

OPINION 6

PANDORA'S BOX
OF CORRUPTION

WORLD 8

'6 RUSSIAN MILITARY OFFICERS
SACKED SINCE WAR BEGAN'

MONEY 10

INDIA'S OUTBOUND TOURISM TO
SURPASS \$42 BN BY 2024: REPORT

BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY AUGUST 8, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹4

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BRACE IN PSG's
5-0 LIGUE 1 WIN
12 SPORT

'Indian federal structure became model for world'

We showed it's possible to overcome challenges, PM tells Niti meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that India's federal structure and cooperative federalism emerged as 'a model for the world during the Covid crisis' and the country had sent a "powerful message" to the developing nations — that it is possible to overcome challenges with resilience, despite resource limitations.

Chairing the seventh Governing Council meeting of the Niti Aayog at Rashtrapati Bhavan's Cultural Centre in the national Capital, the Prime Minister gave credit to States for delivering on the ground saying "every State played a crucial role according to its strength and contributed to India's fight against Covid. This led to India emerging as an example for the developing nations to look up to as a global leader."

The agenda of the Niti Aayog meeting included crop diversification and achieving self-sufficiency in oilseeds and pulses and agri-communities, implementation of the National Education Policy-school education, implementation of the National Education Policy-higher education, and urban governance.

This was the first physical meeting of the Governing Council since the onset of the pandemic. The 2021 meeting was held via video conferencing.

The meeting was attended by 23 Chief Ministers, three Lieutenant-Governors and two Administrators.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Ministers and Chief Ministers of States/UTs at the 7th Governing Council meeting of Niti Aayog at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

Opp makes slew of demands

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From urging the Centre to increase the share of States in the central taxes and duties to the allocation of funds for disaster management to MSP for farmers, Opposition Chief Ministers on Sunday made a slew of demands in the 7th Governing Council Meeting of the Niti Aayog, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Non-BJP ruled States, such as Chhattisgarh, Kerala, and Rajasthan have in the past also demanded that the compensation regime be extended by five years. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee emphasised that the Centre should look into the demands of the State Governments "more seriously" and no policies should be forced on them. Banerjee stressed that there

should be a "greater cooperation" between the Centre and the States. The Trinamool Congress supremo also said that State Governments should not be pressurised to implement the NEP. She left the meeting mid-way citing the cyclone situation in Kolkata.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel reiterated his demand to the Centre seeking a five-year extension for the compensation paid to States for revenue shortfall due to GST implementation and called for revising the rates of royalty for coal and other major minerals from the State. On the occasion the Chief Minister noted that the Niti Aayog has appreciated the better performance of the aspirational districts of the State in the last three-and-a-half years. He, however, added that there are still resource problems in

the State, which should be resolved.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann informed the media that he raised the issues of farmers including Minimum Support Price (MSP) while adding that he was happy with the meeting.

"It was the first for me after becoming the Chief Minister. It is unfortunate that no one has come from Punjab in the last three years. I went with detailed homework today and kept Punjab's issues. The biggest issue was of the variety of crops," Mann said he was satisfied with the Niti Aayog's meeting as all issues were listened to.

Delhi CM and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal could not attend the meeting as he is away in Gujarat. Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao boycotted the meeting.

Golden and silver shower for India on Super Sunday

Eldhose Paul wins first triple long jump gold in CWG

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

It was a Super Sunday for India as it saw a huge haul of gold, silver and bronze medals at the Commonwealth Games. Eldhose Paul won a historic triple jump gold in a 1-2 finish for India as the country bagged four medals on the concluding day of athletics competitions at the Commonwealth Games here. After the mad rush of four medals coming within 30 minutes, India's medal tally from athletics swelled to eight -- 1 gold, 4 silver, 3 bronze -- the best in the CWG history outside the country and only second to the haul at the 2010 edition in Delhi.

The 25-year-old Paul became only the sixth Indian to win a CWG gold since legendary Milkha Singh won it in 1958 in 440 yards. The Ernakulam-born Indian Navyman led India's historic 1-2 finish with a best jump of 17.03m in his third attempt after opening with 14.62m. His jump was though wind-assisted and his second best was 16.63m. Before Sunday's jump, he had a personal best of 16.99m. Paul's historic 1-2 finish in men's triple jump at the Commonwealth Games was followed by fellow Kerala athlete Abdulla Aboobacker here on Sunday as he finished at 17.02m, which he managed in his fifth attempt.

Meanwhile, in boxing, the indomitable Nikhat Zareen added a Commonwealth Games light flyweight (50kg) title to her bulging trophy cabinet while Amit Panghal (51kg) began his redemption journey with a much-needed gold winning show. Nikhat, who is on a winning spree since the Nationals last year, asserted her dominance over Northern Ireland's Carly Mc Naul as she punched her way to a comprehensive 5-0 win in her maiden CWG appearance.

Panghal, on the other hand, avenged his 2018 Commonwealth Games final loss against Kieran MacDonald by clinching the title with a comprehensive 5-0 win over the favourite. Indian boxers made it three out of three golds on the day as young Nitu Ghanghas (48kg) too reigned supreme on her CWG debut. Sagar Ahlawat will play his final bout later tonight.

The India pugilists will return with seven medals from Birmingham, two less than the previous edition.



Boxer Nikhat Zareen with the gold medal after winning the final of 48kg-50kg (Light Flyweight) boxing match, at the Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham, UK on Sunday. PTI

Women win hockey medal after 16 yrs

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Skipper Savita Punia led from the front with a spectacular display as the Indian women's hockey team overcame the stop-watch controversy to beat New Zealand 2-1 in shootout and win the bronze medal at the

Commonwealth Games here Sunday.

This is the team's first medal at CWG in 16 years. Leading 1-0, India conceded a penalty corner with less than 30 seconds to go for the final hooter, as the match went into shootout after Olivia Merry's equaliser. In the

regulation time, India got the lead through Salima Tete in the 29th minute.

Coming off their heartbreaking loss to Australia in a controversial semi-final, India showed the intent to wrap up their campaign with a win and earn a podium finish.



Indian players Vandana Katariya, Lalremjamia and Sangita Kumari celebrate their win over New Zealand in the women's hockey bronze medal match at the Commonwealth Games 2022, in Birmingham on Sunday. PTI

Dog dies fighting with cobra to save master



Canine loyalty draws people to S'garh man's house

MALAY RAY ■ SUNDARGARH

Dogs are always known as loyal to their masters. A Labrador killed a cobra and lost his own life to save life of his master and his family in Bargaon block of Sundargarh district.

Krupasindu Panda, a retired bank employee, is an animal lover. He has kept a cow, a cat and a few dogs in his house. Only after his pets take the food, Panda couple goes to eat the food. Panda had a 3- year-old Labrador, whom he fondly called "Prince".

Prince openly moves in the garden of Panda. On Friday night, after taking dinner, Panda and his wife went to sleep. Prince was moving in the garden outside the house. A cobra was

entering into the house of Panda but when Prince saw it, he started barking. Later, they had a face-off. The cobra bit Prince and Prince also bit the snake, following which the cobra died there and Prince after coming to his rest place, died there.

On Saturday morning, when Panda woke up, he saw Prince lying dead after being bitten by a cobra and the cobra lying dead nearby. After hearing about the loyalty of Prince, a number of persons of the locality rushed to the house of Panda to see the deceased dog.

"My Prince lost his life to save our lives from a cobra," said Krupasindu Panda, while sobbing. "Prince was always obedient and he sacrificed his life for us," Panda said, adding, "The death of Prince is a personal loss to me."

Later, Panda and his family members buried Prince inside the premises of their house.

Low pressure to become depression in 48 hrs

Heavy rains in State till Aug 11

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The low pressure now lies as a well-marked one over northwest and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal off Odisha and adjoining north Andhra Pradesh coasts, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday.

As per IMD's Regional Office

here, the system is likely to concentrate into a depression during the next 48 hours. Subsequently, the system is likely to move west-northwestwards across Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Under its influence heavy rainfall would lash several parts of the State till July 11.

The weather office has issued a Red warning for heavy to very heavy rainfall very likely to occur at a few places (7 to 20cm) with extremely heavy rainfall

(>20cm) at isolated places over the districts of Kalahandi and Rayagada in the next 24 hours.

As per IMD, several parts of the State experienced heavy to very heavy rainfall in the past 24 hours. Barmul of Nayagarh district recorded the highest rainfall of 229.4 mm, followed by 180.3mm of rainfall in Padmapur of Rayagada district.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20 cm) is very likely to

occur at isolated places over the districts of Gajapati, Ganjam, Khordha, Puri, Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, and Koraput on Tuesday. On Wednesday, heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20cm) very likely to occur at isolated places over the districts of Sambalpur, Bargarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh,

Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Subarnapur, Jajpur, Bhadrak, Balasore, Kendrapada with extremely heavy rainfall (>20cm) at isolated places over the districts of Bargarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh and Keonjhar. Heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) very likely to occur at isolated places over the districts of Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khordha, Boudh, Bolangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Nayagarh, the IMD said.

Amit Shah on 2-day visit to State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived here on Sunday on a two-day visit to the State. He was accorded a rousing reception at the city airport.

Makin a night halt and offering prayers at the Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar on the last Monday of holy month of Shravan, Shah would leave for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birthplace in Cuttack and pay tribute to the legendary leader by garlanding his statue on the occasion of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

He would also attend a function marking the 75th anniversary of Odia daily Prajatantra' at the Indoor Stadium in Cuttack.

Later, Shah would visit the Odisha BJP office in Bhubaneswar, where he would meet senior State party leaders. In the evening, he would attend a book reading of Modi@20 at a hotel here before flying back to Delhi.



NITI Aayog meeting CM reiterates Special Focus State status demand

As Odisha is victim of natural calamities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Sunday again demanded that the Centre grant Special Focus State status to Odisha.

Attending the NITI Aayog Governing Council's 7th meeting at New Delhi, Patnaik stressed on disaster-resilient infrastructure to protect Odisha from frequent natural calamities.

Justifying his demand for Special Focus State status to Odisha, he said the State has been neglected in many sectors, including telecom, railways and banking.



"Odisha has historically been neglected in the subjects in the Central list namely telecom, railways and banking. We have the lowest den-

sity in all these crucial infrastructures; and I would urge the Central Government to give special focus for Odisha," Patnaik said.

Besides, Patnaik urged the Central Government to resolve the issue on allocation of houses to beneficiaries in tribal districts of Odisha under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).

As regards the rural housing scheme PMAY, most of tribal and KBK districts in Odisha have been bypassed from new allocation. "I would request the Central Government to immediately resolve this issue and allocate houses. The State Government has complied to all the queries raised in this regard," Patnaik said.

He also said the Prime Min-

ister Fasal Bima Yojana has some implementation issues in the field, because of which genuine farmers are deprived in some cases. The Niti Aayog may study this and suggest ways to protect the interest of farmers.

Besides, he suggested that the ASI be transformed and the AMSAR Act amended so that it helps protect heritage sites, including Konark.

"We all accept that the State and Central Governments are political entities; and sometimes, there are disputes in the implementation of Central schemes. Niti Aayog can resolve these issues like an ombudsman. This will promote cooperative federalism and speedy implementation of schemes," the CM observed.

‘Strictly implement Witch Hunting Act’ Gundicha Temple to reopen for devotees

NHRC directs State Govt
RAJESH BEHERA
■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the Odisha Chief Secretary to make every possible effort for effective implementation of the provisions of the Prevention of Witch Hunting Act, 2013 in the State.

The NHRC passes the order taking cognisance of a petition filed by social activist and Supreme Court lawyer

Radhakanta Tripathy.

The petitioner stated that on June 12, 2021, one Luka Dalabehera and his son Anak were beaten to death at Muthuguda village in Gajapati district of Odisha on the suspicion of practicing witchcraft.

The incident occurred in spite of the Odisha Prevention of Witch Hunting Act existing to deal with the social evil.

Tripathy alleged that the act is not being implemented in true letter and spirit due to which innocent people are being subjected to torture and harassment.

He requested the commission to issue directions to the State authorities to take appropriate action in the cases of witchcraft and sorcery in the entire State.

The State authorities in a report submitted to the NHRC stated that a case has been registered at Adaba police station on the complaint of Ludia Gomango, daughter of the deceased Luka and the case was investigated.

During the probe all the 13 accused were arrested and forwarded to court. The case is pending for further

investigation. However, sincere steps are being taken for the early submission of the charge-sheet.

Meetings are being conducted in all the police station jurisdictions through Ama police scheme in frequent intervals and awareness programmes are being conducted to prevent the further incidents.

The other stakeholders have been intimated to hold awareness programme and wide publicity of evils of witch hunting act among local people, the report stated.

Servitors’ entry to Shreemandir sanctum sanctorum to be regulated
PNS ■ PURI

After a gap of two and a half years, the Gundicha Temple here would be reopened to the devotees within a week. A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee on Saturday.

The devotees would be al-

lowed to visit the temple without any entry fee. However, they would be barred from touching the Adap Mandap of the shrine and entering into the temple kitchen.

The temple managing committee asked the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) Superintending Engineer to prepare a five-year budget and an action plan within a month for undertaking repairs in the Jagannath Temple. Moreover, the ASI was asked to submit a detailed report regarding the repair works undertaken at the temple during last one year.

Last year, the ASI had con-

ducted laser scanning of several structures of the shrine excluding its sanctum sanctorum, but it is yet to submit a report regarding its findings to the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA). "The temple managing committee has refused to allow the ASI to conduct laser scanning of the sanctum sanctorum or any other structure of the shrine until the submission of a detailed report on

last year's survey," said a source in the SJTA.

The committee also decided to regulate the entry and presence of servitors at the sanctum sanctorum of the temple.

"Some devotees have complained that they could not have a proper view of the idols due to the presence of a large number of servitors at the sanctum sanctorum. Henceforth, only the servitors who have been authorised to perform the rituals can only enter into the sanctum sanctorum," said SJTA Chief Administrator Vir Vikram Yadav.

Unique Odia identity to TPCODL women



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The TP Central Odisha Distribution Ltd on Saturday distributed hand-woven Ikat sarees and specially-made Dhokra badges to Abha Shakti members (Women Self-Help Groups) at an event here on the eve of the National Handloom Day.

Energy Minister Pratap Keshari Deb was chief guest of the event, also attended by TPCODL CEO M Shenbagam and Tata Power T&D president Sanjay Banga.

The event was held to recognise the role played by Abha Shaktis who have been trained under the Roshni (Skilling) programme to become social change agents. The

women have been skilled for meter reading, billing and collection (MBC) activities enabling them to become self-employed. The company plans to distribute a total of over 2,000 sarees to about 1,000 Abha Shaktis in the coming days.

The sarees designed by upcoming young native designers also have elements inspired by Odisha's culture like Konark Wheel and the domestic hand-made designs used in rural households during Lakshmi Puja. A total value chain of over 6100 families, directly and indirectly, benefitted through the entire programme apart from the Abha Shakti members who will receive two sarees each.

Home Guards’ duty call allowance hiked

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has hiked the monthly duty call allowance of Home Guards to Rs 12,480.

The Government increased the allowance to Rs 416 per day from Rs 300. Earlier, the Home Guards were getting a monthly allowance of Rs 9,000. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired

by Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra following directions of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who approved the proposal to hike the allowance of Home Guards.

Earlier, the Supreme Court had expressed displeasure over the low salary of Home Guards in Odisha and directed the State Government to reconsider its earlier decision of paying Rs 9,000 per month.

Pending court cases

State yet to realise Rs 14K cr arrear revenue

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Revenue arrears of the State Government worth Rs14,440.58 crore are locked up in different courts. This was informed by Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari in a written reply in the Assembly last week.

Pujari said the State Government is yet to collect arrear revenue of Rs 23,540.51 crore till March 2022, of which revenue worth Rs 14,440.58 crore has not been realised due to cases in different courts.

While cases related to revenue arrears worth Rs 614.90 crore are pending in the Su-

preme Court, arrear cases of Rs 8,678.44 crore and Rs 5,147.23 crore are to be decided by the Orissa High Court and other courts, respectively, he said.

The cases of revenue arrears are in different categories such as Commercial Tax (Rs 6,779.68 crore), electricity duty (Rs 1,534.90 crore), mining royalty (Rs 2,070.03 crore), Excise duty (Rs 92.20 crore), MV Tax (Rs 81.12 crore), Industrial Water cess (Rs 3,830.36 crore) and Forest Development Tax (Rs 52.29 crore).

For speedy trial of pending revenue arrear cases, the

Government has been appointing the Advocate General, Public Prosecutor, Assistant Public Prosecutors and Standing Counsel. If needed, for important cases, the Government also hires Special Counsel, he said.

