just one month of net outflows, which was in July.

The latest inflow helped in pushing the number of folios in the category by over 14 per cent to 24.6 lakh in September from 21.46 lakh in the preceding month. So far this year, the folio numbers have surged by 56 per cent. Market experts attributed the inflow in September to correction in the price of the yellow metal and onset of the festival season in the country.

"Gold ETFs saw a prominent inflow for the past month. In the thick of a volatile market, resorting to a safe instrument can be one of the reasons for this move, with rising gold prices being the other reason drawing attention to the instrument," Priti Rathi Gupta, Founder of LXME, said.

Country's oil import bill has risen in just 5 months of FY22

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The sharp economic recovery and rising demand post the second wave of Covid coupled with a spike in global oil prices may pose a challenge for the Government in FY22 to maintain fiscal discipline amid good growth in tax revenue.

The country's crude oil import bill that fell drastically last year in the absence of demand and soft oil prices, has risen by over 138 per cent in April-August of FY22 to $ 42 billion, up from close to $ 18 billion the same period of last year.

During the period, crude has jumped by about 40 per cent from $60 a barrel to more than $85 a barrel now. This price pressure has come when demand for petroleum products is on a rise in the country already reaching pre-Covid levels and rising.

All this has meant that India is not only importing more to meet additional demand, but is doing it at premium prices ballooning its import bill.

Quarterly earnings, global cues to dictate trends in markets this week: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Quarterly earnings and global cues will be the major sentiment driver for the equity market this week, according to analysts.

Of late, Benchmark indices have been on a record-breaking run.

"Quarterly results will dictate market sentiment and will be the talk of this week as they pick up the pace. D-Street will be all ears to any management insights to forecast the future earnings trajectory.

"With the anticipation that companies would keep up their momentum from the previous quarter into the second quarter, investors may see whipsaw movements in the stock this week as results beat or miss market expectations," said Yesha Shah, head (equity research) at Samco Securities.

Among major earnings to be announced this week are from UltraTech

Cement, ACC, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Asian Paints, Hindustan Zinc, IDBI, Bank of Maharashtra, South Indian Bank, Federal Bank and Reliance Industries Limited.

"If we talk about the cues for this week then quarterly earnings will dominate the market where the market will react to HDFC Bank and Avenue Supermarts earnings on Monday.

"Ultratech Cement, ACC, HUL, Nestle, Asian Paints, JSW Steel, HDFC Life, and Reliance Industries will come out with their earnings during the week," Santosh Meena, head (research) at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said.

He further added that other than earnings, global cues will be important where global markets have started to do well after a period of correction.

Last week, the BSE benchmark rallied 1,246.89 points or 2.07 per cent.

The benchmark went past the 61,000-mark for the first time on Thursday.

Markets were closed on Friday for Dussehra.

"Banking will be the key sector under focus in the coming days as the sector is set to kick-start its earnings season. With the expectation of a strong recovery in corporate earnings, the Indian market is positioned to continue its bull run.

"However, any deviation from market expectation may lead to short-term correction in the respective segments," said Vinod Nair, head (research) at Geojit Financial Services.

Markets will also track the movement of the rupee, foreign institutional investors and Brent crude.

Power consumption up 3% at 57.22 billion units in Oct

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's power consumption grew 3.35 per cent in the first half of October to 57.22 billion units (BU), showing recovery amid coal shortage at electricity generation plants, according to power ministry data.

Last year during October 1-15, power consumption stood at 55.36 BU which was higher than 49.66 BU in the same period in 2019. The data clearly shows that there is recovery in power consumption as well as demand in the country.

Amid the coal shortage at power plants in the country, the peak power shortage moderated to 986 MW on October 15 in sharp contrast to 11,626 MW on October 7.

It is to be noted that the 11,626 MW peak power shortage on October 7 was the highest during the first half of this month.

Besides, the latest coal stock report for 135 coal-based power plants monitored by Central Electricity Authority for October 13, showed that the number of non-pithead power plants having less than four days of coal stock (supercritical coal stock) reduced to 64 from 69 on October 8 when the daily power consumption touched its peak of 3,900 million units in first half of this month.

Earlier this week, the power ministry had stated that the capacity of units under outage due to low coal stocks reduced from 11 GW on October 12 to 5 GW on October 14. Experts are of the view that there would be good recovery in power demand as well as consumption due to the government's efforts to ramp up coal supplies at plants and improvement in economic activities due to lifting of lockdown restrictions by states.

Improved affordability of residential assets, lowest-ever interest rate pushing home loan demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Favourable demographics, improved affordability of residential properties and historically low mortgage rates are pushing the demand for home loans, mortgage lenders said.

Several major banks, mortgage companies and housing finance companies have significantly reduced their interest rates on home loans during the festival period to encash revival in housing demand after the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In some cases, the interest rate on home loans is as low as 6.5 per cent.Asked about the likely impact of its decision to cut mortgage rates for the festive season on home loan disbursals, HDFC Managing DirectorRenu Sud Karnad said the lower interest rate does help but it is just one of the many variables for the pick-up in demand for home loans.

"Housing today is much more affordable than it ever was. In the last couple of years, property prices have more or less remained the same across the country while income levels have gone up," she noted.

Karnad further said people are upgrading to bigger size apartments because of the requirements of additional space post-outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Work from home, education from home and entertainment from home due to the pandemic have also made people realise the need for anadditional space at home," she said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that my clients Sh. Pritam Singh S/o Late Sh. Charan Singh and his wife Gagan Jeet Kaur both R/o WZ-46/3A, Mukherjee Park, Chaukhandi Road, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-110018 have severed all their relation with their son Mr. Manmeet Singh (unmarried) due to his unacceptable behaviour and conducts. Both of my clients have also disowned & debarred their said son from all their movable and immovable properties. Anybody dealing with Mr. Manmeet Singh will do so and have done so at his/her/their own risk and responsibilities and my clients and their properties will not be responsible for any act, deed or dealing including financial dealing done by Mr. Manmeet Singh.