For collection of the revenue dues, the State Government has taken some important measures including appointment of Special Counsel, high-level review meeting by Chief Secretary, out-of-court one-time settlement, etc, Pujari pointed out.

The appellate authorities have been asked to complete the pending Commercial Tax

related cases within a specified timeline, he added.

Team Finance led by Principal Secretary Finance Vishal Dev has been consistently monitoring the revenue collection with a specific focus on arrear revenue, he informed.

And due to sustained efforts, collection of both tax and non-tax revenue is on the rise and it is expected that State's own revenues are to register a moderate growth in 2022-23. Now, the thrust is on collection of arrear revenue, which will help out the State in a big way, said sources.

Breastfeeding Week

‘Mother’s milk is a protective shield’

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

"Breastfeeding will protect your child from serious infections. It is the only vital nutrient for a baby under six months of age," said prominent paediatrician, former Head of Paediatrics at Ispat General Hospital, and former State Coordinator of Breast Feeding

Network of India Dr Radhanath Satpathy.

Currently, Dr Satpathy is the Head of Social Paediatrics and Minority Health at AIPH University, Bhubaneswar. On the occasion of World Breastfeeding Week from August 1 to 7, Dr Satpathy said,



Dr Radhanath Satpathy

"Breastfeeding has no alternative for an infant. Antibodies present in the mother's milk prevent many infections. It is considered the ideal nutrition for ensuring holistic growth of a child. Therefore, it's high time to create large-scale awareness in families across communities in Odisha."

Elaborating on the stages of breastfeeding, Dr Satpathy said, a baby needs to be breastfed the colostrum milk within 1 hour of birth. Because, the yellow sticky milk contains antibodies and white blood cells that not only protects the baby from infection but also is vital for digestive system, he told.

He further added that a child has to be exclusively breastfed (transitional milk) till 6 months. For a child of 6-8 months, liquid food (like vegetable soup, fruit juice etc.) be supplemented along with mother's milk. Satpathy emphasised that a child up to 2 years has to be breastfed in

right proportion in order to ensure its proper growth physically and mentally.

"Studies reveal that babies who are not breastfed develop grave nutritional deficiencies. In many cases, stunted growth (poor height to weight ratio) in babies is observed," he informed.

Terming breastfeeding as doubly beneficial, Satpathy said the breastfeeding mothers benefit immensely from the practice.

"Breastfeeding will prevent obesity, breast cancer and diabetes in women. Moreover, it also acts as a natural contraceptive for women," said Dr Satpathy.

In city

Woman ends life 2 months after marriage

Kin allege harassment by in-laws
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A newly-married woman allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling of her bedroom at GGP Colony under the Mancheswar police station in the capital city on Sunday. She was identified as Prajna Paramita Swain.

Prajna had married one Prashant Patra of the Patia area on June 8, 2022. Days after her marriage, her in-laws sus-

pected her of having cancer and drove her out of the home, in the fear of incurring huge expenses for her treatment.

Unable to bear the trauma, Prajna committed suicide, her family members alleged.

"Her in-laws used to torture her and drove out from their house accusing her of suffering from cancer. But we got her treated at a private hospital in the city by spending only Rs 12,000. The doctors there said that she didn't have any kind of cancer," said the deceased's brother. Meanwhile, Prajna's brother filed a written complaint at the Mancheswar police station.

FPI holds 'Govt Servants' Free Speech Day'

Urges Govt to implement HC order, 1971
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Freethought Party of India (FPI) in collaboration with AMOFOI observed August 2 as the 'Government Servants' Free Speech Day' so as to remind high ranking officers of the fact that they cannot take repressive measures against subordinate servants as per their whims.

The celebration was presided over by BSP leader Madhusudan Yadav. While giving a historical background of the celebration, FPI general secretary B Ramchandra CST Voltaire went back to his days in Kalahandi College,

Bhawanipatna, and quoted the landmark judgment of the Orissa High Court that was delivered on August 2, 1971 on his writ plea.

"It is a matter of pity that meanwhile 51 years have gone by but the Government of Odisha did not care to implement the judgment of the High Court," lamented Voltaire and urged the CM and Chief Secretary to take out Rule 6(ii) and Rule 7(i) from the Odisha Government Servants' Conduct Rules of 1959 as per the orders of the HC dated August 2, 1971.

Yadav outlined the importance of free speech in a democracy. He slammed the State Government for ignoring the HC order for a long time.

CONTEMPORARIES

It's prudent to withdraw Personal Data Protection Bill

On August 3, the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MEITY) withdrew the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019. Soon after, a note was circulated for the MPs wherein the reasons for such withdrawal were stated as, "Considering the report of the JPC (Joint Parliamentary Committee), a comprehensive legal framework is being worked upon. Hence, it is proposed to withdraw The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, and present a new Bill that fits the comprehensive legal framework".

As the Bill stands aborted, it has at least for some time now brought the momentum for data protection framework to a halt, which was first proposed and considered in 2011 when a draft for this purpose was coordinated through the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. This proposal was followed by the recommendation of an expert committee in October 2012 headed by Justice AP Shah that "a detailed framework that serves as the conceptual foundation for the Privacy Act".



S JYOTIRANJANA

The Union Government constituted an expert group headed by Justice (ret'd) BN Srikrishna in July 2017 during the same time when petitions on the constitutionality of Aadhaar and the right to privacy were pending before the Supreme Court. During the constitution of the expert group, the then Union Minister for MEITY Ravi Shankar Prasad had notably remarked, "Data protection law... will set a global benchmark."

Interestingly, during August in the same year, a nine-judge

Supreme Court Bench unanimously pronounced a judgment in the Puttaswamy case upholding the fundamental right to privacy being important for the autonomy, dignity and liberty for every Indian. The formation of the Srikrishna Committee was noted as a positive obligation on the Government to enact a law for informational privacy by Justice DY Chandrachud, who had authored the majority of the opinion in the Puttaswamy judgment. Further in July 2018, this ignited the hopes of the nation when the Srikrishna Committee submitted its report. The report was appreciated Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who said, "It is a monumental law; and we would like to have the widest parliamentary consultation."

Subsequently in December 2019, the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 was introduced in Parliament which was then referred to a JPC of 30 MPs that submitted a report after two years and 78 sittings on December 16, 2021, which contains

97 amendments, 93 recommendations and seven dissent notes. Post those recommendations, Justice Srikrishna remarked, "I said earlier when I saw the 2019 draft that it is sliding into the Orwellian state, and this proves my point."

It is obvious that the Union Government in the best of its prudence has decided to withdraw the Bill as it is always better to give a fresh thought to the proposed legislation rather than struggling to amend the previous one. There is definitely a lot of criticism on the withdrawal of the Bill mainly because all three branches of Government worked on the Bill for years. But attributing any ill intention on the Government over withdrawal of the Bill is not justified as Union Minister for MEITY had stated, "Our target (to pass the Bill) was actually this Budget session itself, but definitely, by the Monsoon Session." Which implies the Government was keen on passing the Bill after duly considering the suggestions of the

JPC but was constrained to withdraw it on August 3 for embarking upon "a comprehensive legal framework". With the pace in which the technology sector is advancing, it is obvious for the Government to change its mind in order to bring a better personal data protection regime.

The withdrawal of the Bill, especially in view of an array of JPC recommendations, is wise as it will give scope for incorporating changes on the foundation of those recommendations and even an attempt can be made to improve in light of those recommendations in a better way. The final recommendation by the JPC is for "the Bill as amended after inclusion of suggestions/recommendation made by the committee be passed". And the proper course correction can be made by considering the JPC's recommendations including the expert analysis and dissenting notes and then re-draft and re-introduce a new Bill, for which it was essential to withdraw the old one. And as it concerns the

common man, now public consultations can be organised; and this can go a long way in building stakeholders' confidence and clear doubts on provisions.

The Government has already set a goal of a one-trillion dollar digital economy, and re-introducing a new data protection legislation after careful consideration of various stakeholder interests will be important in balancing genuine regulation and data protection compliance as opposed to an overburdening compliance regime which would impede innovation and growth. This could be well-reasoned with the Srikrishna Committee report as well as a growing international consensus about the necessity for data protection in next-generation innovation in technology.

Most importantly, with the withdrawal of the Personal Data Protection Bill, the imperfections inherent in the Bill and even in the JPC report, the chances of institutionalisation of bad privacy practices are now warded off. But

in the face of fast digitisation that heavily depends on gathering of personal data in all sectors -- education, agriculture, finance, health, labour benefits, welfare or the linking of Aadhaar with voter records under the Election Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021 or for the collection of biometric samples for storage in electronic databases under the Criminal Procedure Identification Act, 2022, it is important to carefully but soon re-introduce the Personal Data Protection Bill that is based on a "comprehensive legal framework"; otherwise, such a crucial aspect of our lives will be exposed to data theft and misuse in the absence of proper regulation and rogue elements will exploit the legal vacuum.

(The writer is an Additional Central Government Standing Counsel, Central Administrative Tribunal, Cuttack and a Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law and Media Studies, School of Mass Communication, KIIT University. Views are personal)

In Nuapada

Tribal girl’s death: Whom to blame, school or hosp?

AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA

Death of Shivani Bhoi, a six-year-old tribal girl due to diarrhoea in the girls' hostel of Nehena Sevashram (ST, SC Residential School) is taken suspiciously by tribal leaders of the locality. According to Ashram teachers, Shivani was admitted to the SDH immediately when she complained of loose motion and vomiting on August 3. However, despite treatment, she died in the evening. The question raised in various circles is, was she neglected? If so, where, in the hostel or at the hospital?

According to the doctor who treated Shivani, her condition was critical when she was admitted. She had high fever and diarrhoea. Despite the efforts of doctors, she could not be saved. Health



workers who treated her also said her condition was serious when she was brought to the hospital.

"If this is the case, did the girl's condition become so bad within an hour after vomiting started in the morning," asks Balkrishna Sabar, secretary of Zilla Adivasi Kalyan Sangha, Nuapada. The girl's elder sister is also an inmate of Nehena Sevashram. According to her, Shivani was suffering from severe vomiting and diarrhoea for two days.

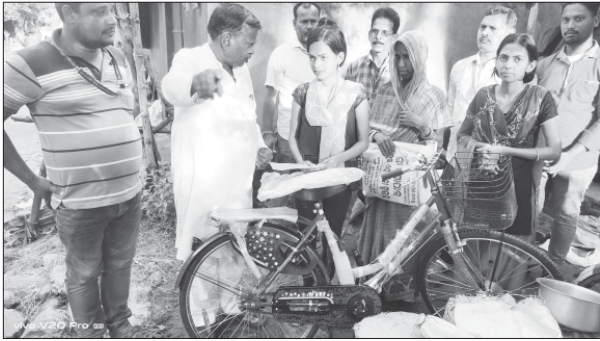
Sabar. "The girl suffered from vomiting on August 2. The SDH is only five km away, but she was taken there after 24 long hours of her complaint. What should we conclude, lack of sensibility or irresponsibility on the part of the school authorities," he asks further.

The most surprising thing was that after the girl's death, her body was hastily burnt in the presence of the Head Masters of seven Sevashrams of Khariar block although it is customary in tribal tradition to bury a body in case of children. "Will the Headmasters of the Sevashram schools, who went to the village with Shivani's body provide a reasonable answer to this question," asks Sabar.

"The girl is gone. However, I request authorities to have an independent investigation," adds he.

No money for higher studies

Girl who scored 83% in Matric gets help



PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

Kendrapada Credit Co-operative Society president and social worker Pramod Kumar Sahu played a Good Samaritan role for an impoverished but meritorious girl of Ayeba village by providing financial help to her for her higher studies.

Monalisa Lenka, daughter of migrant worker, Surendra Lenka, has secured 83 per cent marks in matric examination this year. She was studying in Govari High School at Gandakhia. As her father Surendra is a daily wager at Surat, the family struggle

it hard for their minimum needs. As such, it is difficult for them to support the higher studies of the girl.

Monalisa had appealed to the district administration seeking financial assistance for getting admission in a college as well as to purchase books. But she got no response.

When the matter came to the knowledge of Pramod, he provided an assistance of Rs 5,000 for her higher studies, besides handing over a new bicycle to commute daily and some clothes to her family members. "I assure to lend my support to her studies ahead," said Pramod.

In Brahmapur

Molester held from R'gada; bike seized

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Brahmapur police have arrested a youth allegedly involved in molesting a 22-year-old woman on July 12 under the BNpur police station area in the city.

The arrested accused was identified as Firoj Polkia (28), a resident of Batapolice village under Gunupur police station in Rayagada district, said, Brahmapur SP Sarvana Vivek M.

On the fateful day, the victim, who was working in a

private clinic, was on her way to her workplace by foot, when the Firoj came by a bike and stopped her on the pretext of asking for an address. But he molested the woman and sped away from the spot.

Later, the victim lodged a complaint with the BNpur police,, who had initiated an investigation.

The cops have seized a TVs Apache motorbike from the possession of the accused and also ascertained that the youth was stalking the victim for quite some time.

In Koraput

Elderly man tied to pole, thrashed to death

1 accused held; two absconding

PNS ■ KORAPUT

In a barbaric incident, an elderly man was tied to an electric pole and thrashed to death allegedly by his family members at Uparakutinga village under Laxmipur block of Koraput district. The deceased was identified as Kursha Maniaka.

A dispute had ensued between Maniaka and his family members as he broke the asbestos sheets of his son's house on Saturday. The incident took a violent turn

as Maniaka's brother, son and daughter-in-law tied him to an electric pole and thrashed him with sticks.

The victim sustained critical injuries and died on the spot. Later, the accused cremated the body with the help of some villagers to destroy evidence.

The matter came to fore as a video of the elderly men being beaten went viral on social media.

The Laxmipur police on Sunday raided the village and nabbed one of the three accused while two others managed to flee. A hunt was on by the cops to trace and nab the absconding duo.

‘Stop releasing sewer water into Salunki’

Lok Adalat asks Phulbani civic body

BIRENDRA SUBUDHI ■ PHULBANI

Adjudicating over a petition concerning pollution of the Salunki river due to dumping of garbage and release of drain water in Phulbani, Chairman, Permanent Lok Adalat, Santosh Kumar Nayak directed the district

administration and EO, Phulbani Municipality to stop releasing toilet and drain water to the river.

The PLA took special note of the grave issue as the pollution of the river has triggered several health issues of the people living nearby the river.

Ashok Kumar Parida and 18 others of the Milita Nagarika Mancha in their petition had complained that municipality garbage, household waste and drain water released into the

river create chemical reactions with people using the water for drinking purpose directly getting affected. Dumping of solid waste materials like plastic, aluminum etc is very dangerous and affects the water bodies a lot. Sewage is a part of waste water that contains human excreta and urine which are released into the river Salunki without treatment, posing a grave threat to both human health and environment.

The right to clean water

comes under the ambit of the right to life. In Narmada Bachao Andolan Vrs Union of India, the Supreme Court held that right to clean water is a fundamental right under Article 21of the Constitution. As such, the State is duty bound to prevent the water from getting polluted. So prevention of water of Salunki from pollution is the highest need of the hour. As such, the Phulbani town must have a sewage treatment plant to clean up the sewage, said the petitioners.

Vedanta awareness on Breastfeeding Day



PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

To mark the World Breastfeeding Day, the Vedanta Aluminum reached out to 2,000 pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers here in Jharsuguda and its plant area in Kalahandi district.

An awareness campaign was also organised in collaboration with the National Rural Health Mission, Lanjigarh Vedanta Aluminum hospital, and Mamata-Maa organisation to sensitise mothers and community at large. The focus was on breastfeeding of

children up to six months after birth besides health, nutrition improvement, etc.

In Jharsuguda awareness camps and meetings were organised through modern Anganwadi, child development centres and Nandaghars; ANMs, Asha Workers and doctors have explained the utility of breastfeeding to the expecting mothers.

Vedanta Chief Executive Officer Sunil Gupta said the company is committed to providing health services to the public.

Ganjam Congress stages anti-Govt rally

Protests rising prices, unemployment

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Ganjam District Congress Committee (DCC) on Friday staged a demonstration before the RDC office here against the unprecedented rise in the prices of essential commodities, including cooking gas, rising unemployment and imposition of GST on some basic food items consumed by common people.

Hundreds of party workers led by senior functionary Pitabash Panda and Krushak Cell Odisha Prabhari Rashmi Ranjan Pattnaik started a rally from the Bapuji Ashram towards the RDC office carrying flags, placards and banners and shouting slogans against both the Central and State Governments for their

failure in containing prices of essential commodities.

Party leaders alleged that the Modi-led Union Government has undermined the Indian Constitution and the Parliament by not allowing the Opposition to raise issues of public interest including the problem of unemployment.

PCC observer and former Phulbani MP Nakul Nayak lambasted the Modi Government for taking the country towards the pre-Independence era and burdening the people with taxes and rising prices.

District leader Panda accused the Naveen Patnaik Government of neglecting development of Ganjam district. He said the Patnaik Government has not established a single industry in the district and has failed to check migration of workers to other States.

INBRIEF

B'PUR DAV STUDENTS HOLD ANTI-PLASTIC DRIVE

Brahmapur: The DAV School here held an awareness programme against plastic for the masses. They staged a street play on "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" at the Brahmapur Railway station. Later, a rally was taken out from the railway station to Bijipur. The students gave slogans against use of plastic and created awareness through singing. They distributed paper bags and urged the people to use paper bags as an alternative to plastic and polythene. Principal Dharashree Padhy and supervisor Rinakni Patnaik guided.



HEALTH CHECKUP CAMP AT KHARIAR ROAD

Nuapada: A free health checkup and awareness camp was held by the Khariar Road NAC at Khariar Road recently. It was inaugurated by NAC Chairperson Sonia Goldi Agrawal in the presence of Vice-Chairperson Nishant Daga, EO Karna Suna and all Councillors. Health checkup was done by Dr Siddhartha Mahapatra, homoeopathic doctor of the NAC dispensary. People were made aware about Covid, diarrhoea, malaria, dengue, BP, blood sugar, etc. Free blood test was also done by a medical team. It was informed to the public that a team of health personnel would cover all 19 wards of NAC to provide free health checkup in next one month.



B'GARH COP RESCUES MENTALLY-CHALLENGED

Bargarh: Birbar Bhagat, a police officer of Bargarh's Gaisilet police station, saw a mentally-challenged person and immediately stopped there and took the man with him to the police station. The man looked dirty; so, he got his matted hair and beard cut and washed him with soap. Other personnel of the police station helped Bhagat, who fed him with his own hands. Dr Joshwant Meher and pharmacist Sivananda Pradhan gave primary treatment to the man.



AMAZON STRENGTHENS CUSTOMER PACKAGES IN ODISHA

Puri: The Amazon India has announced to have further strengthened its operational engagement with the Indian Railways with more than 325 intercity transportation lanes for movement of customer packages. This is a 5X increase in railway lanes since it began working with the Railways in 2019 and is one of the enablers for the company to offer 1-day and 2-day delivery promises to customers in the hinterlands of the country. With this expansion, Amazon now ferries customer packages with the Railways to cities in Odisha such as Jharsaguda, Rourkela and Puri.

JSW project: Villagers assured of all support



PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

A village committee meeting of Dhinkia under Erasama block where the JSW will start its proposed steel plant was held on Friday.

Total 28 village committee members participated in the meeting led by committee head Murali Sahoo. Tanmaya Swain, Rajesh Swain, Ananta Swain and Dr Tamil Pradhan were present. They discussed the villagers' sentiment over the proposed JSW projects. Jagatsinghpur SP

Akhileshvar Singh joined the meeting and hailed that villagers should be united to maintain peace and brotherhood among them.

The district administration and JSW authority are fully prepared to address any grievance raised by the villagers, Singh said and asked the villagers to avoid enmity and violence.

Additional SP Paradip Nimain Sethy and IIC Abhyachandpur Jibananda Jena among others participated.

Split voting may be repeated in 2024 polls in Odisha

Naveen Patnaik, president of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), has been serving as the Chief Minister of Odisha , since 2000. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress, are in the opposition in the State since 2009. But neither of them is able to give a matching fight to the ruling BJD. The national level opposition relationship between the BJP and the Congress, keep the opposition divided in the State and helps the BJD win. But gradually, the Congress declined and the BJP began to rise as single opposition.

Hoping to come to power in 2019 general election, the BJP had set an electoral mission of 120+ Assembly seats. But the BJP failed in the mission miserably and got only 23 Assembly seats and 32.49% vote share. However, the party's performance in the Lok Sabha election was good with 8 Lok Sabha seats and 38.4% vote share. The better performance of the BJP in



LALIT MOHAN MISHRA

Lok Sabha and BJD in Assembly poll in Odisha is mainly due to the split- voting behavior of the voters in 2019 poll.

Variance in the percentage of voting in the Assembly and the Lok Sabha spheres is a common trend in Odisha. In 2009 general election, the BJD had bagged 38.8% votes in Assembly and 37.23% votes in Lok Sabha poll. The BJP had bagged 15.05% votes in Assembly and

16.89% votes in Lok Sabha spheres. Similarly, the Congress had bagged 29.10% votes in Assembly and 32.7% votes in Lok Sabha section. In 2014 general election, the BJD got 43.35% vote in Assembly and 44.10% in Lok Sabha. The BJP had secured 17.99 % in Assembly and 21.5% votes in Lok Sabha poll. The Congress had bagged 25.71% in Assembly and 26% votes in Lok Sabha Poll.

In 2019 election, the BJD got 44.71% vote share in Assembly and 42.8% vote share in Lok Sabha domains. The BJP had bagged 32.49% votes in Assembly and 38.4% votes in Parliament poll . Similarly, the Congress had bagged 16.12% votes in Assembly and 13.4 % votes in Lok Sabha.

One factor which is also responsible for the variance in the percentage of voting in the Assembly and the Lok Sabha spheres is the vote share of the Independents and small parties.

The Independents and others took away 12.95% votes in 2014 Assembly poll as against 8.35 % in Lok Sabha poll. Similarly, in 2019 poll, the vote share of the Independents and others was 6.68% in Assembly Poll as against 5.4% in Lok Sabha poll. The less the Independents and others bag votes, the more the major political parties gain.

Split-voting occurs when people vote for one party for the Center and another party for the State. In 2009, split- voting was seen for the first time in Odisha . People gave vote to the Congress in Lok Sabha poll while casting their vote for the the BJD and its alliance for the State Assembly. The Congress bagged 6 Lok Sabha seats, the BJD and its allies got 15, leaving the BJP with no seat. But in the Assembly poll, the BJD could bag 103 seats alone, leaving the Congress with 27 and the BJP with 6 seats. In Baleswar Lok Sabha

Constituency, Congress leader, Srikanta Jena won the poll while five Assembly seats under the Lok Sabha constituency went to the BJD and only one Assembly seat went to the Congress. Apart from split -voting, the weakness of the BJP and the better candidature of the Congress helped the Congress to perform better. The same situation was repeated in 2019 general election and helped the BJP in Lok Sabha poll while giving the BJD the mandate for the Assembly.

The main cause of split-voting is the Central political wave during elections. Central wave used to influence Odisha election in the past. But the situation has changed since 2004 general election. In spite of anti-BJP wave from the Center, the BJP-BJD alliance won the State Assembly poll. In 2009, 2014 and 2019 general elections, the central wave was checked by the BJD to influence the Assembly

poll. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is the presence of a regional party and the second reason is the conduct of simultaneous Assembly and Lok Sabha election since 2004. In fact, split- votings are seen in those States where the regional parties are in State power.

In the prestigious Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha Constituency, the BJP won the Lok Sabha seat for the first time in the electoral history of the State. BJP candidate, Aparajta Sarangi, won the seat while none of the Assembly seats under the Lok Sabha Constituency could go to the BJP. The BJD won in six Assembly Constituencies and the Congress won in one. This was a situation of split-voting. It was not due to the Central- BJP or Modi-wave alone, but due to two additional contributing factors such as the personality factor of the candidate and the faulty left-electoral-alliance strategy of the Congress.

Shall the split- voting be repeated in 2024 election in Odisha? The BJD is not complacent and is working continuously to perform better in both Lok Sabha and Assembly segments. The BJP is planning to bag 14 Lok Sabha seats where it had performed very well in 2019 but is yet silent on its Assembly target. As the popularity of Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, is increasing and the opposition Congress is weak at the Center and the State, the split-voting is expected to be repeated in 2024 poll where voters are likely to vote for the BJD for Assembly and BJP for Lok Sabha , unless the union politics changes drastically. However, like the last time, the candidate and the Congress factor shall also influence the 2024 poll outcome of BJP. It remains to be seen if the Congress improves in the State and the BJP settles its Chief Ministerial candidate issue.

(Mob: 9439178588)

Monkeypox: 2 UAE returnees found infected with strain A.2 of virus

NIV conducts study on two patients, finds they had been infected with a less seen variant of current strain of infection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As India's Monkeypox tally continues to rise, the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune on Sunday said that after analysis of the two cases pertaining to travellers who had returned from the UAE and subsequently tested positive in July, it has been found that they were infected with virus strain A.2. They said it is related to the lineage of hMPXV-1A clade 3.

In other words, the two patients had been infected with a less seen variant of the current strain of infection and bears similarity to cases that have cropped up in several Western nations earlier this year. Clade 3 is various 'branches' of monkeypox, each of which have unique genomic signatures and varying severity. Mentioning the details, the study also showed that the 35-year-old male and 31-year-old male from UAE -- tested positive for Monkeypox -- had no traces of sexual contact.

The development came soon after the country reported two fresh cases on Friday.

"Phylogenetic analysis revealed that the two cases were infected with Monkeypox virus strain A.2 which belong to hMPXV-1A lineage of clade 3...The complete genome sequences obtained from skin lesions of cases 1 and 2 showed similarity of 99.91% and 99.96% respectively with MPXV_USA_2022_FL001 West African clade," said the



ICMR-NIV study.

The term 'hMPXV' is an abbreviation for 'human monkeypox virus'. While scientists have traditionally classified monkeypox cases based on location - clade 1 for Congo Basin as it was the first to be detected and 2 for West African - many argue that the new strain (akin to the typically milder West African strain) deserves a fresh categorisation as clade 3.

Genetic data from other parts of the world however have indicated that there are at least two 'separate' monkeypox outbreaks underway outside of Africa at present, with a majority of the genomes across the world which belonging to the B.1 lineage. The A2 strain meanwhile has been detected in several Indian cases includ-

ing a Kerala man who returned from the UAE who had succumbed to the virus last week.

"Case 1, a 35-year, male, resident of UAE had developed low-grade fever and myalgia on July 5 2022. On the next day, he developed multiple vesicular rashes in the oral cavity and lips followed by a single lesion on the genital organ. The lesions were umbilicated with the size 0.5 to 0.8 cm," the study explained.

Another case pertained to a 32-year-old male from Dubai who travelled to his hometown Kerala on July 13, 2022, and tested positive for Monkeypox.

According to the study, he had developed dysuria and genital swelling on July 8. The next day he developed fever with chills, myalgia, backache and headache followed by mul-

tiple vesicular rashes on the genital organ and both hands on July 10. The lesions progressed and later spread to the face, back, neck and forearm with cervical lymphadenopathy by July 15, 2022. "He did not have any co-morbidity and denied any sexual or physical contact with suspected or confirmed MPXV case," it added.

The Niv on 6 August analysed two monkeypox cases of travellers who had returned from the UAE.

According to the study, the two cases were infected with monkeypox virus strain A.2 which is related to the lineage of hMPXV-1A clade 3.

"The complete genome sequences obtained from skin lesions of cases 1 and 2 showed similarity of 99.91 and 99.96 per cent respectively with MPXV_USA_2022_FL001 West African clade," read the ICMR-NIV study.

"Phylogenetic analysis revealed that the two cases were infected with Monkeypox virus strain A.2 which belong to hMPXV-1A lineage of clade 3," it added.

Both the cases' samples from multiple sites -- lesion fluid, lesion roof and lesion base -- were collected on the ninth post-onset day of illness i.e. 13 July, 2022, and July 16, 2022, respectively. They referred to the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for emerging and re-emerging diseases, ICMR-National Institute of Virology, Pune, India for the MPXV diagnosis.

Health Min renews facilities for nurses

Annual health check-ups, creche facility, 40/W working hours in list



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Annual health check-ups, a creche facility and work hours not exceeding 40 in a week are among the measures that the Union Health Ministry has proposed in a recently released draft guidelines with an aim to improve the working conditions of nurses in all healthcare institutions.

It has also recommended that all healthcare establishments may, as far as possible, provide accommodation to their nursing staff within or near their premises.

The healthcare establishments will have to establish internal complaint committees in accordance with the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at

Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and should also take necessary measures to ensure the security of nurses during night shifts. Appropriate measures may be taken to ensure proper lighting in and around the work settings to promote the safety of nurses.

The draft guidelines have been released on the ministry's website for comments from the public and the stakeholders within 30 days from the date of issuance. The document stated that the WHO Global Strategy on "Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030" calls for upholding "the personal, employment and professional rights of the health workforce, including safe and decent working environments free from all kinds of discrimina-

tion, coercion and violence".

Conducive working conditions would enhance patient care and contribute substantially to the overall healthcare outcomes. A safe and healthy work environment for nurses is imperative in order to envision quality nursing care. "Therefore, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has drafted the guidelines to give effect to the resolution towards improving working conditions of nurses in various healthcare establishments," it said.

According to the draft guidelines, all healthcare establishments have to ensure adequate infrastructure and well-equipped work stations in all units or wards to enable efficient functioning of the nursing staff.

It also mandates that all

healthcare establishments will have separate washrooms and changing rooms (including drinking water, pantry facilities, lockers, clean uniforms etc.) for the nursing staff and should identify designated resting rooms for nurses working for a prolonged hours.

The guidelines said the healthcare facilities should take initiatives to recognise outstanding nurses and take measures to upkeep the morale and motivation of the nursing staff. All healthcare institutions should provide paid maternity leave in accordance with the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 and other authorised leave or allowances and facilities in accordance with the government's guidelines or existing policies.

Parliament has become dysfunctional, democracy gasping for breath: PC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister P Chidambaram on Sunday said he was veering to the conclusion that Parliament has become "dysfunctional" and alleged that democracy is "gasping for breath" in India with almost all institutions tamed, emasculated or captured.

He also said Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu "failed" to protect Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge last week from being summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) when the House was in session.

The senior Congress leader also dismissed Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks linking the Congress' demonstration against price rise on Friday to the Ram temple foundation day, saying the anniversary of the 'shilanyas' was "far from our mind" when the date for the protest was fixed.

It was fixed taking into account that all the MPs will be in Delhi on Friday because the voting for the vice presidential poll was on Saturday, he said, adding that one can always twist logic to blame someone.

"Moreover, it was on August 5, 2019 that the illegal dismembering of Jammu and Kashmir took place! Let's leave

these aside when discussing a serious issue," Chidambaram said.

Shah had linked Congress leaders' protest in black clothes over the issues of price rise, unemployment and GST hike to what he said was the party's "appeasement" politics to convey its opposition to the Ram temple foundation stone laying by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 5 in 2020.

Chidambaram also rejected BJP leaders' charge that the Congress' protest on August 5 was an attempt to save the party's top leadership that is facing questioning by the ED in the National Herald case.

"We had announced and

made it clear that the protests on August 5 were exclusively on inflation, unemployment and Agnipath. If people pretend to be deaf and blind to the announcement, what can we do?" he said.

On about Kharge's summoning by the ED during the working hours of Parliament last Thursday, he said it was a "sad day" for Rajya Sabha when the Chairman "failed to protect" the Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge from being summoned when the House was in session.

On ED probes against several Opposition leaders, Chidambaram refused to comment on any particular case but



asserted that it was increasingly and abundantly clear that the powers of investigation and the laws were directed only at members of the Opposition.

"Institutions have been tamed or emasculated or captured. Democracy is gasping for breath. We may have the shell of democracy, but inside, the shell has been hollowed out. This applies to almost all institutions, which is what Rahul

Gandhi alluded to in his reply (at a press conference Friday)," he said talking to a section of news agency.

With Parliament unable to transact much business during the Monsoon session due to frequent adjournments amid logjam between the Opposition and Treasury benches over a host of issues including price rise, Chidambaram said he is "veering to the painful conclusion that Parliament has become dysfunctional".

He asserted that the single big reason for this was that the Treasury bench had "no interest" in dialogue, discussion and debate.

"Let me ask, what calamity

ty would have befallen if the government had agreed to a debate under Rule 267 on price rise on the first day? The debate would have been concluded in one day. Instead, we wasted two weeks," he said.

The BJP seems more comfortable with governing without debate and without an Opposition, he alleged.

Chidambaram also hit out at Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for her reply to the debate on price rise in Parliament in which she said that India did not face any risk of either recession or stagflation as its macroeconomic fundamentals are "perfect".

No one from the

Opposition hinted at an impending recession or stagflation and these were set up by the government like "straw men" so that the government can shoot them down, he said.

"Our concerns were rising prices and rampant unemployment. The twin factors have placed an unbearable burden on the poor and the middle class. The finance minister was obliged to spell out the steps that the government intended to take to moderate prices and to create jobs. The FM did not," he said.