Santosh Kumar (Advocate)
WZ-64A, Mukherjee Park, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-18

India will launch industry-led policies in space sector: ISRO chief

IANS ■ DUBAI

India is revising its existing policies and is also in the process of bringing in new ones to increase industry participation in the space sector, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Dr K. Sivan said on Sunday.

Sivan, who is Secretary, Department of Space, said this, via a video message during the inaugural session on 'Future of Space-International Participations and Collaborations' at The India Pavilion, Expo 2020 Dubai.

He emphasised that the recent reforms in the sector has ensured that the role of the private sector has evolved from being just suppliers to partners in the process.

He also highlighted that space is one of the significant areas that India is looking at for international cooperation.

"I hope space cooperation will further strengthen with commercial and technological collaborations," said Sivan, adding that Indian industry has to play a big role in the space sector globally.

India is planning to boost the space sector in the global market.

With an aim to make the country an economic space hub in the future, it also recently launched a new industry body, the Indian Space Association (ISpA).

DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

OA/816/19 DATE:- 27.08.2021
PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK APPLICANT
VERSUS
SH. SATPAL BISHNOI & ORS. RESPONDENT

To,
DEFENDANT

4. M/S AMRAPALI SAPPHIRE DEVELOPERS PVT LTD.
307, 3rd FLOOR NIPUN TOWER KARKARDOOMA COMMUNITY CENTRE DELHI-92
ALSO AT:- C-56/40 SECT-62 NOIDA
ALSO AT:- GH-01 SECT:- 43 NOIDA

Whereas the above named applicant (s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of **Rs.44,61,031/- (RUPEES FORTY FOUR LAKH SIXTY ONE THOUSAND AND THIRTY ONE ONLY)** against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on **20.10.2021 at 10:30 A.M.**

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing for that purpose: -

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the **"Cisco Webex"** application/software;
(ii) **"Meeting ID"** and **"Password"** for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar-Recovery Officer-1/and Recovery Officer-II shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. **drt.gov.in** under the Public Notice Head.
(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned official at **Ph. No. 23748478.**

Given under hand and the seal of the Tribunal on this the **27th day of August of 2021.**

BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL

ASSISTANT REGISTRAR
DRT-II, DELHI

PARADIP PORT TRUST

e-TENDER CALL NOTICE

Name of the work: **"Connecting open drain and septic tanks to STP of capacity 2.00 MLD at Bhimabhoi colony".**
Estimated cost: **Rs. 5,63,61,035/-**
Last Date & time of submission: **27.10.2021 upto 17:00 Hrs.**
Refer our website for details: **https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.**
Executive Engineer PHD(M), PPT
PPT/PR/118/21-22 Dt. 14.10.2021

Bollywood

'For the role of Basanti in *Sholay*, I felt that no one can do the best apart from Hema Malini.'
—Ramesh Sippy

HOLISTIC LIVING

Yoga and Ayurveda improve the quality of life and inculcate a positive attitude towards ageing, says NAMITA PIPARAIYA

In Ayurveda, a lifespan is divided into three stages — *balavastha* (childhood), *madhyavastha* (young and middle age), and *vridhavastha* (old age). It is evident that two people of the same age may have different energy levels, and a lot depends on how we take care of our body or how much we push our energy beyond its limit.

Four factors influence our ageing, such as time, nature, diet, and type of illness. Additionally, in *vridhavastha*, vata dosha (air and space element) becomes dominant. Since vata is concerned with bones and the nervous system, if proper care is not taken, the degeneration can be seen in joints along with the mind that undergoes various cognitive issues. These are some of the first signs of age-related decline.

Here are a few ways in which Ayurveda and yoga can help in enhancing your lifestyle:

❒Create a routine

This is the first stage of ayurvedic living. At each stage of life, we must create a routine that suits our personality-type. Having a fixed sleep schedule, starting your day by drinking water, finishing all ablutions, and making time for some mindful activities, like yoga and meditation, can help rejuvenate you in the morning itself. Plan your days and find activities that you enjoy — it helps in avoiding the feelings of loneliness and boredom.

❒Stay active

Moderate daily activity will keep the body and bones healthy. In the vata stage, more grounding activities like hatha yoga or moderate weight-training are recommended. High-intensive activities like plyometrics increase vata, so it may not be suitable for everyone. Therefore, it is significant to choose your physical activities accordingly. Balance training is particularly important for healthy ageing because it is an excellent way to tone down vata and to develop strong mind-body awareness.

❒Focus on mental fitness

Along with a healthy body, a strong mind is also important. We often underestimate the stresses of old age, which may arise due to loneliness, fear, loss of ability, and so on. By making time for pranayama, meditation, mindful walking, and even by engaging in recreational hobbies, we can keep our minds healthy.

❒Eat well

We must change our nutritional needs. Especially after 60, our dietary habits start catching up with our bodily systems. Therefore, we start seeing increased instances of issues like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart failure, electrolyte imbalances, insomnia, and so on. So, it is important to choose nutrient-rich foods, that you can get by eating a wide variety of local produce, eating more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, healthy fats, especially Omega 3s. You should avoid sugary foods, dry salty snacks, and junk food.

❒Explore ayurvedic therapies

Not all herbs or therapies are suitable for everyone. An ayurvedic doctor will assess your body type and recommend treatments suitable for your specific conditions. This can include panchakarma, herbs, or dietary prescriptions. These are best taken after being assessed by a professional.

With a little discipline and some motivation, we can improve not only our longevity but also our quality of life. It helps in keeping a positive attitude towards ageing.

(The author is the founder of Yoganama, a wellness platform that emphasises on yoga, Ayurveda and philosophy for mindful living.)

WEBBED

ONE MIC STAND

The second season of the unscripted comedy original will see filmmaker, Karan Johar, novelist, Chetan Bhagat, actor, Sunny Leone, journalist, Faye D'Souza and rapper, Raftaar, attempting stand-up comedy for the first time. It will be released on October 22 on Amazon Prime Video.

AISA WAISA PYAAR

Starring Saqib Saleem, Nidhi Singh, Prit Kamani, Ahsaas Channa, Adah Sharma, Taaha Shah, Rajit Kapur, and Sheeba Chaddha, the film depicts different shades of love through four separate relationships criss-crossing each other. It will release on October 27 on Eros Now.

GIRGIT

The story unravels the secrets of each character that has an evident and sharp resemblance to a chameleon. Starring, Nakul Roshan Sahdev, Taniya Kalrra, and Trupti Khamkar, the web-show will stream from October 27 on ALTBalaji and MX Player Gold

Don't second-guess cops

It is exciting to portray multiple shades with layered emotions, says SAMAR VERMANI, on playing the role of a double-faced police officer in his new web-series, *Girgit*

The actor, Samar Vermani, who was seen in late actor Om Puri's *Lashtam Pashtam*, will be playing the role of a cop in the forthcoming web-series, *Girgit*. Vermani will be playing the character of Rathod, an odd foul-mouthed cop who doesn't believe in second-guessing.

Vermani defined his character, "Rathod is the culmination of everything raw and irreverent." This is his digital debut project, and the actor is quite excited about it.

"For an actor, it is always exciting to portray multiple shades with layered emotions," said Vermani, describing his role.

"For the first time, I have played the role of a tough-cop card with a character like a chameleon that also resonates with the nature and title of the show *Girgit*," he added.

The actor revealed that the show's premise left him so intrigued that he asked for the script to read further. He expressed, "After reading the synopsis, I was curious to read further, so I asked for the script. The script turned out to be even juicier, and when I read about my character, it was interesting and enticing. I couldn't be more convinced to say yes to the show."

The show stars Nakul Roshan Sahdev, Taniya Kalrra, and Trupti Khamkar in primary roles. *Girgit* will stream from October 27 on ALTBalaji and MX Player Gold.

—IANS

Budget fashion

You can look good without burning a hole in your pocket with these traditional outfit options. By TEAM VIVA

After an extended Covid hiatus, it is hard to stay calm. The festive season is approaching and the thought of celebrating your favourite festivals with friends and family makes you excited. As you get prepared to soak up the Navratri craze and revel in the glory of Diwali, the thrill of selecting your looks and the excitement of adorning your desired traditional attires cannot be overlooked.

When it comes to festive shopping, there are over a dozen things to put together to perfect your look(s). While this season is more about making lasting memories in your best ethnic outfit and less about fretting over burning a hole in your pocket, we have picked some of the top ensembles under ₹15,000 which aptly reflect the ethnic spirit, to make your celebrations guilt-free.

❖Shiraz set by Gulabo Jaipur

Prized at ₹7,300, this georgette attire includes taari details and gota work, which makes it ideal for any festive occasion. The flared pants and a contrasting organza dupatta add an exclusive beauty to this traditional look. With *prêt* aesthetics at its core, this three-piece outfit is chic, elegant, minimalistic, and budget-friendly.

❖Kurta-gharara set by Global Desi

With a hot pink embroidered top and matching gharara-style pants, this attire, priced at ₹5,499, quite perfectly exudes an ethnic spirit, adding depth to the look with absolute ease. While the three-fourth sleeves and a V-neck give a boost to the style quotient, the printed intricacies on the pants make the ensemble a fine mix of chic, classy, and trendy.

❖*Chanderi* kurta-pants by Ridhi Mehra

Flourishing floral prints and a trendy silhouette, this fuchsia pink ensemble presents a trendy and feminine vibe. The *chanderi* work epitomises elegance and induces a sophisticated charm to the outfit. The couture label uses a combination of plush fabric, contemporary patterns, and affordable luxury to add a twist to Indian wear.

❖Silk kaftan dress by Prints by Radhika

The ₹15,000 burgundy kaftan dress, made of pure silk, incorporates *prêt* elements that add an appealing look to the outfit. The thread tassels and the sharp neckline add subdued oomph and elegance to the attire, which is every bit chic and minimalistic.

❖Asymmetrical kurta and *farshi* pants by Pink City

Priced at ₹14,000, this asymmetrical kurta, with a V-shaped hemline and temple borders, flaunts a vibrant and smart vibe. It is the ideal fashion choice for an intimate occasion. While the *gota*-work in the centre adds a defining touch to the look, the silhouette brings an ethereal effect to the attire.

❖Ombré anarkali set by Neha Chopra

This pink ombre anarkali set entails a pink churidar and a butterfly-printed dupatta that brings a luxurious touch to Indian fashion. The set, priced at ₹12,000, has a natural and stylistic flair accompanied with minimalism and a classic appeal. The outfit's palette choice, combined with its graceful expression of individualism and elegance, makes it a fine cut for the festive season.

❖Ivory botanical tunic by Archana Shah

The floral-printed tunic mirrors subdued elegance and chic comfort. With a silk base and organza trimmings, this ivory tunic, worth ₹ 14,500, boasts a well-fitted silhouette and eye-catching designs. Perfect for any traditional or Indo-western do, the tunic is a celebratory marriage of Indian and modern sensibilities.

TREND BLAZER

MILIND GUNAJI'S NEW PROJECTS

The actor, **MILIND GUNAJI,** has several forthcoming projects like *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2* with Karthik Aryan and Kiara Advani, *Wings of Gold*, featuring a Bruce Lee lookalike and Ali Fazal, along with a web series.