Chidambaram also criticised Sitharaman's comparisons with other countries, saying they were "odious".

NIA arrests Delhi man for collecting funds for ISIS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested an active ISIS member from the Batla House area of the national Capital.

The "radicalised" individual Mohsin Ahmad, hailing from Patna, was collecting funds for the global terror group and was arrested during searches here in connection with the ISIS module case.

"Yesterday (06.08.2022), the NIA conducted a search in the residential premises of accused Mohsin Ahmad, son of Mohd. Shakil Ahmad presently residing at F- 18/27, Japani Gali, Jogabai Extension, Batla house, New Delhi and permanent resident of New colony,



ITI women, Digha, Dinapur cum Khagaul, Patna, Bihar and subsequently arrested him in the case pertaining to online and on ground activities of ISIS," the agency said in a statement on Sunday.

The case was registered suo-moto by the NIA on June 25.

"Accused Mohsin Ahmad is a radicalised and active

member of ISIS. He has been arrested for his involvement in collection of funds for ISIS from sympathisers in India as well as abroad. He was sending these funds to Syria and other places in the form of cryptocurrency in order to further the activities of ISIS. Further investigations in the case are in progress, it said.

On July 31, the anti-terror agency had carried out searches at 13 premises of suspected persons across six states -- Bhopal and Raipur in Madhya Pradesh, Bharuch, Surat, Navsari and Ahmedabad in Gujarat, Arariya in Bihar, Bhatkal and Tumkur City in Karnataka, Kolhapur and Nanded in Maharashtra and Deoband in Uttar Pradesh.

HAL developing long-endurance drone for vigil over LAC

New Delhi: State-run aerospace behemoth Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) is working on an AI-driven multi-role, advanced and long-endurance drone for strategic missions in high-altitude areas including the frontiers with China, people familiar with the development said on Sunday.

The rotary-wing drone will have the capability to carry a load of 40 kgs, including missiles and sensors, and it is being developed considering the requirement of the armed forces to keep a strong vigil over the mountainous areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), they said.

The HAL has set a target

of conducting the maiden test-flying of the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) by the middle of next year and plans to produce 60 such platforms in the first phase of the project, the people in the know told PTL.

They said the operating system of the long-endurance drone will feature applications of Artificial Intelligence and the armed forces will be able to use it for multiple purposes including transporting essential supplies. "The drone is being developed in such a way that it can carry a wide range of vital military systems including sensors, missiles and various other weapons," said one of the people cited above.

Climate change making prediction difficult for weather agencies across world: IMD

New Delhi: Climate change has hampered the ability of the forecasting agencies to accurately predict severe events, and weather bureaus across the world are focusing on augmenting the observational network density and the weather prediction modelling to improve predictability, India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said.

He also said that though the monsoon rainfall has not shown any significant trend in the country, the number of heavy rainfall events has increased and that of light rainfall events has decreased due to climate change.

"We have got the digital data of the monsoon rainfall since 1901. Parts of north, east

and northeast India show a decrease in rainfall, while some areas in the west, such as west Rajasthan, show an increase in precipitation.

"Thus, there is no significant trend if we consider the country as a whole -- the monsoon is random and it shows large-scale variations," the IMD chief said when asked about the impact of climate change on the Indian monsoon.

On July 27, the government had told Parliament that Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Meghalaya and Nagaland have shown significant decreasing trends in the southwest monsoon rainfall during the recent 30-year period (1989-2018, both years included). The annual rainfall over these five states, along

with Arunachal Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, has also shown significant decreasing trends, it said.

Mohapatra said an analysis of the day-to-day rainfall data since 1970, however, shows that the number of very heavy rainfall days has increased and that of light or moderate rainfall days has decreased.

"That means if it is not raining, it is not raining. If it is raining, it is raining heavily. The rainfall is more intense when there is a low-pressure system. This is one of the most important trends found in the tropical belt, including India. Studies have proved that this increase in heavy rainfall events and decrease in light precipitation are due to climate change," he told PTI.

Nocturnal lizard endemic to Eastern Ghats on verge of extinction

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Endemic to India's Eastern Ghats, Jeypure ground gecko (Cyrtodactylus jeypurensis), an enigmatic nocturnal lizard, is on the extinction path due to deforestation, mining, rapid urbanization and forest fires coupled with huge pet trade demand fuelled by booming social media amongst reptile breeders and keepers.

India has now sought its inclusion in the Appendix II species of the Convention on International Trade In Endangered Species of Wild Fauna And Flora (CITES) to be

held in November in Panama. Enlisted Appendix II species means they are not necessarily threatened with extinction but could become so if their trade is not regulated.

The proposal is likely to be taken up at the nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties CoP Panama City (Republic of Panama) to be held mid-November.

India, in its document submitted to the Convention, that on the basis of available trade data and information on the status and trends of the wild population, it can be inferred that the regulation of trade in the species is necessary to

avoid it becoming eligible for inclusion in Appendix I in the near future.

Once thought to be extinct and then discovered again in 2010, C. jeypurensis is endemic to Eastern Ghats of India and has been recorded from very few localities in southern Odisha and northern Andhra Pradesh. The species is listed as Endangered in the IUCN Red List.

India expressed concerns that C. jeypurensis is or may be affected by trade because it is an attractive species and could become the target of commercial collection. "The species is handsome looking and docile,



which makes it vulnerable for the pet trade and there appears to be demand for it amongst reptile breeders and keepers outside India.

Live specimens of the species are in trade outside India as evidenced by advertisements on social media," as per the document. To corroborate its apprehension, the Government has attached annexures giving proof of details of the sale offers of the lizard on Facebook and Instagram.

Due to the restricted area of occurrence of the species, the ongoing decline in the species' population and continued

threats to the species, any collection of the species for the international pet trade is very likely to have a detrimental impact on its status.

"While the species may actually qualify for inclusion in CITES Appendix I, an Appendix II CITES listing as a start would provide regulation of international trade in the species and penalties for breach thereof, thereby helping to control illegal export of the species from India; and generate trade data regarding international trade and demand for the species.

Surveys indicate that the population of the species may

be declining at a fast rate. In the Galikonda and Aaraku valleys, Andhra Pradesh, the population spotted by a team of researchers from IISc was revisited by a team of scientists and research scholars of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) in 2021, which resulted in no observation during the same month in October.

Similarly, Paderu hill, where this species was found in good numbers (6 individuals) during a survey conducted by IISc team, was revisited by the ZSI team in October 2021 and only one individual was observed, said the document.

Maha Cabinet expansion likely before August 15

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is likely to expand his Cabinet this week by inducting at least 15 Ministers and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis is expected to keep the crucial Home portfolio, sources said on Sunday.

Top Government sources also said the civic polls in the State, delayed due to the OBC reservation issue being heard by the Supreme Court, are likely to be held in October after getting a clarification from the apex court.

Shinde and Fadnavis were sworn in as Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister respectively on June 30 after the resignation of Uddhav Thackeray due to a rebellion in the Shiv Sena ranks.

The duo have been functioning as a two-member cabinet since then, inviting criticism from opposition leaders, including NCP leader and for-



mer Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

"Ajit Pawar is leader of the opposition. He will have to say such things. Ajit dada conveniently forgets that when he was in the government there were just five ministers for the first 32 days," Fadnavis told reporters here on Sunday.

The expansion of the Maharashtra cabinet will take place "before you can even imagine", Fadnavis said in response to repeated questions from reporters.

Sources said the exercise will be carried out before August 15.

On Saturday, Chief

Minister Shinde said the functioning of the state government has not been affected in any way due to the delay in the expansion of the council of ministers and that more ministers will be inducted soon.

"The work of the government has not been affected in any way. The decision making process has not been affected. I and the deputy chief minister have been taking decisions and there is no impact on the working of the government," the chief minister told reporters here.

Fadnavis said the BJP has embarked on a mission to improve its footprint in Maharashtra in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections by identifying 16 parliamentary constituencies where opposition parties have had a consistent winning streak.

He said these constituencies included those held by Shiv Sena leaders who have now joined the Shinde camp.

"Since Shiv Sena and BJP

will contest the Lok Sabha elections as a coalition, the BJP will work to ensure the victory of the sitting Lok Sabha members from these constituencies," Fadnavis said.

He said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been given the responsibility to coordinate efforts to better the BJP's performance in Baramati, where the party had polled a good number of votes in the previous elections.

Fadnavis said Sitharaman is likely to tour Baramati in September and travel programmes of other central BJP leaders and Union ministers tasked with responsibilities for Lok Sabha polls will be finalised soon.

"In these 16 constituencies, the central BJP will concentrate its energies to better the party's performance," Fadnavis said. Baramati is currently represented by Supriya Sule, the daughter of NCP chief Sharad Pawar. The seat is considered a bastion of the Pawar family.

Security beefed up at Kolkata's Indian Museum after shooting

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Security was heightened at the Indian Museum in Kolkata on Sunday after a CISF personnel killed a colleague and injured an assistant commandant of the force in indiscriminate firing.

CISF head constable Akshay Kumar Mishra, who fired around 15 rounds from an automatic rifle on Saturday evening, was arrested, a senior Kolkata Police officer said.

An official at the state-run SSKM Hospital said that the injured assistant commandant of CISF, who suffered a bullet wound in one hand, was in a stable condition.

Security arrangements at the Indian Museum, the oldest and largest in the country, were increased following the incident, officials said.

Mishra has alleged that he was subjected to "harassment" by a superior for over two months, which led him to resort to the indiscriminate



firing that killed one CISF personnel and injured another.

The firing incident took place at the CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) barrack at the Indian Museum situated near Esplanade here. CISF has been in charge of security at the museum since December, 2019.

In June, a city police constable had fired several rounds outside the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata before shooting himself dead. A woman travelling pillion on a two-wheeler died after being hit in the firing.

ITBP jawan held for raping, impregnating Sikkim teenager

PTI ■ GANGTOK

An ITBP jawan was arrested in Sikkim for allegedly raping a 13-year-old girl multiple times at his official quarters after which she became pregnant, police said on Sunday.

The incident happened in Rangpo town in Pakyong district, they said.

In her complaint, the girl's mother alleged that a teenaged local boy also sexually assaulted her for months. Police said they have detained the boy as well.

The girl's mother alleged that the paramilitary personnel, an assistant sub-inspector, raped her multiple times at his residential quarters in Raj Bhavan's Winter Camp in Rangpo since April.

Police booked the jawan, a native of Dharchula in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act's section 4 (punishment for penetrative sexual



assault) and section 6 (punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault).

In the same complaint, the girl's mother alleged that the local boy was also sexually assaulting her since February.

Police said they have nabbed the boy and taking legal action against him.

The girl was medically examined at the primary health care in Rangpo, they said.

Police said they are investigating the case, and trying to ascertain if the local boy and the ITBP jawan had any connection. The sequence of events is being established, they said, refusing to divulge details about how the alleged rapes and assaults continued for so long.

Ahead of Gujarat polls, Kejriwal promises sops for tribals

PTI ■ VADODARA

Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday promised implementation of the Constitution's Fifth Schedule and the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act in tribal regions of Gujarat if the AAP is voted to power in the State.

Kejriwal also promised that Gujarat's tribal advisory committee would be headed by a person from the community instead of the chief minister, as has been the case in the state.

He claimed the Gujarat Assembly elections, due later this year, will be a direct contest between the ruling BJP and the AAP.

Talking to reporters in Vadodra before addressing a rally in tribal-dominated Chhota Udepur district, Kejriwal also said that if AAP comes to power in Gujarat, each tribal village will get a



good government school and a "mohalla clinic".

Multi-speciality hospitals will also be set up in the region for free treatment of tribals, the Delhi chief minister said.

He also promised simplification of the caste certificate issuance process and houses to those who do not own one.

The government will also connect tribal villages with roads, he said.

The Fifth Schedule of the

Constitution deals with provisions related to the administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes.

The PESA Act was enacted by Parliament in 1996 to ensure self-governance for people living in scheduled areas. The states were required to formulate rules for the effective implementation of the Act to strengthen gram sabhas in scheduled areas.

Kejriwal said despite 75

years of independence, tribals have remained backward.

"They are remembered before elections and have only been exploited by all. The Constitution provides for a separate system for tribals because the community has a different culture and is very backward," he said.

No government is ready to implement provisions made for them in the Indian Constitution because they are always eager to usurp their natural resources, Kejriwal claimed on the second day of his two-day visit to Gujarat.

"We will implement provisions of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution word to word. We will also strictly implement the PESA Act which says no government can take action in a tribal area without the gram sabha's consent," he said.

"There is a tribal advisory committee. Its work is to oversee the development of tribal

regions, how to utilise funds. The law says the tribal advisory committee chairman will be a tribal. In Gujarat, the chief minister heads the committee. This will be stopped," he said.

Kejriwal said tribals will also be provided employment and free electricity which he has guaranteed for everyone in Gujarat.

He claimed the forthcoming Gujarat Assembly election will be a direct contest between the BJP and AAP.

"So many Congress leaders have joined the BJP, many more will flock the saffron party, and the remaining will join the BJP after the election. It is more or less a merger of the Gujarat Congress into the Gujarat BJP," he further claimed.

"The ILU (I love you) politics between the two parties has come to an end. Now it will be politics of people, which is what the AAP does," he said.

Kejriwal said while on one hand is the BJP's "misgovernance" of 27 years (in the state), corruption and incidents of spurious liquor, or the other hand is a "new politics (of AAP) with new faces and new hope".

"I guarantee you that we will make the future of your children. But if you vote them to power, they will offer you spurious liquor," he said.

"Because they (BJP) are worried (of the outcome) in Gujarat, they harass us (AAP leaders) in Delhi," he alleged.

Asked about the AAP's chief ministerial face in Gujarat, Kejriwal said every person is his party's CM face.

"Every Gujarati will be the CM. We have come up with a new hope, new politics. Ours is the first party that talks of honesty," he said.

Can any other party talk about honesty, promise to construct schools? he asked.

"If we can construct schools in five years (of AAP governance in Delhi), why can't they (other parties)? But they will not do because their intention is not right," Kejriwal said. On the "revani" (sweet) or freebies that he has been promising during his campaigning, Kejriwal claimed the BJP government waived "Rs 10 lakh crore of its friends" and wants to waive more, but is short of money.

"So, they now say there is no need for free education and hospitals. I would like to ask the people of the country whether it is right to provide free education to your children or waive loans of their friends?" he said targeting the political opponents.

Without naming anyone, he also demanded a probe into whether people whose loans were waived offered donations to the party. "Whether the loans were waived for free or

something happened?" he asked. Kejriwal said he had faith in the Supreme Court which was hearing a plea related to freebies offered by political parties.

The AAP convener said he does not oppose any political party or its leaders and all he does is work for the people.

"Can anyone object to me over the issue of construction of schools for children? I had made an open offer that whoever wants to learn from me--whether he is the chief minister of BJP or Congress (ruled states)--come and learn, our country is one," he said.

Kejriwal also referred to a "survey", claiming 99 per cent people in Gujarat agreed to have free education, 97 per cent wanted free medical treatment, and 91 per cent said they would like to have free electricity. "Even the survey shows what we are announcing is liked by the people," he said.

Court issues warrant against UP Min Sanjay in 2015 case

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After Rakesh Sachan, another Minister in the Yogi Adityanath Government, Sanjay Nishad, has landed in trouble as a court has issued a non-bailable warrant against him. The court in Gorakhpur has ordered the arrest and production of Nishad by August 10. The responsibility of compliance with this order has been given to Shahpur police.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Jagannath has ordered the police to produce Fisheries Minister Sanjay Nishad in the court, and if necessary, to take him in custody in compliance with his orders.

It may be mentioned that the NBW against Cabinet Minister Nishad was issued in a 7-year-old case. On June 7, 2015, a movement was going on in Kasarwal under Sahjanwa police station, to press the demand of 5 per cent reservations for Nishads in govern-



ment jobs. The agitators were sitting on the railway track. Meanwhile, a dispute escalated and the police resorted to lathi-charge in which one person had died while 24 policemen were injured in the violence.

Then it was alleged that the man had died after being shot by the police.

Due to this the movement became violent and the agitators clashed with the police. Several police vehicles were torched by the agitators. After this, a case was registered against many people, including NISHAD Party chief Sanjay

Nishad, for rioting, sabotage, arson and other related sections of the Indian Penal Code.

Significantly, Sanjay Nishad's party is an ally of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. Both the parties had come together before the Lok Sabha elections in 2019. One son of Sanjay Nishad is an MP and the other is an MLA. Apart from this, Sanjay Nishad himself is a member of the UP Legislative Council.

Earlier, a Kanpur court, on Saturday, found UP's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Rakesh Sachan guilty in the 1991 Arms Act case. Unhappy with the decision, the lawyers and supporters of Rakesh Sachan allegedly left the courtroom after he was found guilty. However, the minister denied the allegation and called it a rumour.

Rakesh Sachan said, "Some cases are pending, the things that are going on are misleading". He added that the court's

decision would be accepted.

The court filed a complaint against Rakesh Sachan in the Kotwali police station late at night. The court in its complaint has asked Kanpur police to register a case in this matter.

Kanpur Nagar's Joint Commissioner of Police Anand Prakash Tiwari, after receiving the complaint, started an investigation in this matter. He said, "The statements of all related people will be recorded, the CCTV footage will be checked and then further action will be taken."

He added, "The facts of the complaint will also be examined. The investigation is expected to be completed in a day or two. Further action will be taken accordingly."

Sachan claimed on Sunday that he was currently in Kanpur. He said that he had to talk to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on this issue and after that he could be called to Lucknow.

After Indian woman kills self in US, FIR filed in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bijnor police registered a case in connection with the death of a 30-year-old Indian-origin woman in the US who reportedly committed suicide after suffering years of alleged domestic abuse by her husband.

Mandeep Kaur, 30, allegedly committed suicide on August 3 after posting a video online in which she spoke about years of domestic abuse by her husband Ranjodhbeer Singh Sandhu, who works as a truck driver.

Moments before her death, Kaur had released a video in which she narrates the details of the torture she faced during her 8-year-long marriage.

"It has been eight years. I cannot take daily beatings now. Papa, please forgive me. I am going to die," she said in the video.

The video led to a massive outrage on social media. Kaur left behind two young daughters aged 4 and 6 years.

In the video posted online, Kaur, seen crying and distressed, says she cannot take the abuse anymore and also talks about taking her own life.

According to reports, Mandeep Kaur moved to New York after her marriage but was allegedly abused by her husband Ranjodhbeer Singh Sandhu for not bearing a son and over dowry.

The Indian Embassy in New York expressed grief over Kaur's death and said it was in

touch with the US authorities at all levels and would render all kinds of assistance required.

Mandeep Kaur's sister Kuldeep Kaur said her sister was married in February 2015 and after the couple went to New York, the husband started torturing her. The sister claimed that the husband wanted a son and Rs 50 lakh in dowry.

Mandeep was found hanging from the ceiling fan of the house in New York where she

lived.

The father of Mandeep Kaur said that her husband had been torturing her for years, demanding a son. But Kaur said she won't leave her husband as she couldn't raise her two daughters, the father claimed.

In one of the unverified videos that is widely shared on social media, her husband can be seen beating her while the two daughters are crying in the background.

UP crosses 1 cr Covid booster dose mark

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In what comes as an incredible achievement ahead of the Independence Week celebrations in the State, Uttar Pradesh crossed the major milestone of administering over one crore 'precaution doses' of Covid vaccine on Sunday.

As a result of the successful execution of the ongoing special 75-day 'Amrit Dose' campaign in Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath, the state achieved another milestone while continuing to conduct one of the most successful vaccination campaigns in the country since the rollout of the mass immunisation drive.

Committed to providing additional protection to the people against the novel coronavirus, Uttar Pradesh began administering booster shots (precaution dose) from January 10, an official spokesman claimed here on Sunday.

The state, on July 15, launched a special 75-day special drive to administer precaution doses to all aged 18 years and above at public vaccination centres free of cost.

In pursuance of the directives issued by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the authorities concerned are carrying out awareness campaigns regarding the importance of booster doses to encourage every individual above 18

years of age to take the booster doses.

Through these campaigns, information about vaccination centres, where booster shots are being administered, is also being provided.

Uttar Pradesh has so far administered over 35.27 crore total vaccine doses. Out of these, about 17,63,25,382 are first doses, while as many as 16,63,14,727 individuals are fully-vaccinated. Besides, over 2,70,85,700 vaccine doses have been administered to children in the age group of 15-17 and over 1,58,35,391 doses to children in the age group of 12-14 in the state.

It may be recalled that the Uttar Pradesh government has set a target to provide the



precaution dose of Covid vaccine to at least 13 crore people who are eligible for it

within the 75-day special drive which will continue till September 30.

Office of the Superintending Engineer 1 st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com						
No. 2520 (I) Tender-1/2022-23						
Dated 06.08.2022						
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E- Tendering) E-TENDER NOTICE						
The Superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, PWD Almora Public Works Department, Almora invites tender through E-Tendering. (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 10/08/2022 & onwards on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in						
S. No.	Name of work	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	Construction Division PWD Kapkot Construction of Karuli Bend to Gajli Bijoria Motor Road from Km. 1.00 to 5.00 Under State Sector (CM Ghoshna) in Kapkot Constituency distt- Bageshwar. (Remaining work)	₹ 5000.00+ 18% GST	5.10 Lakh	120 Days	15 Months	Category "B" & above (Road Works)
2	Construction Division PWD Kapkot Construction of Ramadi — Kanauli Motor Road in Km. 3.50 to 8.00 Under State Sector in Kapkot Constituency distt- Bageshwar. (Remaining work)	₹ 5000.00+ 18% GST	3.88 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month	Category "B" & above (Road Works)
3	Construction Division PWD Ranikhet Improvement & Damarikran work in Baser Bend to Kuna Dhanyari Motor Road in constituency Dwarahat Under State Sector Distt Almora	₹ 5000.00+ 18% GST	3.48 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month	Class "B" & Higher in Road Works
4	Construction Division PWD Ranikhet Improvement & Damarikran work in Ganoli-Bawan Motor Road in constituency Dwarahat Under State Sector Distt Almora	₹ 5000.00+ 18% GST	3.34 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month	Class "B" & Higher in Road Works
5	Construction Division PWD Ranikhet Improvement & Damarikran work in Kaffara-Barat-Tipola Motor Road in constituency Dwarahat Under State Sector Distt Almora	₹ 5000.00+ 18% GST	4.16 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month	Class "B" & Higher in Road Works
6	Construction Division PWD Ranikhet Construction of Dwarahat- Surikhet Motor road to Bayela - Nar Motor Road Under SCP	₹ 5000.00+ 18% GST	4.55 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month	Class "B" & Higher in Road Works



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Making it meaningful

Boycott by any Chief Minister of Niti Aayog Governing Council meeting is not good for nation building

The seventh meeting of the Governing Council of Niti Aayog on Sunday, under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is a good occasion for the political class to thrash out the most important national issues. The Council comprises, apart from the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers of all states and Union Territories with legislature, Lt Governors of other UTs, ex-officio Members, Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman, and Niti Aayog full-time Members. Union Ministers were special invitees. That this was the first in-person meeting of the Council after the pandemic made it even more important. Agriculture, especially self-sufficiency in oilseeds and pulses, topped the agenda. National Education Policy and urban governance were other important subjects discussed at the conference. The Government wanted the Council to finalise a roadmap and outcome-oriented action plans. So, by any reckoning, it was a very important meeting. But, unfortunately, it was politicised. Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao announced



that he would stay away from the meeting as a mark of strong protest against the present trend of the Central government to discriminate against the states and not treat them as equal partners. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, an ally of the Bharatiya Janata Party's, also missed the meeting. It may be mentioned here that Kumar also didn't attend a dinner hosted by PM Modi for the newly elected President Droupadi Murmu.

Political parties will hurl allegations and counter-allegations at each other for the absence of some Chief Ministers, but this will just generate a lot of heat and dust, which already aplenty in the political arena. It is unfortunate that politics has been reduced to petty politicking, scoring brownie points, and one-upmanship; such things happen in every democracy, but there is also meaningful discussion and informed debate, in legislative chambers and outside them. But, sadly, that is no longer the case in India. Self-righteousness is the disease that afflicts all parties; now political adversaries are not seen as leaders who have a different viewpoint but as enemies. The Niti Aayog Governing Council is a perfect forum where both the Central and state governments can express their views and present the problems they face in formulating and executing policies. The Chief Ministers who refuse to attend it actually lose the opportunity to tell the country that they feel discriminated against; in a way, they banish themselves out of a major national forum. The Centre too must share some portion of the blame; some acts of omission and commission are responsible for the mistrust. All political parties must ponder over a couple of simple questions: Should every interaction between them be marked with bombastic acrimony and self-righteousness? Should they exchange charges all the time? One hopes that all chief ministers attend the next meeting of the Niti Aayog Governing Council or any such gathering.

PICTALK



A ragpicker collects recyclable items from the offerings and idols of Goddess Dashama, left by devotees in Ahmedabad

PTI

Address pendency issue

The courts have four crores pending cases; inordinate delays leave lakhs languishing in jails

It is high time to address the issue of pendency in lower courts so that speedy justice can be delivered in a minimum of time. The slow justice has ruined many lives and many people who should have been in jail are out of it thanks to their resources and the slow pace at which the judiciary works in the country.

The issue of pendency of cases in the Indian courts especially the lower ones has once again come to the fore. The Supreme Court A bench of Justices Sanjay KishanKaul and MM Sundresh have appealed to the government to solve this issue else it would haunt the country for the next thousands of years.



In solving cases make the process of getting justice a punishment in itself.

The excruciatingly slow process of getting bail not only ruins the life of an individual but also puts undue pressure on jails and the judiciary. Having said that, it is difficult but not impossible if all concerned make a resolve to solve it. For instance, the suggestion that first-time offenders involved in petty offences could be let off. Far from reforming long stay in jail actually makes them hardened criminals. Moreover, video hearings could be implemented across the country to the lowest court level. Though increasing the number of judges is easier said than done. Besides, making some changes in the Indian penal code could also ease the burden on the judiciary. IPC was passed in 1860 to suit the colonial rulers. Many laws such as sedition law and the like have become archaic and need to be redone. There are phrases that need to be defined properly like 'obscene'. The loose phrases put extra pressure on courts and hence more time. But first of all, a political will and an earnest desire for radical change is a must.

Pandora's box of corruption

The gold worth crores of rupees was unearthed by ED in Bengal from a minister's close confidant, revealing how deep the rut goes



BRIENDER SINGH PANWAR



The recent incident of the unearthing of more than Rs 50 crore in cash, gold jewelry worth crores in flats belonging to a close associate of West Bengal's former Industries Minister, Education Minister, and Secretary General of Trinamool Congress Party (TCP), Partha Chatterjee, as well as disclosure of many properties allegedly jointly owned by them or their families, have opened a Pandora box of corruption. It is not an overnight happening. During his tenure as Education Minister, recruitment scams were a regular occurrence, and the media highlighted the interviews of ordinary people who paid for jobs to local small-time politicians who were authorized to collect the booty for their masters. The public witnessed with apparent indifference the eight-year ordeal of the cheated State Level Selection Tests (SLST) candidates who protested against this grave injustice, but, nobody took notice. Where was the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamta Banerjee, who is now seen distancing herself from tainted Partha Banerjee, when all these malpractices were going on with full impunity right under her nose? This gives credence to the statement of Chatterjee that the money is not his and he will disclose the source at the right time. It is but, obviously, that this practice of monetizing posts in the education system and in other services was carried out in a big way by people who had the patronage of the big wigs and they were individual profiteers as well.

During the tenure of Chatterjee as Education Minister, the clear implication was that the system was manipulated in such a way that all school posts, of teaching and non-teaching staff, were open for sale at a price. From 2016 onwards, the appointment of teachers qualifying for the SSCs had violated the merit list, for reasons of nepotism, money or political clout. Investigation reveals that irregularities in the recruitment by SSC of group D staff in state-aided schools, after the tenure of the original panel of

appointees for 13,000 posts had expired.

It was found that at least 269 primary school teachers in government-aided schools were ineligible for appointment. Considering the facts, the declaration of Additional Solicitor General Suryaprakash V Raju that they were looking for at least Rs 120 crore in the SSC recruitment scam is not out of place. However, the education scams in West Bengal are not something new. The left-party governments started the process. Although the SSC was set up way back in 1997, the prospective teachers were asked to pay a substantial amount before they could join as teachers in schools to which they have been appointed through the SSC. This was true for lower-level jobs in government and public sector industries as well. The scale of demand was not as high as it is now. The saving grace was that college and university posts or those of Vice Chancellors were not sold, though most appointments were guided by political consideration.

At present, under the TMC regime, the system has degraded to such a low level that not only the coffers of the party are filled to the brim,



IT WAS FOUND THAT AT LEAST 269 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN GOVERNMENT-AIDED SCHOOLS WERE INELIGIBLE FOR APPOINTMENT

but, the money is siphoned off at all levels of the political hierarchy. Soon after the controversial minister assumed charge, the rot was extended to the higher education system. As per the information available, lakhs were extorted for college appointments and for vice chancellors. Like the corrupt practices followed in the construction industry, the education sector also passed into the hands of powerful 'syndicates' functioning at the behest of the ruling party. Corruption seeped in even in the admission process in colleges. After taking charge of the Education Ministry, the first decision taken by Chatterjee was to do away with the centralised online undergraduate admission process paving the way of the selling of seats in colleges which was decided by politically affiliated students' and teachers' union's functionaries earning lot of money while the concerned authorities were looking the other way. Imagine the loss of society and the institutions where incompetent teachers are appointed for a period of 30-35 years and an entire generation suffers. Such cases are common in India. Hardly a day passes when we do not hear about

the incidents of "leaking" of examination papers and forging of mark sheets in one state or the other and the practice continues unabated.

No wonder, the report of Transparency International places India at 85 out of 180 countries in terms of the Global Corruption Perception Index (GCPI). The greed of a few people who hold power in connivance of their stooges often hijack the system to further their petty interests and that is the reason why we lose our talent to the developed countries. If we want to emerge as a developed country, this trend needs to be reversed. Corruption, nepotism, and favouritism are the biggest curse that is a hindrance to the development of any society. We should come together to stop such malpractices. Public opinion need to be built to oppose such incidents. The guilty should be identified and punished so that nobody can dare to repeat the mistakes. The law enforcement agencies should be given free hand to deal with the situation so that justice is done.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman, Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHINESE MACHINATIONS

Sir — Following US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, China recently dispatched 27 fighter planes into Taiwan's airspace. On August 11, a Chinese research and survey ship is anticipated to dock in the southern port of Hambantota, Sri Lanka. Despite the statements made by China and Sri Lanka that the ship is for survey and research, it needs to be closely watched since it might be having hidden weapons since China might aim to vanquish India the same way as they vanquish Taiwan. Now Bandula Gunawardhana, the head of the Sri Lankan government, made a mistake by allowing it to anchor in the port area in the first place despite India's warning. India is helping Sri Lanka in its gravest moment yet it is still inclined toward China. This is not fair and the government of India should ensure that Sri Lanka does not fall into the lap of China.

Vijaykumar H K | Raichur

CASTEISM IS STILL PREVALENT

Casteism is still prevalent Sir — The poison of casteism is now seeping into the temples of education. A shocking incident has come to the fore in which children refused to eat the food cooked by a Dalit chef. As reported, in a school in Morbi, many children of the OBC community refused to eat food because the food was prepared by a "Dalit lady" cook. A complaint regarding this has been filed. Allegedly the children of the OBC community, influenced by their parents, refused to eat the food prepared by the Dalit woman. This is so unfortunate that we are still grappling with the problems that we started our journey with. Unfortunately, it does not have a legal solution. It is a social problem that can only be solved by education and creating awareness. The children were doing so at the behest of their parents and guardians. Children are too tender to be punished for it. If punished they would become even more inclined to be discriminatory. So it

TIRANGA IS OUR PRIDE

The country is celebrating 75 years of independence and there can be nothing more significant than to hoist Tiranga to mark the occasion as it symbolises the heritage of India and represents the ethos of independence movement. Tiranga is our pride. As citizens of this great country, we have a responsibility to celebrate the 75th independence anniversary with pride and honour and to dedicate ourselves to the growth and development of Bharat. We need to be stronger from the inside to take on forces that are trying to divide our country and preserve the fraternity of this great nation. National pride has been reborn under the current Government. As we hoist the flag as a part of the Har Ghar Tiranga initiative, these very thoughts will be echoing in every Indian's heart. India is my country and all Indians are my brothers and sisters. I love my country, and I am proud of its rich and varied heritage. I shall always strive to be worthy of it. I shall give respect to my parents, teachers, and all the elders, and treat everyone with courtesy. To add to that the health workers, who did a marvelous job during Covid. Tiranga hoisting is a timely measure on the eve of the 75th year of Independence.



Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

is the parents who must be convinced about the wrong lessons they are giving to their children. The principal of the school says that she has had two meetings with the school monitoring committee in which the parents were also involved but they are adamant and don't want to give up their casteist thinking. Under Article 17 of the Constitution, untouchability or treating someone, as an untouchable is illegal. In our country, everyone has 6 fundamental rights, one of which includes the right to equality. In which all persons have equal rights without any discrimination, if a person discriminates against any casteism, then it is illegal. I support all irrespective of the caste they belong to, General, OBC, SC, ST, for me they are all same and for everyone, they all must be the same. Let's hope, sense prevails soon.

Garima Shrivaspal | Ujjain

THE FINANCIAL STRAIN OF FREEBIES

Sir — It refers to "Shun freebies". It is a very sensitive issue raised by our Prime Minister and needless to say that every

political party in the country is guilty of revdi culture to some or other extent. Ideally, the apex court should not have been involved in this debate, but now since the ball is in their court, let us see what is the ideal solution for this. No political party would like to lose votes in absence of these freebies, and they are right in their approach because in electoral politics parties go to any length to woo voters. Ideally, all political parties, including the ruling party need to sit together and arrive at a consensus that none of them would offer any freebies and will abide by it in letter and spirit. Unfortunately no political can come clean on it, including the BJP as every political party has used it as an electoral tool to harvest the votes. If it is not addressed now then the financial health of many states will go from bad to worse and they will be responsible for that fiasco. BJP has to walk the talk.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

From one point of view 8 years is less for 80 miracles! In the 8 years of Modiji's leadership, India has seen 80 miracles happen on the ground.



Jai Shakti Minister
—Gajendra Singh Shekhawat



As we continue to power healthy jobs growth, Democrats are ferociously fighting back against America's families.
Speaker, US HQR
—Nancy Pelosi

Been working the last few days non stop...so needed to indulge in my favourite past time...the love of my own person' & to pamper myself



Actor
—Shahrukh Khan



Penalty miss hua Australia se and the Umpire says, Sorry Clock start nahi hua. Such biasedness used to happen in cricket as well earlier till we became a superpower, Proud of our girls.
Cricketer
—Virender Sehwag

This government has got an uncanny knack of ignoring what's important & concentrating on headlines — instead of GDP govt bothered about our DP.



Mahua Moitra
—TMC MP

FIRST COLUMN

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS IS MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Material cravings remain brief; spiritual progress gives better life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

What are our hopes for near and dear ones when they depart? That they would have gotten a better birth. This actually defines the philosophy of life. Let us critically examine what we consider success in life.

Let me begin with wealth. Practically, everyone wishes to have lots of it in order to obtain everything desirable, because money is the means for acquiring material objects, including ways for comfortable living. The underlying idea is to avoid suffering at any cost and enjoy life.

Sufferings are determined by fate and they are inevitable. Steve Jobs, cofounder of Apple, died at the age of 56 due to a terminal disease. Wealth didn't help him beat the ailment.

Another human craving is for power, because it allows control over others, situations, etc. Do we succeed? Yes and no. Yes, for a limited duration, because power is also a material acquisition. It is a result of pious activities. Once they run out, power is gone. Hitler wanted to control the entire Europe, and maybe the whole world, with the help from his allies. He ruled Germany and some parts of Europe for a brief period and then he was stripped of his power. This shocked him to such an extent that he died by suicide; yes, suicide.



Fame is another human trap. We all crave for attention. There is nothing wrong with such a desire, but when fame becomes the yardstick for success, we go horribly wrong. Michael Jackson desired big success, which would ensure tremendous fame. He did succeed for some time till his insatiable appetite for fame took his life. He had sacrificed his sleep to be able to work more and more. And he had to be administered drugs to help him sleep. Doses kept on increasing till he never woke up.

The fourth yardstick of success is beauty. Models, film stars, etc., are paid huge sums, because beauty sells. Marilyn Monroe found out the dark side of it in a very depressive way, and she too died by suicide.

Fifthly, being independent, i.e. above rules, is another measure of success. What happens to some toppers in All India competitions when they flout all rules for their personal benefits? They are caught and put in jail. Their idea to prolong their sukha ends in lots of dukkha.

All popular notions of success are flawed, and they don't make us big or independent. They don't even prevent suffering or make our sukha permanent. What then should be the yardstick for success? It should be progress in life. Yes, progress is what we should look for. In younger days, it should be mainly material progress, because that will set us up nicely for our later years. Subsequently, it must be spiritual progress, however small it may be, because this will connect us with God, who is everything (The Geeta 7.19) and source of everything superior. (10.41) Then, all our inherent shortcomings won't matter; God will supplement whatever we lack. Fortunately God is ever willing to help; we just have to approach Him in a humble mood, in order to take His shelter.

From experiences of countless fortunate souls, who took shelter in God, we learn that we begin to succeed in all aspects of our lives. Our health in all its manifestations begins to improve. Physically we benefit; mentally we become stranger; emotionally we become mature; intellectually we become wise; and spiritually we advance. Our interpersonal relationships improve; we become more useful; and we get set for a better next life.

(The author is a spiritual teacher)

Defence Atmanirbharta is a real game changer

PM's push for defence Atmanirbharta can bring about a sea change in our armed preparedness



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

The contemporary battlefield is a complex mix of traditional and hybrid warfare. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has immensely contributed to the national security policymaking by reformulating the security objectives and displaying a political resolve to bring profound changes in security governance.

Modi's approach is purely India centric. One of his landmark achievements is the initiative of Atmanirbharat Bharat. Launched in May 2020, it seeks India's self-reliance in different sectors. As the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has transformed the nature of wars from mechanical to electronic, the import of different systems makes the security systems prone to various vulnerabilities like hacking.

The issue of spare parts and path dependency creates new complications tactically and geopolitically. The problem gets complicated with the new developments in hybrid warfare involving drones for drug and small arms trafficking, apart from the malicious use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Thus, the policy was well-founded and was the need of the hour.

In 2020, while we were grappling with the Corona pandemic and its impact on the supply chains in different sectors, PM Modi used the problem to find new opportunities and launched Atmanirbhar Bharat. Before officially formulating the policy, in 2018, the PM set up the Innovation for Defence Excellence (Idex) to create a defence and aerospace ecosystem that engaged the R&D institutes, academia, industries, and promoted start-ups. These sectors could now directly deal with the armed forces via open challenges.

The Army Design Bureau is a facilitator and provides financial support to start-ups and MSMEs. The 100th contract of Idex was recently signed. Apart from allowing the local firms, it was a stepping stone to India's civil-military fusion.

India's defence exports have increased considerably from a mere ₹2,059 crore in 2015-16 to a whopping ₹13,000 crore in 2021-22, with a rise of 54.1 per cent over the previous year. As the numbers of successful case studies are impressive, it becomes pertinent to highlight some achievements of PM Modi's initiative in the defence sector.

From the development of small equipment like the P7 heavy drop system that helps deliver combat stores in inaccessible areas to aircraft carrier Vikrant for the Navy, Atmanirbhar Bharat is achieving significant milestones. It is important to highlight the contribution of the PM in stopping the payment of royalties to Russia for the technologies that were transferred by the former Soviet Union and were domestically manufactured in India. For example, in the case of the T-72 tank, PM Modi himself brought the issue to the notice of President Vladimir



ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT-II IN THE DEFENCE SECTOR WILL INCLUDE REFORMS REGARDING THE PRODUCTION OF CORE TECHNOLOGIES VIA A PPP MODE. IT WILL ALSO LIBERALISE THE TESTING AND CERTIFICATION OF PRODUCTS, A SHIFT FROM THE PAST PRACTICES

(The author is Assistant Professor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda)



Putin and the needful was successfully done. This led the PM to bring out a list of banned items for defence imports in August 2020 and May 2021, with the third list announced in April 2022. The positive list currently has banned 310 items from being imported. The Indian army is now equipped with the Ashlesha radar, predominantly a 'Low Level Lightweight Radar' (LLLWR). The radar successfully detects multiple objects of the adversary like helicopters, fighters and UAVs at low and medium altitudes and can be used in diverse terrains like plains, deserts, mountain tops, etc. It is currently helping the country against the Chinese PLA on the Northern and Eastern borders.

Developing the Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar is an important development for the Air Force. The radar enhanced India's technical capability in electronic warfare, making the country fifth in the world to possess such technology. The radar is 95 per cent indigenous, with only one subsystem imported. Other necessary inductions such as LCA (Tejas), Astra Air to Air missile, Akash Surface to Air missile system, and Light Combat Helicopter systems pile up the success stories of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Given the threat of PLAN, attempts are being made to upgrade the naval facilities through Swavlamban (self-reliance), focusing on developing 75 indigenous technologies. The past electronic warfare platforms such as 'Ajanta', 'Kite', etc., have been upgraded and can now successfully detect enemy combatants' presence without dis-

closing our position. The list is impressive, from developing underwater sensors to electro-optical Fire Control System (FCS), a world-class Combat Management System (CMS) and 'Battle Damage Control Systems'.

Moreover, 'Project 75-India' aims to build a series of future aircraft carriers and submarines that will qualitatively increase the stealth of the Indian Navy. The tactical importance of the submarine project can be ascertained from the fact that even our closest partners like Russia and France have refused the technology transfer of Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) technology that allows the submarines to stay underwater for a longer duration. So, one can ascertain the financial and strategic interests of the countries with a war-based economy.

Some critical but lesser known indigenous productions in Artificial Intelligence (AI) are Face Recognition System under Disguise, AI-Based Intercept Management System (IMS) for the western theatre, iSentinel threat detection and tracking system and finally, the swarm drones. These indigenous productions will redefine how we respond to the threats of hybrid warfare. Using such technologies for counter-terrorism will help bring peace to the country. Space has been added as a new battlefield domain, and in 2019, DRDO successfully conducted the Anti-Satellite (ASAT) test by accurately hitting a target. Further, under the Defence India Start-up Challenge 5.0, 35 areas such as cyber security, quantum technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and

augmented reality (AR) have been identified as focus areas.

In 2021, two Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs) were established in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to boost Defence manufacturing to attract investment of Rs 10,000 Crore in each DIC.

Creation of Defence Space Agency and Armed Forces Special Operations Division apart from the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) with Department of Military Affairs (DMA) to conduct joint operations will ensure that the next 25 years would be an 'Amrit Kaal' for the Ministry of Defence. New challenges have been accepted. For instance, Bhoomi, a hackathon initiative of the BSF, contributed to finding solutions in tunnel detection and an anti-drone system.

The objective of the PM is to ensure that we are battle ready for the next war, be it conventional, electronic or even on two fronts. Soon, Atmanirbhar Bharat II in the Defence sector will be unveiled, which will include reforms regarding the production of core technologies via a public-private partnership (PPP) mode. It will also liberalise the testing and certification of products, a shift from the past practices.

The aforementioned case studies are just a few contributions of the policy that the upcoming generation needs to be told. Such achievements of the country should be incorporated into the school textbooks at different levels to inculcate a feeling of nationalism and pride apart from encouraging the scientific temper amongst the budding scientists.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

ON THIS DAY MODIJI HAD LAID THE FOUNDATION STONE OF SHRI RAM TEMPLE, SO CONGRESS IS OPPOSING IT. ED AND INFLATION ARE JUST EXCUSES.
—HOME MINISTER
AMIT SHAH



THE ONE WHO INFLECTS PAIN ON THE WEAK BY INCREASING PRICES, ATTACKS LORD RAM & MISREPRESENTS THOSE AGITATING AGAINST INFLATION, INSULTS LOKNAYAK RAM.
— CONGRESS LEADER
PRIYANKA GANDHI

Countering radicalisation in Assam with long-term vision

Elimination of Ayman al-Zawahiri is an opportunity for Assam administration to counter radical elements

The precision strike against Ayman al-Zawahiri will have far reaching implications for India. Indeed, the eliminated Al-Qaeda Emir's gaze had already been on India ever since 3 October 2014 when he proclaimed the formation of the Al-Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent.

The 'shadow of Zawahiri' had encompassed the Rakhine province of Myanmar, Bangladesh, West Bengal and most of Assam. Moreover, Zawahiri had made controversial statements when the Hijab controversy broke in Karnataka. Although the recent arrests of several cadres of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Ansarullah Bangla Team from different places in Assam has not come as a surprise, the matter of concern is



JAIDEEP SAINIK

(The author is a conflict analyst)

the state's inability to fathom the extent to which the radicalisation efforts have taken place.

Indeed, the state has witnessed subterfuge by Islamists since the late 1990s when Pakistan-trained radical elements were arrested from the heart of Guwahati. However, the threat had all but weakened with en masse surrender of cadres after their return from places such as Batrasi in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). Indeed, by their own admission, the wayward group had realised that the motivation for which they had gone to train alongside tanzems such as the ISI chaperoned Lashkar-e-Toiba were at variance with their local objectives to garner aspects such as reservations for Muslims in the legislature. Nizam-e-Mustafa, which

has become the primary goal for almost all Islamist groups that have a global bearing, was not in their agenda. The syncretism that characterised Assamese society of the time ascertained it and got disenchanted with the alien exhortation by the ISI, which had included assassination of political leaders and engineering of pogroms against the Bodo community, which sat cheek-by-jowl with the Muslims, and the belligerence dissipated.

However, there were some who, eschewing attention, continued with their sinister endeavours. Indeed, for a time it was felt that Assam was rid of the radical threat. But quite clearly they were silent, "not by the absence of activity but by the presence of non-activity".

However, the present

apprehensions of the Islamists that have brought back the limelight of the Islamist intimidation to Assam are not indicative of a turnaround in the Assamese Muslim psyche. While it is true that the target group for the Islamist minders have undergone a sea change and are directed primarily on the educated class, the fact of the matter is that an important constituency among the Muslim population of Assam ignored the overtures of the Islamists.

The atmosphere that prevails in the rest of the country, too, has had a sobering effect on the Muslim community, and it was evident that the quam sought no truck with the Islamists. In any event, the chaperons that are seeking to radicalise the Muslim commu-

nity are exclusively from Bangladesh and have very little to do with the manner in which an indigenous Assamese Muslim identifies himself with the state's inclusive character.

But the fact of the matter is that there is a clear move by the Islamists from Bangladesh to make inroads into the Muslim community of Assam. An alert Special Branch of the Assam Police has been able to pre-empt the attempts and, to a considerable extent, thwart at least the opening moves of the Islamists.

However, marshes and warrens are plentiful in the Lower and Middle Assam and it would be less than prudent to lower the vigilance that

has characterised the manner in which the Special Branch has, albeit temporarily, halted

the march of the radicals. The porosity of the border with Bangladesh coupled with the pressure that the Islamists are facing in the country dictate greater watchfulness. After all, one of the primary motivation for the Bangladesh-based Islamists is to utilise the demographic jungle of Lower Assam as a safe haven and construct a "doorway" to metropolitan India in order to perpetrate terror which would be visible to a global audience.

Indeed, therein lies their intent. The fact that Ayman al-Zawahiri had mentioned Assam during his televised statement on 3 September 2014 when he announced the creation of the Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent must be seen in the light of the fact that that Assam and thereabouts

had been in the Islamist radar with clearly such a purpose in mind.

Bangladesh, of course, is a crucial midpoint between the Islamist hotspots of South East Asia and West Asia. Bangladesh was the receptacle for the cross pollination between groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah and Jaish-e-Mohammad.

In any event, the accent of the present must be to ferret out the guest-radical elements that have entered Assam and stem the tide before it begins to mimic the flood waters that are upon the state. The establishment must also immediately psychologically segregate the Muslim community of Assam, co-opt them in its battle against the divisive agenda and announce resolve to root out the menace.

Ukraine grain headed for Lebanon under wartime deal delayed

AP ■ BEIRUT

The scheduled arrival on Sunday of the first grain ship to leave Ukraine and cross the Black Sea under a wartime deal has been delayed, a Lebanese Cabinet Minister and the Ukraine Embassy said.

The cause of the delay was not immediately clear and Marine Traffic, which monitors vessel traffic and the locations of ships at sea, showed the Sierra Leone-flagged Razoni at anchor in the Mediterranean Sea near Turkey.

Lebanon's transportation minister, Ali Hamie, tweeted the ship "that was supposed, according to what was rumored, to reach Tripoli port in Lebanon" changed its status. Hamie refused to comment further when contacted by The Associated Press.

The ship left Odesa last Monday carrying Ukrainian corn and later passed inspection in Turkey.

It was supposed to arrive in the northern port of Tripoli at about 10 am on Sunday. According to Marine Traffic, the ship Saturday changed its status to "order" meaning the ship was waiting for someone to buy the corn.

The Ukrainian embassy in Beirut said the arrival of the



ship has been postponed adding that an "update for the ceremony will be sent later when we get information about exact day and time of the arrival of the ship".