"I feel fortunate enough to be a part of such big Bollywood projects, unlike many actors who have faded away with time. I have always loved being an entertainer, and that's what keeps me going even after so many years," Gunaji shared.

fairtalk
URVASHI RAUTELA

'I am excited to announce the title of my next film, *Dil Hai Gray,* on the auspicious day of Vijaya Dashami. It was lovely working with the director, Susi Ganeshan, producer, M Ramesh Reddy, and my co-stars, Vineet Kumar Singh and Akshay Oberoi. I am sure that the story will be loved by the audience. I hope my fans would bless us with their love.'

dailytalk
ANU MALIK

'Farah Khan and I had *deja vu* as Rahul Vaidya started his journey in front of us. Now, he is promoting his song. His journey has been commendable. He is one of the nicest and most talented human beings I've ever met and I really wish him all the best in his career and for his new music video, *Garbe Ki Raat*.'

ADELE'S ALBUM TO RELEASE SOON

The English singer-songwriter, **ADELE**, has announced that her long-awaited album titled *30* will be releasing on November 19.

Reminiscing old memories, she expressed, "I was willingly throwing myself into a maze of absolute mess. I have learned a lot of blistering truths about myself along the way. When I was writing it, it was my friend who came over with a bottle of wine and a takeaway to cheer me up. Now, I feel peaceful, and I am ready to release my album."

EXPLORING NEW AVENUES

The Sehgal Foundation has been assisting women in Muzaffarpur to consider goat-rearing as a mode of additional income since relying on agriculture alone provides little profit, says SARITA BRARA

Pinki Devi, at her goat-shed

For rural communities dependent on agriculture, one and a half *bighas* of land is not enough for survival. Mintu Devi and her husband from Ratanpura village in Muzzafarpur district of Bihar had only that much land. When they had almost given up on cultivation, Sehgal Foundation — a non-profit organiSation — guided the couple to make the most of the resources available to them. Arrangements were made for Mintu to receive training from the Kisan Vikas Kendra and RSETI (Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes) — an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD). The couple were also given farm implements like a planter, on rent, to sow potato and wheat seeds.

"Earlier the input cost was more while the production was less. Now, it is the other way round, less expenditure on the inputs and more income from the production," shared Mintu, adding that, "People would look at me with awe when I used the planters in my little farm." While mechanisation helped in increasing the production of the two commodities, it was still not enough for a decent living.

Realising the need of additional livelihood opportunities, the foundation decided to encourage small-scale farmers to opt for additional livelihood related activity to bolster their income apart from assist them in increasing production through mechanisation. They did a pilot project and realised that goat farming or *goatery* can be a good source of income in the region, as it did not require a major investment. Goats can also be sold to procure cash in case of any emergency or to meet unexpected expenditures. However, as goats are sensitive animals, they require proper care and attention, especially during peak summer and monsoon months. Apart from the training, another formidable challenge was ensuring the availability of medical care. This was done in collaboration with the Department of Animal Husbandry.

As it is the women usually look after cattle and Mintu was given five female, as well as one male goat. She was provided with training before and after the goats were given on

Asha Devi, tending to her goats

Mintu Devi, preparing feed for her goats

their upkeep, preparing their feed, timely vaccination and the kind of dwelling that was needed for their shelter. This was in July 2019.

In the last two years, Mintu's life has transformed. Today, she is not only the proud owner of a general store that she opened exactly a year after she began goat farming, but her *goatery* enterprise is flourishing with the third generation of 15 goats. Additionally, her earnings from agriculture have almost doubled and she has invested in more opportunities.

"I am keeping six quintals of potatoes in a cold storage at Mehsi village located a few kilometres away from our village in the hope of selling potato seeds at a good price," she explained. She also has a kitchen garden in which she does subsistence farming. Mintu has become an inspiration for many others in the village. She encourages other women to adopt goat-farming as an additional activity to earn more income.

"If you are able to earn income on your own, people start respecting you," believes Pinki Devi from Kodar Ketta village. She too is one of the beneficiaries of the goat-farming project.

After an her brother-in-law's accident and the closure of their general store, Pinki and her husband found themselves at a stage where it had become difficult to sustain life. Her husband had to take up odd jobs for two square meals. It was at this juncture that Pinki was selected as a beneficiary by the foundation. Today, she has 25 goats — six males and 19 females. "There is enough grain production from our small holding of half a bigha to grow bajra and paddy to feed the goats," she said.

Asha Devi, a middle aged woman from Nariyar village of Motipur Block, had never been to school and was not even semi-skilled. Her husband is a daily wager and they have six children to feed. An additional source of income was more than welcome in her household. Rearing goats was not a bad idea but she did not have the required money. While Asha, like other selected beneficiaries, did get the unit of five female and one male goat, it has not been easy for her as few of her goats fell sick. Despite the setback, she is hopeful that once the rainy season ends, she will be able make good money from this business.

The project is aimed at empowering women who are not skilled in any trade, help mechanise the small land holdings of marginal farmers and improve the living standard by providing goat farming units as a source of additional income.

"Women are at the centre of the development initiative undertaken in the villages," says Rahul Kumar, the programme lead of Local Participation and Sustainability. The lives of forty women selected for this project including Mintu and Pinki in five villages of Muzaffarpur have benefited through goat farming.

If women are able to earn extra income through an activity that does not require any special skill, it can result in their empowerment and lead to their social and economic upliftment. The challenge is to ensure that these livelihood options not only continue, after initial hand-holding by the NGOs, but are expanded as well.

—Charkha Features

At the break of dawn...

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI terms the current period as cultural twilight. He believes that the darkness will soon recede and give way to light

The Present period, in the world's cultural history, is characterised by many unexpected, strange and forceful cross-currents. If we focus on the last six or seven decades, many events of unexpected nature and great significance have occurred that have led to rapid and powerful cross-country cultural influences. Let's consider how the rise of communism, before and after WW2, in many countries, brought about not only political and economic changes but also gave rise to a new set of values — positive as well as negative — and created new cultural trends. The ideology or philosophy of communism, with its explanation of world history and the economic forces, human nature, conflict between the rich and the poor, the roles played by religion and the state, and the method suggested by it to bring about a classless and stateless society, permitting violence to exterminate the exploiters, gave a new kind of value-system and divided the world into two power blocks, each willing to fight to the finish. The forces of hatred, violence, class war, arms race, political and economic alignments, suppression of human rights and freedoms were let loose and religion was confined to museums. All this influenced the outlook, attitudes, mannerisms, behaviour and beliefs of millions and replaced the older set of values and culture.