The shipment that was supposed to arrive in Lebanon comes at a time when the tiny Mediterranean nation is suf-

fering from a food security crisis, with soaring food inflation, wheat shortages and bread lines. The ship is carrying some 26,000 tons of corn for chicken feed.

The passage of the vessel was the first under a break-through deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations

with Russia and Ukraine.

The four sides signed deals last month to create safe Black Sea shipping corridors to export Ukraine's desperately needed agricultural products as Russia's war upon its neighbour grinds on.

Lebanon's worst economic crisis in its modern history

that began in late 2019 has left three-quarters of its population living in poverty while the Lebanese pound has lost more than 90 per cent of its value.

The economic meltdown rooted in decades of corruption and mismanagement was made worse by a massive blast in August 2020 that destroyed Beirut's port and the country's main grain silos inside the sprawling facility.

Large parts of the silos collapsed in recent days after fire caused by remnants of grain that started fermenting and ignited in the summer heat last month. Lebanese officials said last week that the Razoni was supposed to leave Ukraine and head to Lebanon on February 24 but the departure was delayed by the war that broke out days later.

On Friday, three more ships carrying thousands of tons of corn left Ukrainian ports and travelled through mined waters toward inspection of their delayed cargo, a sign that the international deal to export grain held up since Russia invaded Ukraine was slowly progressing.

Four more ships carrying agricultural cargo held up by the war in Ukraine received authorisation Sunday to leave the country's Black Sea ports.

6 Russian military officers sacked since war began: UK Intelligence



IANIS ■ LONDON

At least six senior Russian military officers are believed to have been sacked since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, according a British intelligence update on Sunday.

The poor performance of the armed forces during the invasion has been costly for the Russian military leadership, most likely leading to the dismissal of at least six commanders, dpa news agency quoted the UK's Ministry of Defence as saying in its regular intelligence update.

Among others, General

Alexander Dvornikov was removed after being given overall command of the operation in Ukraine.

In addition, at least 10 Russian generals were killed on the battlefield in Ukraine, the update said.

Altogether, all this probably contributed to Russia's tactical and operational difficulties in the war against Ukraine.

The British Ministry of Defence publishes some of its intelligence on the Ukraine war in a daily update on Twitter.

Russia itself remains largely silent on personnel and tactical decisions.

Ukraine's Vatican envoy suggests Papal visit may be imminent

IANAS ■ ROME

The Ukrainian ambassador to the Vatican suggested that Pope Francis might soon visit the war-torn country.

Ukraine has been waiting for the head of the Catholic Church since Russian launched its ongoing war on February 24, Andrii Yurash said in a tweet following an audience with the Pope, adding they would be happy to "welcome him before his trip to Kazakhstan", dpa news agency reported.

The Pope is planning a three-day trip to Kazakhstan on September 13. The Vatican did not make public any details of the conversation with Yurash, but only confirmed the meeting on Saturday.

The Ambassador, on the other hand, reported that Francis had underlined his closeness to the Ukrainian people and expressed the willingness to show this in a visit.

Since the war began, Pope Francis has said several times that he would like to visit Ukraine to promote peace.

However, he has been plagued by a knee injury for some time that has often forced him to use a wheelchair, so it seems unlikely he would make a long train journey to Kiev, for example.

Ukrainian risks life to rescue wild animals from war

AP ■ KYIV

Natalia Popova has found a new purpose in life: Rescuing wild animals and pets from the devastation wrought by the war in Ukraine.

"They are my life," says the 50-year-old, stroking a light-furred lioness like a kitten. From inside an enclosure, the animal rejoices at the attention, lying on her back and stretching her paws up toward her caretaker.

Popova, in cooperation with the animal protection group UA Animals, has already saved more than 300 animals from the war; 200 of them went abroad and 100 found new homes in western Ukraine, which is considered safer.

Many of them were wild animals who were kept as pets at private homes before their owners fled

Russian shelling and missiles.

Popova's shelter in the Kyiv region village of Chubynske now houses 133 animals. It's a broad menagerie, including 13 lions, a leopard, a tiger, three deer, wolves, foxes, raccoons and roe deer, as well as domesticated animals like horses, donkeys, goats, rabbits, dogs, cats and birds.

The animals awaiting evacuation to Poland were rescued from hot spots such as eastern Ukraine's Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, which see daily bombardments and active fighting.

The Ukrainian soldiers who let Popova know when animals near the front lines need help joke that she has many lives, like a cat.

"No one wants to go there. Everyone is afraid. I am also scared, but I go anyway," she said.

Often she is trembling in the car on her way to rescue another wild animal.

"I feel very sorry for them. I can imagine the stress animals are under because of the war, and no one can help them," Popova said.

In most cases, she knows nothing about the animals she rescues, neither their names and ages nor their owners.

"Animals don't introduce themselves when they come to us," she joked.

For the first months of the war, Popova drove to war hot spots alone, but a couple from UA Animals recently offered to transport and help her.

"Our record is an evacuation in 16 minutes, when we saved a lion between Kramatorsk and Sloviansk," Popova said.



An economist by education with no formal veterinary experience, she administered anesthesia on the lion because the animal had to be put to sleep before it could be transported. Popova says she has always been very attached to animals. In kinder-

garten, she built houses for worms and talked to birds.

In 1999, she opened the first private horse club in Ukraine. But it wasn't until four years ago that she saved her first lion.

An organisation against slaugh-

terhouses approached her with a request for help saving a lion with a broken spine. She did not know how she could help because her expertise was in horses. But when she saw a photo of the big cat, Popova could not resist.

She built an enclosure and took in the lion the next morning, paying the owner.

Later, Popova created a social media page titled "Help the Lioness", and people began to write asking for help saving other wild animals.

Yana, the first lioness she rescued, has become a family member since she could not find a new home due to a disability. Popova took care of her until she died two weeks ago.

The shelter is just a temporary stop for the animals. Popova rehabilitates them and then looks for new homes for them. She feels a special

connection with each big cat, but says she does not mind letting them go.

"I love them, and I understand that I do not have the resources to provide them with the comfortable life they deserve," says Popova.

At first, she bankrolled the shelter with her own funds from the horse business. But since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, the horse business has not been profitable.

With more than USD 14,000 a month needed to keep animals healthy and fed, she has turned to borrowing, and seen her debt grow to USD 200,000.

She gets some money from UA Animals and from donations, but worries about how to keep everything together have kept her up at night.

"But I will still borrow money, go to hot spots and save animals. I can't say no to them," she said.

China seeks meeting with Lanka as Colombo seeks postponement of research ship's visit to Hambantota

PTI ■ COLOMBO

China's embassy here has sought an urgent meeting with senior Sri Lankan authorities after Colombo sought a deferment of the planned docking of a high-tech Chinese research vessel at the strategic Hambantota port over which India raised concerns, sources said.

The Chinese space and satellite tracking research vessel 'Yuan Wang 5' was scheduled to dock at the Hambantota Port from August 11 to 17, weeks after Sri Lanka witnessed a major political turmoil following massive mass protests over the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

A 'third-person' note from Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry to the Chinese embassy in Colombo dated August 5 says "the ministry wishes to request that the arrival of the vessel Yuan Wang 5 in Hambantota to be deferred until further con-



sultations are made on the matter."The Chinese embassy in Colombo sought an urgent meeting with the higher Sri Lankan authorities to discuss the issue after receiving the note from the Foreign Ministry seeking a delay in the visit, sources here said.

Some Sri Lankan news portals also reported that Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe held a closed-door meeting with China's Ambassador Qi Zhenhong after Colombo sought a deferment of the planned docking.

But the President's Office denied the media reports over the meeting. On July 12, amidst the political turmoil in Sri Lanka, the then government approved the Chinese vessel's docking at the Hambantota port.

The Chinese vessel was expected to dock at the Sri Lankan port for 'refuelling and 'replenishment' and will conduct satellite control and research tracking in the north-western part of the Indian Ocean region through August and September.

WFP concerned about food crisis in Sri Lanka



IANAS ■ COLOMBO

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is concerned about the impact of the ongoing economic crisis in Sri Lanka on food supplies for the country's poorest.

Nearly 6.3 million people, or three in 10 households, are at risk of food insecurity and need assistance, the WFP said in a statement of thanks for an aid contribution from Norway of the equivalent of about \$500,000.

Recent WFP surveys show that 61 per cent of families are either eating less, or eating less nutritious food, or even skip-

ping meals altogether, due to the acute emergency, reports dpa news agency.

An emergency programme is being set up to help 3.4 million people in Sri Lanka who are most at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition, it added.

The island nation, with a population of about 22 million, is in the midst of its worst economic crisis since it gained independence in 1948.

Most recently, the country, which is \$51 billion in foreign debt, lacked the money to import essential goods such as fuel, medicines and gas for cooking. Food prices have risen sharply and inflation is already over 60 per cent, according to official figures.

"We are deeply concerned about the impact of the current economic and political crisis on the people of Sri Lanka," Norwegian Ambassador Trine Joranli Eskedal was quoted as saying. Food shortages and rising prices have had a particularly negative impact on women and children in the island nation.

Ukrainian energy agency warns of risk at Zaporizhzhya nuke plant

IANAS ■ KIEV

Ukraine's state nuclear agency Enerhoatom has warned against an increasing risk of fire and radiation due to the shelling of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant.

"The Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant is operating at risk of violating the norms of radiation and fire protection," the agency said on Telegram, following an attack on the site on Saturday.

Shelling the previous day damaged a nitrogen plant and an auxiliary part of the power plant, dpa news agency quoted Enerhoatom as saying.

"There remains a risk of hydrogen leaking and radioactive particles dispersing, and the risk of fire is also high."

Ukrainian power plant personnel are trying to maintain safety levels despite these conditions but the threat due to the occupation of the power plant by Russian troops, however, remains high. The plant may have been mined by Russian troops, according to a report by The Insider which is critical of the Kremlin.

A video allegedly shot at the beginning of the week showed Russian military trucks driving onto the factory site and unloading goods.

One of the trucks drove into the plant's engine room.

The Insider said either the power plant itself or the area around it has been mined.

"The EU condemns Russia's military activ-



ities around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, which is a serious and irresponsible breach of nuclear safety rules and another example of Russia's failure to respect international norms," said EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell, demanding access for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the plant.

On March 4, the nuclear and thermal power stations were both captured by Russian forces.

The plant continues to be operated by Ukrainian staff, under Russian control.

Last week, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi expressed grave concerns about the physical integrity of the plant, whether all necessary repairs and maintenance were being done, and the security of nuclear material.

2 dead, 5 missing after migrant boat capsizes in US

AP ■ KEY WEST (US)

Two people died and five were missing after a boat believed to be carrying migrants attempting to enter the US illegally capsized off the coast of the Florida Keys, the Coast Guard said.

Eight people were rescued, the Coast Guard said in a news release on Friday.

The agency described the boat as a "rustic vessel" that was making an illegal voyage with 15 migrant passengers. It was not immediately clear where the migrants were originally from.

Reports of the capsized vessel about 23 kilometers south of Sugarloaf Key reached the Coast Guard around 10 am on Friday. One person was rescued



from the water by the Royal Caribbean cruise ship Mariner of the Seas, the Coast Guard said.

"Our search continues for others that may have survived this tragic incident," said Rear Adm. Brendan McPherson,

commander of the Seventh Coast Guard District.

"This situation highlights the risks these migrants face as they attempt to enter the US illegally by sea."

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard responded to a ground-

ed sailing vessel that was believed to be carrying more than 100 migrants on Saturday afternoon.

The boat was spotted off the coast of Key Largo, near the gated community of Ocean Reef, officials said.

Rescue crews transferred the people from the grounded vessel to Coast Guard ships, officials said. Some entered the water without life jackets and needed to be rescued, the Coast Guard said. Photos taken from a WPLG-TV helicopter showed dozens of people sitting on the grass, having been given blankets and towels.

Officials did not immediately release details about where the people were from or specify how many were on board.

1 dead, 17 missing, 121 hurt in fire at Cuban oil facility

AP ■ HAVANA (CUBA)

A fire set off by a lightning strike at an oil storage facility raged uncontrolled in the Cuban city of Matanzas, where four explosions and flames injured 121 people and left 17 firefighters missing. Cuban authorities said a unidentified body had been found.

Firefighters and other specialists were on Saturday still trying to quell the blaze at the Matanzas Supertanker Base, where the fire began during a thunderstorm Friday night, the Ministry of Energy and Mines



tweeted. Authorities said about 800 people were evacuated from the Dubrocq neighbourhood closest to the fire.

The government said it had asked for help from international experts in "friendly countries" with experience in

the oil sector.

Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossio said the US government had offered technical help to quell the blaze. On his Twitter account, he said the "proposal is in the hands of specialists for the due coordination".

Minutes later, President Miguel Díaz-Canel thanked Mexico, Venezuela, Russia, Nicaragua, Argentina and Chile for their offers of help. A support flight from Mexico arrived on Saturday night.

The official Cuban News Agency said lightning hit one tank, starting a fire, and the

blaze later spread to a second tank.

As military helicopters flew overhead dropping water on the blaze, dense column of black smoke billowed from the facility and spread westward more than 100 kilometers toward Havana.

Roberto de la Torre, head of fire operations in Matanzas, said firefighters were spraying water on intact tanks trying to keep them cool in hopes of preventing the fire from spreading.

Cuba's Health Ministry reported that 121 people were injured with five of them in critical condition.

China keeps up pressure on Taiwan with 4th day of drills

AP ■ BEIJING

China said Sunday it carried out its fourth consecutive day of military drills in the air and sea around Taiwan in the wake of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the self-ruled island, despite international calls to calm the tensions.

The People's Liberation Army said the exercises focused on testing its long-range air and ground strikes. It did not say if it will continue the drills after Sunday.

Taiwan said that it continued to detect several batches of Chinese aircraft, ships and drones operating around the Taiwan Strait, which separates the island and mainland China, and "simulating attacks on the island of Taiwan and our ships at sea."

Taiwan's official Central News Agency meanwhile reported that Taiwan's army will conduct live-fire artillery

drills in southern Pingtung County on Tuesday and Thursday, in response to the Chinese exercises.

The drills will include snipers, combat vehicles, armored vehicles as well as attack helicopters, said the report, which cited an anonymous source.

China set up no-go areas around Taiwan for the four-day drills it announced immediately after Pelosi's trip to Taipei on Tuesday and Wednesday that infuriated Beijing, which saw it as a violation of the "one-China" policy.

China claims Taiwan and has threatened to annex it by force if necessary.

The two sides split in 1949 after a civil war, but Beijing considers visits to Taiwan by foreign officials as recognizing its sovereignty.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence emphasised that its military was surveilling the situation and had dis-



patched aircraft and ships to respond accordingly.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has called on the international community to "support democratic Taiwan" and "halt any escalation of the regional security situation."

China has so far conducted missiles strikes on targets in the seas around Taiwan, and sent warships across the Taiwan Straits median line. It has also cut off defense and climate talks with the US and imposed sanctions on Pelosi in retaliation for

her visit.

The Biden administration and Pelosi say the US remains committed to the "one-China" policy that recognises Beijing as the legitimate government but allows informal relations and defense ties with Taipei.

US, Australia, Japan urge China to immediately cease military exercises around Taiwan

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States, Australia and Japan have urged China to immediately cease its military exercises launched following US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei, as they reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Pelosi, 82, was the highest-profile US official to visit Taiwan in 25 years. Pelosi's visit on Wednesday and her meetings with President Tsai Ing-wen and other leaders has infuriated China, which views the self-governed democratic island as its territory that should be reunified with the mainland, even by force.

China fired a barrage of ballistic missiles into the waters around Taiwan as it launched large-scale military exercises in response to her visit to Taipei.

A joint statement was issued by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong,



and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa after their in-person meeting in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, on the margins of the 55th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

"The Secretary and the Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," the statement said on Saturday.

Sharing the region's desire for diplomacy to avoid the risks of miscalculation, they expressed their concern about

the People's Republic of China's (PRC) recent actions that gravely affect international peace and stability, including the use of large-scale military exercises.

"They condemned the PRC's launch of ballistic missiles, five of which the Japanese government reported landed in its exclusive economic zones, raising tension and destabilising the region. The Secretary and the Foreign Ministers urged the PRC to immediately cease the military exercises," said the joint statement.

Biden leaves White House for 1st time since getting Covid-19



AP ■ REHOBOTH BEACH

Ending his most recent COVID-19 isolation, President Joe Biden on Sunday left the White House for the first time since becoming infected with the coronavirus last month, settling in for a reunion with first lady Jill Biden in their home state of Delaware.