Similarly, many wars were fought among various middle-eastern nations, followed by the Gulf war, the takeover of an Asian nation by a bigger and powerful nation, and such other events have altered the traditional values and norms and brought about significant changes. The part played by the UN and its various agencies, the human rights movement and the democratic form of governance, et al also had no less significant impact. Various scientific postulates or theories, such as of Copernicus and Darwin and various philosophical and psychological dissertations, such as the ones by Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche also crucially affected the prevailing system of values and culture.

However, the greatest impact on the cultural scene has been of the multi-media. Cinema, the TV, videos, the print media, and now, of course, the internet, have worked like a cultural invasion of one country by another and also on the atmosphere at home, at the playground, in the aeroplanes and almost everywhere. The use of satellites, computers, the internet, cordless and cellular telephones, the industrial advertisements and exhibitions have demolished the cultural sanctuaries of a country. They have blurred or even effaced the cultural boundaries between various groups, communities or nations. Heritage sites, the places known as repositories of certain cultures, have almost all fallen victims to the onslaughts of these forces. While there has been plunder of icons, artefacts and heritage objects by rich individuals and nations to replenish their private collections or museums, on the other hand, there has been great insensitivity to the objects of art, worship, religious monuments by the rapacious collectors and money-minded dealers. But while this intermix of different cultures and their impact on value systems has resulted in a moral loss on multiple counts, there have been some gains also. Science and technology, the interaction between various communities and nations, the multi-media have done some good, as a result of which we find that a new pattern of culture and values is emerging. At least there is a great voice being raised for re-establishing values. Much of it is, no doubt, negative and is polluting the human mind but, undeniably, some good features can also be observed. It is in this context that the contribution of various organisations and NGOs should be looked at.

These global institutions have not only appreciated and encouraged what is good in the international and inter-continental cultural scenario, but have also constantly worked with all sincerity to help the emergence of a global culture with universal values. Employing the means provided by science and technology, business and industry, media and communication, jurisprudence and education, health, science, yoga, religion and culture, these NGOs are trying to bring on the world-stage everything that is an all-time best in the form of a new value-system. They are involving youth and women and engaged in all professions to achieve this goal with their co-operation. The present is thus a period of cultural twilight. Soon, darkness will be receding into oblivion to give place to the light of values, virtues and unique divine culture.

Be your best version

The integration of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being is the path to attaining infinite potential, shares NIKHIL BEHL

Have you ever wondered what your infinite potential is?

Most of the time, it's a passing thought that we all have sometimes — a moment of brilliant clarity that teases the genius hidden within you. However, despite your best efforts, that idea of a perfect you always seems so elusive, so distant, almost impossible to reach.

But that's not true.

We are all capable of achieving our infinite potential but there's a reason we fail (or worse, give up trying). It's the trap of one-dimensional well-being.

Ask an athlete and they'll tell you pushing yourself physically can help you break your barriers, ask a psychologist and they'll tell you to take care of your mental health, and if you ask a philosopher, they'll tell you to introspect and focus on your inner being.

But who is wrong and who is right? The truth is, they're all partly right.

True well-being

Well-being means the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy. It's not a singular path but a culmination of all three areas — physical, mental, and spiritual because it caters to the body, the mind, and the soul. For a person to experience true well-being, they must experience excellence in all three areas.

In the conventional sense, health and well-being was often attributed to a healthy body, one that lacks any ailments or diseases. As science progressed and awareness spread, people realised the importance of mental health in leading healthier and happier lives.

And yet, most people still felt distant, lost, and hopeless.

There has been a renewed interest in eastern philosophy, yoga, and other spiritual quests in recent times, especially in the west. More and more people are trying to search for meaning and purpose in their lives because the spiritual thirst needs to be quenched.

There has to be a crossroad where these three seemingly distinct roads meet because that's where true well-being resides, that's where people can find their infinite potential.

Realising your infinite potential

Infinite potential is not some abstract concept, it can help people prevent chronic ailments and lead healthier, happier lives. That's why it's important for people to take proactive steps in trying to reach their infinite potential.

Here are some practical steps to achieve your infinite potential.

For the body

- Work out for some time everyday.
- Take ample amounts of rest.
- Learn about early signs of illnesses.
- Eat a balanced, healthy, and wholesome diet.
- Have adequate portions for meals.
- Quit smoking.

For the mind

- Align yourself with your thoughts and feelings.
- Adopt a positive attitude.
- Ask for and offer support.
- Respect time and pick up time-management skills.
- Learn stress management techniques.
- Forgive yourself and practice acceptance

For the soul

- Understand your spiritual core.
- Practice solitude and meditate regularly.
- Nurture curiosity and be inquisitive about life.
- Immerse yourself fully into everything you do.
- Live by your principles and listen to your gut.
- Set yourself, and others around you, free.
- Look at adversity as opportunity and challenge yourself.

These steps are just the beginning of your path towards tranquility and self-transformation. As you climb your way towards well-being, you'll find greater opportunities to grow and higher goals to achieve.

(The author is the co-founder and CEO of Fitza, a health and fitness app that creates pocket guides, personalised meals and health kundali to help people achieve their health goals.)

"For a man to conquer himself is the first and noblest of all victories.
—Plato

DISCARDED PHONES OR GOLD ORE?

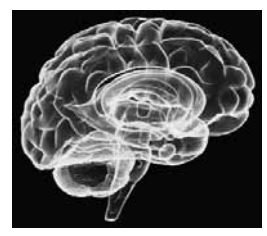
How much gold can we get from mobile phones? Leading experts say a tonne of discarded mobile phones is richer in gold than a tonne of gold ore.

Experts are calling on households, businesses and governments to get dead or unused plug-in or battery-operated products to facilities where they can be either repaired or recycled to recover a king's fortune in valuable materials and reduce the need for new resources.

This year's mountain of waste electronic and electrical equipment (WEEE) will total about 57.4 million tonnes — greater than the weight of the Great Wall of China, earth's heaviest artificial object.

According to estimates in Europe, where the problem is best studied, 11 of 72 electronic items in an average household are no longer in use or are broken. Annually per citizen, another 4 to 5 kg of unused electrical and electronic products are hoarded in Europe prior to being discarded. Another study estimates that 54 to 113 million mobile phones alone, weighing 10 to 20 tonnes, are sleeping in drawers and other storage spaces in French homes.

PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS LEAD TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION



Adolescents who had received a mental health disorder diagnosis were often excluded from the labour market and education as young adults, finds a new study.

The study indicated that almost 11 per cent of adolescents who had received a psychiatric diagnosis were excluded from the education and labour market for at least five years in their early adulthood.

For the study, published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, the team included 55,273 individuals after exclusions for intellectual disability, death or emigration.

The results are concerning because they highlight the link between mental health disorders and long-term exclusion from education and labour market.

"Vocational rehabilitation and tight collaboration between psychiatry and social services are important for enabling adolescents suffering from mental health problems to access the labour market," said lead author David Gyllenberg, from the University of Turku (Finland).

HORNBILL – CREATOR OF ORCHARDS

Hornbills are large, endangered, fruit-eating birds found across Asian forests with only certain fleshy fruit trees and yet, they are responsible for dispersing seeds in large patches, thereby creating fruit orchards, a new study has revealed.

Scientists from the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Mysuru, and Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, studied how fruit bearing plants and hornbills influence the distribution of each other in the Namdapha Tiger Reserve, one of India's most biologically diverse protected areas.

According to a study published online by the *Journal Of Avian Biology*, hornbills help in dispersing large number of seeds in areas with rare trees. They disperse up to 12,000 large seeds per square kilometre in a day, thereby creating fruit orchards.

KIDS ACT AS SPREADERS OF COVID

Infants, children and adolescents are equally capable of carrying high levels of live and replicating SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing Covid-19, in their respiratory secretions, researchers have confirmed in a new study, emphasising that kids are an essential component of beating the pandemic.

According to the study, published in the *Journal Of Infectious Diseases*, the high levels of virus correspond with live, infectious virus, and that levels are highest early in the illness in both symptomatic and asymptomatic children.

The study was led by a team from Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), Brigham and Women's Hospital, Ragon Institute, MIT and Harvard. They studied 110 children aged two weeks to 21 years who tested positive for Covid-19 at MGH or urgent care clinics. The researchers found no correlation between the age of the children and the amount of their viral load. Reassuringly, they also found that viral load had no correlation to severity of disease in the kids themselves, but concerns remain for them and those around them.

MICROPLASTICS THREATEN MARINE LIFE

New research at Queen's University highlights the impact that microplastics are having on hermit crabs, which play an important role in balancing the marine ecosystem.

The research found that microplastics are affecting the behaviour of hermit crabs, namely their ability during shell fight contests, which are vital to their survival.

There is a strong association between hermit crabs and their shelters or shells, which are taken from marine snails to protect their soft abdomens.

The new study, published in *Royal Society Open Science*, builds on previous research by Queen's University that showed hermit crabs were less likely to touch or enter high-quality shells when exposed to microplastics. The microplastics impair both the attacking and defending behaviour of hermit crabs during contests, impeding their ability to secure the larger shell that is required for both their growth and survival.

CHHETRI CREDITS YOUNGSTERS

SAFF CHAMPIONSHIPS TRIUMPH

PTI ■ MALE

Talismanic skipper Sunil Chhetri played a pivotal role in India's eighth SAFF Championships title triumph by striking five goals but he credited the young brigade for team's victory.

The 37-year-old Chhetri, Indian football's torch bearer for the last 10 years, went past legendary Pele and equalled Lionel Messi when he scored the team's opener -- and his 80th goal -- against Nepal in the summit clash on Saturday.

"Look at the youngsters -- it feels good for all of them. It's all due to their hard work. We were here for 20 days till the final, staying on an island, riding the waves every day for practice sessions, and matches," Chhetri said in a release from All India Football Federation.

"We made it special as we were not so good in the first two games. It was tough from there to come up and play the way we did," added Chhetri after his third triumph in the SAFF Championship as a player.

Chhetri, who has won the regional tournament in 2011 and 2015 also, was referring to the draws against Bangladesh (1-1) and Sri Lanka (0-0) in the first two matches which had attracted criticism.

"Didn't start like we should have, but ended exactly how we wanted to. Proud of this bunch and the way we got things on track," he later said in a tweet.

Chhetri, who scored five out of India's eight goals, was all praise of the other two Indian goal getters on Saturday -- Suresh Singh and Sahal Abdul Samad.

Sahal, on his part, said it was an "unbelievable" moment and "a miracle".

"I don't know what happened inside the box. I came in for the last 4-5 minutes. My teammates have been working hard – it all goes to them," he said.

"But I just don't remember what happened inside the box. I got it and went in. This is an amazing feeling."

Head coach Igor Stimac, who was banned from the dugout in the summit clash after being red carded in the earlier league match against Maldives, let the players take centrestage.

"The boys have done it," he quipped.

Stimac became the third foreign coach after Jiri Pesek (1993) and Stephen Constantine (2015) to clinch the title with the Indian team.

The Blue Tigers dedicated the trophy to their two injured teammates -- Farukh Choudhary, and Brandon Fernandes, who weren't able to travel to the ground. With the title win, India extended their domination in the regional tournament. Saturday's final was the 12th for India in 13 editions.

The players leave for Bengaluru Sunday night from where they will join their respective clubs for the Indian Super League.

However, the U-23 players, including goalkeeper Moirangthem Dheeraj Singh, will stay back in Bengaluru for a couple of days before flying to Dubai for the AFC U-23 Qualifiers on October 20.

BCCI invites application for head coach's post

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A couple of days after convincing former India captain Rahul Dravid to take up the responsibility, the BCCI on Sunday issued advertisement for the post of head coach and three support staff as per Lodha Committee mandated constitution.

It is a foregone conclusion that Dravid, who is currently heading the NCA and has been the guiding force behind the India A and U-19 programmes, is set to take over unless something miraculous happens.

Dravid has already informally agreed during his discussion with top BCCI officials in Dubai on the sidelines of IPL final.

However, the BCCI needs to have a Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) in place and they will have to make a formal recommendation to the BCCI apex council, if one goes by the book. The last date of application for all posts is October 26. That is the reason the BCCI has now issued the advertisement for the head coach's post for a period of two years till 2023 ODI World Cup, along with positions for batting, bowling and fielding coaches.

Ravi Shastri, along with bowling coach Bharath Arun and fielding coach R Sridhar, will complete tenure at the end of India's T20 World Cup campaign next month.Batting coach Vikram Rathour, though he doesn't have any performance to show during his two-year tenure from 2019 till date, is expected to get an extension if he applies.

For the bowling coach's position, the long-standing India A and U-19 coach Paras Mhambrey, a trusted ally of Dravid, is expected to get the job. For the head coach's post, the incumbent will have to play either 30 Tests or 50

ODIs, along with experience of either coaching a national team for two years or any IPL team for three years.

He will be in charge of team of support staff ranging between 14 to 16 people.

"The successful candidate will be responsible for developing a world class Indian cricket team which delivers sustained success in all conditions and formats, inspiring current and future generations of cricketers and stakeholders with their approach to the game," the advertisement stated.

The head coach will be responsible for reviewing, maintaining, and enforcing the disciplinary codes within the Indian men's team.

The BCCI also feels that the incumbent head coach "needs to demonstrate great organizational and tactical strengths and will be responsible for setting out and then executing short, medium and long term plans for the development of the Indian team.

Gambhir: Hardik should be picked only if he does proper bowling in warm-up games

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India opener Gautam Gambhir is of the opinion that star all-rounder Hardik Pandya can be a part of the Virat Kohli-led team's playing XI in the T20 World Cup only if he is able to bowl at his best in the warm-up matches.

Hardik has not bowled regularly for India and his IPL side Mumbai Indians since returning after undergoing a back surgery in 2019.

Hardik was initially chosen in India's 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup as a batting all-rounder but as it became increasingly clear that he may not be able to bowl during the showpiece, the selectors brought in Shardul Thakur at the expense of Axar Patel to beef up the seam-bowling department.

"For me, Hardik Pandya gets into India's playing XI only if he does proper bowling in both warmup games, not only in the nets. There is a huge difference between bowling in the nets and against quality batsmen like Babar Azam and that too in the World Cup," Gambhir said on Star Sports show Game Plan.

"He has to bowl in the practice matches and the nets, and he has to bowl 100 per cent. If you are thinking that you will come and bowl just at 115-120 kph, I will not take that risk," the World Cup-winning former opener added.

OMAN BEAT PNG BY 10 WICKETS

PTI ■ AL AMERAT (OMAN)

Ludhiana-born Jatinder Singh smashed an unbeaten 73 as co-hosts Oman thrashed Papua New Guinea (PNG) by 10 wickets in the opening Group B first round match of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

Courtesy Jatinder's 42-ball-knock and his opening partner Aqib Ilyas's 50 not out off 43 balls, Oman chased down a modest 130-run target in only 13.2 overs.

None of the PNG bowlers could create any trouble for Jatinder and Aqib as they went about their business in confident fashion from the onset.

While Jatinder had seven fours and four sixes in his knock, Aqib's innings was laced with five boundaries and one hit over the fence.

Very strong against slow bowlers, Jatinder would rock back and hit them er mid-wicket for sixes as he carried his form from the Qualifying tournament in 2019 where he was the highest run-getter for his adopted country.

Earlier, skipper Asad Vala struck a fine half-century before rival captain Zeeshan Maqsood returned with figures of 4/20 with his

slow left-arm orthodox which restricted PNG to 129/9.

"They were batting very well when I got the wickets. Because we got the wickets, they couldn't put on a big total. I just try to keep it tight and not give away loose balls. We knew the wicket was playing very well, we needed to make sure we didn't give away loose balls and easy boundaries," Maqsood, who was adjudged 'Player of the Match' said at the post-game presentation ceremony.

Sent into bat, PNG lost both their openers for no score before Vala smashed 56 off 43 balls with the help of four boundaries and three sixes while Charles Amini made 37 off 26 balls to stitch 81 runs for the third wicket.

But thereafter, PNG witnessed another batting collapse as they lost their next six wickets for just 37 runs.

Maqsood was certainly pick of the bowlers for Oman but medium pacers Bilal Khan (2/16) and Kallemullah (2/19) also chipped in with a couple of wickets each.

Oman will play Bangladesh in their next Group B match on Tuesday, while PNG will also take on Scotland the same day.

Neeraj records KO win

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian professional boxer Neeraj Goyat notched up a Technical Knockout win over Congo's Bebe Rico Tshibangu in the Amir Khan-supported Super Boxing League's Crypto Fight Night here.

Goyat notched up the win in the third round of his bout on Saturday night.

The triumph in the welterweight bout continued Goyat's three-year unbeaten streak in the circuit.

Goyat, after the fight, once again challenged Khan for a showdown.

Khan, when asked about it, did not give a definitive response.

"There have been talks in the media about the same and the fans, for them when this happens will definitely be exciting as this would be the hotly anticipated bout as per them," Khan, a former Olympic medallist, said.

Decision on Dhoni's retention will be taken only after knowing rules: CSK

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A call on whether to retain Mahendra Singh Doni for the next season of the IPL will be taken only after knowing the rules of the system, a top Chennai Super Kings official said on Sunday.

The retention rules have not been laid down as yet and two more teams are set to be added in the 2022 edition.

"The rules of retention are not clear yet...We are not sure about the number of retentions that will be allowed. And a call on that will be made once the rules are known," the official told PTI when asked about the possibility of using a retention card to retain the talismanic Dhoni.

The iconic CSK skipper is the toast of the cricketing world after guiding the franchise to a fourth IPL title on Friday in Dubai.

Earlier, Dhoni had said that he would like to create a roadmap for the next 10 years for CSK.

The skipper had said that he hadn't decided how he would fit into the retention scheme of things.

"Again I've said it before, it depends on the BCCI. With two new teams coming in, we have to decide what is good for CSK," he had said after his team defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by 27 runs in the IPL final.

"It's not about me being there in the top-three or four. It's about making a strong core to ensure the franchise doesn't suffer. The core group, we have to have a hard look to see who can contribute for the next 10 years," he had said.

The CSK official also said any celebrations by the team would wait till the captain returns after finishing his role as a mentor with the Indian T20 World Cup team in the UAE.

Do it for Virat: Raina's message to India's T20 WC players

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India cricketer Suresh Raina says Virat Kohli deserves to draw the curtains on his T20 captaincy stint by winning the shortest format's World Cup in the UAE and Oman.

Kohli will step down from T20 captaincy after the World Cup and Raina said the talismanic batter deserves a befitting farewell from his teammates.

"For India, the message at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup is simple -- do it for Virat Kohli.

"It will probably be his last time at this tournament as captain, so it's very important for him to make everyone believe we can do it and for us to get behind him," Raina wrote in a column for ICC.

"India fans can't wait for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 to start for this reason. We have the players, we have the momentum - we just need to go out there and execute now."

Raina feels the Indian players featuring in the IPL in the UAE could help them during the World Cup.

"All of our players have just played the Indian Premier League in the UAE and they have played themselves into top form with eight or nine games in this environment.

"This gives India an edge on all other teams and makes them one of the big favourites to win the T20 World Cup in my opinion," he said.

"The conditions in UAE are

very similar to what we play India and also in Pakistan. It's a good opportunity for the Asian teams to come and play their natural game."

Raina believes the key to India's success in the tournament lies in the performance of top three batters.

"For me, the key to success for India's batting lies in the top three. Rohit Sharma is a gun player — he has a brilliant record at ICC events in the past and had a great IPL.

"We need Rohit, KL Rahul and Virat to bat through to 15 overs and lay the platform. They can set the momentum for the India team by doing this," he said.

"There are lots of electric combinations in the middle order and obviously Rishabh Pant is going to play a key role there. Hardik Pandya is also very capable as a power hitter.

"But if the top three are still there at that stage of the innings, there is no target that India can't chase," Raina added.

He believes mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy is going to play a crucial role for India in the tournament, considering the slow nature of the pitches in the UAE.

"My experience in the IPL was that the wickets in UAE and Oman will be very, very challenging when it comes to the mystery spinners.

"That makes Varun Chakravarthy the main guy in the India bowling attack. He has showed he can exploit the pace of the pitches," Raina said.

IOC supports concerns over FIFA's plans

IANS ■ LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND)

The international football federation, FIFA's plans to hold its flagship Men's World Cup every two years has raised heckles in the clubs' circuit. The plan to switch the Men's World Cup from a quadrennial schedule to a biennial is now causing concerns among other international federations too.

On Saturday, the Executive Board (EB) of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) took note of FIFA's plans to change the football competition schedule and to hold the World Cup every two years and supported the calls for wider consultation. It has also shared its concerns over these plans.

"A number of International Federations (IFs) of other sports, national football federations, clubs, players, players associations and coaches have expressed strong reservations and concerns regarding the plans to generate more revenue for FIFA," the IOC said in a release.

Their concerns are mainly due to this move's impact on other sports as the increased frequency and timing for the World Cup would create a clash with other major international sports. This includes tennis, cycling, golf, gymnastics, swimming, athletics, Formula 1, and many others. "This would undermine the diversity and development of sports other than football," the IOC said in a release after the EB meeting.

It will also have an impact on the principle of gender equality in FIFA as the increas' in men's events in the calendar would create challenges for the further promotion of women's football.

The increased frequency of the World Cup will also impact players' welfare as the plans, in particular, the doubling in the frequency of the World Cup would create a further massive strain on the physical and mental health of the players, the IOC release noted.

"The IOC shares these concerns and supports the calls of stakeholders of football, International Sports Federations, and major event organisers for a wider consultation, including w'th athletes' representatives, which has obviously not taken place," the release said.

FIFA president Gi'nni Infantino's plans regarding the frequency of the Men's World Cup have been opposed by the Continental federations for Europe (UEFA) and South and Central Americas. The Asian and African confederations have supported the move.

Shafali, Radha shine in Sydney Sixers win in WBBL

PTI ■ HOBART

India's Shafali Verma struck a half-century and Radha Yadav scalped two batters in Sydney Sixers' five-wicket win in the Women's Big Bash League but Poonam Yadav's effort did not yield a desired result as her team Brisbane Heat lost its match on Sunday.

Young opener Shafali struck 57 off 50 balls with six hits to the fence in Sixers' successful run chase against Hobart Hurricane, who made 125 for nine.

Apart from Shafali's knock, Sixers skipper Ellyse Perry hit 27 runs off 33 balls as they reached 129 for five in 19.3 overs.

Left-arm spinner Radha got rid of compatriot Richa Ghosh (46 of 46) and Sasha Moloney (22 off 16 balls) to help Sixers restrict Hurricane to a modest total.

In another match, leg-spinner Poonam dismissed experienced Beth Mooney (40) and Heather Graham (6) to help Brisbane Heat restrict Perth Scorchers to 137 for seven after inviting them to bat first.