The president had tested negative Saturday, clearing the way to emerge from an isolation that lasted longer than expected because of a rebound case of the virus. The White House physician, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, had said in his last update that Biden, "in an abundance of caution," would continue his "strict isolation measures" pending a second negative test. The White House on Sunday did not say whether the president had a second negative test and had not provided a new report from O'Connor since midday Saturday.

"I'm feeling great," Biden said before boarding Marine One outside the White House.

The Bidens were expected to spend the day in Rehoboth Beach, a popular vacation destination.

Israeli airstrike kills 2nd top Islamic Jihad commander

AP ■ GAZA CITY

Israel said Sunday that it killed a senior Islamic Jihad commander in a crowded Gaza refugee camp, the second such targeted attack since it launched its high-stakes military offensive against the militant group just before the weekend.

The Iran-backed militant group has fired hundreds of rockets at Israel in response, and the risk of the cross-border fighting turning into a full-fledged war remained high.

Gaza's ruling Hamas group, which fought an 11-day war with Israel in May 2021, appeared to stay on the sidelines for now, possibly because it fears Israeli reprisals and undoing economic understandings with Israel, including Israeli work permits for thousands of Gaza residents, that bolster its control.

The Islamic Jihad commander, Khaled Mansour, was killed in an airstrike on the Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza late Saturday.

Two other militants and five civilians were also killed in the attack, bringing the



Palestinian death toll to 31 since the start of the Israeli offensive on Friday. Among the dead were six children and four women. The Palestinian Health Ministry said more than 250 people were wounded since Friday. Israel says some of the deaths were caused by errant rocket fire, including one incident in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza in which six Palestinians were killed Saturday. On Sunday, a projectile hit a home in the same area of Jebaliya, killing two men. Palestinians held Israel responsible, while Israel said it was investigating whether the area was hit by an errant rocket.

Mansour, the Islamic Jihad commander for southern Gaza, was in the apartment of a member of the group when the missile struck, flattening the three-story building and badly damaging nearby houses.

"Suddenly, without warning, the house next to us was bombed and everything became black and dusty with smoke in the blink of an eye," said Wissam Jouda, who lives next to the targeted building.

Ahmed al-Qaissi, another neighbour, said his wife and son were among the wounded, suffering shrapnel injuries. To make way for rescue workers, al-Qaissi agreed to have part of his house demolished.



UNSC to address Gaza airstrikes as toll reaches 24

IAN ■ TEL AVIV/GAZA

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is to discuss Israel's airstrikes on Gaza in a closed doors session in New York on Monday, as the death toll continued to rise, with 24 people confirmed dead and 203 injured, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

The UN's most powerful body agreed to address the attacks following requests for it to do so made by the United Arab Emirates, Ireland, France, Norway and China on Saturday, dpa news agency reported, citing diplomatic sources.

Israeli forces launched Operation Breaking Dawn on Friday, a series of targeted airstrikes on Gaza that resulted in the killing of Taisir al-Jabari, a senior leader of the

Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group, among many others.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which is classified as a terrorist organization by both the European Union and the United States, is closely linked to Israel's arch-enemy Iran and is the second most powerful militia in the Gaza Strip after the ruling Hamas militant group.

Fearing reprisals for al-Jabari's killing, Israel closed its border with Gaza causing a fuel shortage at Gaza's sole power plant that forced it offline on Saturday.

As a result, Gaza residents are now limited to just four hours of electricity a day, compared to the previous 12, in what an energy company official described as a "catastrophic situation."

Blinken in South Africa on Africa tour

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken began his three-nation tour of Africa with his arrival in South Africa on Sunday.

Blinken's visit to Africa is seen as part of a competition between Russia and Western powers for support from African countries over the war in Ukraine. Blinken's trip to Africa follows recent tours by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and French President Emmanuel Macron.

South Africa is one of many African countries that have maintained a neutral stance on the war and have not publicly criticized Russia.

On Sunday after an early morning arrival, Blinken is to visit the Hector Pieterse memorial in Soweto township, which commemorates a student killed in 1976 when protesting South Africa's regime of racial oppression, apartheid, which ended in 1994.

On Monday, Blinken will describe the United States' strategies for sub-Saharan Africa in a major policy speech at the University of Pretoria. Africa has been hard-hit by the effect



of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the rising food and oil prices caused by Russia's war in Ukraine.

Blinken and Pandor will also hold a press conference Monday in which the two countries' different positions on the Ukraine war are expected to be visible.

Blinken will go on to visit Congo and Rwanda this week to end his international tour which also took him to Cambodia and the Philippines.

Gunmen kill 4 in attack targeting lawmaker in NW Pakistan

AP ■ PESHAWAR

Gunmen shot dead four people including two police in northwestern Pakistan in an attack targeting a provincial lawmaker from former Prime Minister Imran Khan's political party, police said.

Lawmaker Malik Liaquat Khan — no relation to Imran Khan — of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party was wounded in the attack late

Saturday along with three others and was hospitalized in the provincial capital of Peshawar, police said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

The assault took place in the Maidan area of the Lower Dir district of conservative Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which is governed by Khan's party.

Police officer Zar Badshah said among those killed were the



nephew and brother of the PTI lawmaker, who was returning home after attending a funeral late Saturday.

The area has been a stronghold of late religious leader Sufi Mohammad, who preached a strict version of Islam in the 1990s and later led his followers in fighting in Afghanistan against the US and allied forces. It remained under the influence of the Pakistani Taliban until 2009.

9 wounded in shooting outside Cincinnati bar, say police

AP ■ CINCINNATI (US)

At least nine people were wounded — none critically — in a shooting outside a Cincinnati bar early Sunday, police there said.

Most of the victims suffered wounds to their lower halves, Lt. Col. Mike John of the Cincinnati police told news outlets. A police officer fired at a suspect who fled the scene,



but it was unclear if that person was actually shot. The sus-

pect was not in custody as of Sunday morning. "It is a little unusual when we do not know for certainty whether the individual the officer fired on was struck or not," John said.

John said police used what he called two "bang balls" — a "percussion instrument" with a "very loud noise" — to disperse a crowd they said had gathered around officers trying to provide aid to the wounded.

Bangladesh seeks China help to repatriate Rohingya refugees

AP ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday sought cooperation from China to repatriate Rohingya refugees to Myanmar during a visit by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who promised better trade ties, investment and support for infrastructure development in the South Asian nations.

China had used its influence in Myanmar to broker a November 2017 agreement to repatriate about 700,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees who fled persecution in Myanmar in August that year. Despite attempts to send them back, the refugees refused, fearing danger in Myanmar, which was exacerbated by the military takeover last year.

Yi arrived in Dhaka on Saturday evening and met with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen. They discussed bilateral and global issues before his departure on Sunday



morning, said Shahriar Alam, Bangladesh's junior minister for foreign affairs.

Bangladesh has strong relations with China, which is a major trade partner mostly for raw materials. But maintaining close ties with Beijing is challenging for Bangladesh, which also balances diplomatic and trade relationship with both India and the United States, China's main rivals.

More than 500 Chinese companies are active in Bangladesh. China is involved in the country's all major infrastructure projects such as sea-

ports, a river tunnel and highways, and helped built its largest bridge over the River Padma at a cost of \$3.6 billion.

Amid recent tensions between China and Taiwan, Bangladesh issued a statement reiterating its support for the "one-China" policy.

After winning elections in 2008, Hasina's administration closed the Taiwanese business representative office in Dhaka in response to a request from China, and since then China has increased its engagement in Bangladesh.

US Democrats climate, energy Bill clears initial Senate hurdle

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US Democrats pushed their election-year economic bill toward Senate approval early on Sunday, starting the sprawling collection of President Joe Biden's priorities on climate, energy, health and taxes on a pathway that the party hopes will end in final congressional passage by the end of this week.

The evenly divided Senate voted on Saturday to begin debating the legislation 51-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris breaking the tie and overcoming unanimous Republican opposition.

A dwindled version of earlier multitrillion-dollar measures that Democrats failed to advance, the package has become a partisan battleground over inflation, gasoline prices and other issues that polls show are driving voters.

The House, where Democrats have a slender majority, could give the legislation final approval next



Friday.

"The time is now to move forward with a big, bold package for the American people," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY.

"This historic bill will reduce inflation, lower costs, fight climate change. It's time to move this nation forward."

Republicans said the measure would damage the economy and make it harder for people to cope with sky-high inflation. They said the bill's business taxes would hurt job creation and force prices

upward and urged voters to remember that in November.

"The best way to stop this tax and spend inflationary madness is to fire some of the 50 so they can't keep doing this to your family," said South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, top Republican on the Senate Budget Committee.

Nonpartisan analysts have said the legislation, which Democrats have named the Inflation Reduction Act, would have a minor impact on the nation's worst inflation bout in four decades.

Ex-rebel sworn in as Colombia's president in historic shift



AP ■ BOGOTA (COLOMBIA)

Colombia's first leftist president was sworn into office on Sunday, promising to fight inequality and heralding a turning point in the history of a country haunted by a long war between the government and guerrilla groups.

Sen. Gustavo Petro, a former member of Colombia's M-19 guerrilla group, won the presidential election in June by beating conservative parties that offered moderate changes to the market-friendly economy, but failed to connect with voters frustrated by rising poverty and violence against human rights leaders and environmental groups in rural areas.

Petro is part of a growing group of leftist politicians and political outsiders who have been winning elections in Latin America since the pandemic broke out and hurt incumbents who struggled with its economic aftershocks.

The ex-rebel's victory was also exceptional for Colombia, where voters had been historically reluctant to back leftist politicians who were often accused of being soft on crime or allied with guerrillas.

A 2016 peace deal between Colombia's government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia turned much of the focus of voters away from the violent conflicts playing out in rural areas and gave prominence to problems like poverty and corruption, fuelling the popularity of leftist parties in national elections.

Petro, 62, has promised to tackle Colombia's social and economic inequalities by boosting spending on anti-poverty programs and increasing investment in rural areas.

8 of top-10 firms add ₹98,235 cr in m-cap



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the 10 most valued firms together added Rs 98,234.82 crore in market valuation last week, with IT majors Infosys and TCS emerging as the biggest gainers amid a positive momentum in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex advanced 817.68 points or 1.42 per cent.

From the top-10 pack, HDFC twins were the only laggards.

The market valuation of Infosys jumped Rs 28,170.02 crore to reach Rs 6,80,182.93 crore.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) added Rs 23,582.58 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 12,31,362.26 crore.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries Limited climbed Rs 17,048.21 crore to stand at Rs 17,14,256.39 crore and that of ICICI Bank advanced Rs 13,861.32 crore to Rs 5,83,261.75 crore.

The market capitalisation (m-cap) of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) went higher by Rs 6,008.75 crore to Rs 4,34,748.72 crore and that of Bajaj Finance increased Rs 5,709.2 crore to Rs 4,42,157.08 crore.

State Bank of India's valuation went up by Rs 2,186.53 crore to Rs 4,73,584.52 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) advanced by Rs 1,668.21 crore to Rs 6,21,220.18 crore.

On the other hand, the m-cap of HDFC declined by Rs 4,599.68 crore to Rs 4,27,079.97 crore.

HDFC Bank's valuation dipped Rs 4,390.73 crore to Rs 7,92,860.45 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued domestic company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, HUL, ICICI Bank, SBI, Bajaj Finance, LIC and HDFC.

India's outbound tourism to surpass \$42 bn by 2024, says report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Outbound trips from India will surpass USD 42 billion by 2024 and the government could bring about certain policy changes to boost this growing market, a report said.

The report titled 'Outbound Travel and Tourism - An Opportunity Untapped' by Nangia Andersen LLP in association with FICCI, highlights the up-and-coming Indian travel market and outline a framework for creating a more value for money experience for Indian tourists and travellers.

To facilitate ease of doing business and promote the interests of Indian firms dealing in outbound travel the government could look at steps like increasing direct connections to popular and upcoming destinations, allowing foreign cruise vessels to operate on Indian waters, besides taking concerted and coordinated efforts on multiple fronts to propel the outbound tourism market, the report said.

Nangia Andersen LLP Head — Government and Public Sector Advisory Suraj Nangia said Indian outbound tourism is going to surpass USD 42 billion by 2024.

"We are soon going to be the most populous country in the world with the fastest growing economy. The Indian outbound travel market is among the fastest growing markets globally with approximately 80 million passport level of purchasing power, especially among the middle class."

The report noted that allowing foreign cruise vessels to include Indian destinations



as a stop would encourage both inbound and outbound tourism as well as increase revenue for Indian ports.

With a growing economy, young population, and growing middle class, India is ideally positioned to become one of the most lucrative outbound tourism markers in the world. Europe sees 20 per cent of the travellers from India's outbound traffic. 10 per cent travel to Australia and New Zealand, while the rest of the traffic is towards South east Asia, it said.

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner — Government and Public Sector Advisory

Poonam Kaura said, "With the positive response of foreign delegations and their policies, our government can surely establish bilateral relations with tourist-friendly countries for both inbound and outbound tourists".

In 2021, Indians spent approximately USD 12.6 billion in outbound trips, compared to USD 22.9 billion in 2019. While the reason for decrease in spending could be due to the pandemic but these figures point out the huge value that can be captured from Indian outbound travellers, the report added.

Revenue share from EV segment to touch 50% by FY27: Sona Comstar MD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Automotive Technology firm Sona Comstar expects its revenue share from the electric vehicle segment to touch 50 per cent by FY27, on strong pipeline of orders and an expanding EV market, a top company official said.

The revenue share of the company's EV segment in the overall topline jumped to 29 per cent in the June quarter from a meagre 2 per cent in FY20, Sona Comstar Managing director and Group CEO Vivek Vikram Singh said.

"As much as 66 per cent of our overall order book pertains to the EV segment. So, it (EV segment revenue) should account for 45 per cent in the overall revenue for sure in the next 3-4 years," Singh told PTI.

Singh further said, if the electric two-wheeler segment takes off in India, the EV segment revenue would be higher. "So, we will have to wait and see. If we win more programmes in the orderbook shape that will also help (us), then this share could reach 45-50 per cent by FY27," Singh said.

The company earlier this week reported a 5 per cent growth in profit after tax at Rs 75.80 crore and 18 per cent increase in the topline to at Rs 589.20 crore in the June quarter over the year-ago period aided by a 68 per cent rise in the Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) revenue compared to Q1FY22. The Gurugram-based company has two business verticals -- driveline and motor -- with 13 products. It has nine manufacturing facilities in four countries -- India, USA, China and Mexico -- as well as three R&D centres.

Its EV-focussed products include differential assemblies, reduction gears, traction motors, motor controllers, e-axes and integrated modules among others. According to Singh the company has won a total of 13 new programmes -- six from EV customers and remaining seven from the non-EV applications during the June quarter.

Of the six EV programmes, three are significant ones which will drive diversified EV growth. This includes one programme from an Indian original equipment manufacturer (OEM) of electric and ICE (internal combustion engine

'Inflation hasn't impacted imported spirits segment, investing in brand building'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The premium spirits segment has not been impacted by high inflation while affordability has improved in some states due to changes in the excise policy, said an official of American spirits major Brown-Forman, the maker of many popular brands including Jack Daniel's.

The company is seeing buoyancy in the on-trade segment with faster than expected recovery post pandemic and a "massive shift" in the upgradation and modernisation of the retail stores in many cities, including Tier 2, which also augurs well for premium spirits, said Siddharth Wadia - General Manager - India, Middle East & North Africa (IMENA) at Brown Forman.

India is a "strategic emerging market" for Brown-Forman, where it is strengthening its presence in tier II cities and actively investing in brand building and marketing initiatives through increased retail presence.

Brown-Forman, which had some launches in the recent past

with the RTD (ready to drink) offerings and some other variants, has plans to bring more innovation-based products to the Indian market. Besides Jack Daniel's official merchandise has seen encouraging responses here, he said.

"We continue to evaluate innovation opportunities in RTDs, flavoured whiskeys as well as in the overall premium spirits category," he said.

"In the premium spirits category, we are not seeing any impact on discretionary spending. From what we have seen so far, inflation has not really impacted the premium-end of the albo-bev segment and therefore it continues to experience high growth rates."

The company believes that even despite this inflation, consumers will continue to enjoy their aspirational or favourite drinks because it is witnessing a fundamental shift in quite a few of the markets towards premium spirits.

"Not to say that inflation is not hurting, but just that we feel that the net result of that inflation is still not as impactful on



the imported spirits segment," Wadia added.

It is seeing buoyancy in the on-trade segment with faster than expected recovery post the pandemic. There is no dearth of travel that is happening and that is a "positive sign".

"The other thing is that the reservations of in-home consumption

will continue to get lowered as an outcome of the pandemic from a long-term perspective because it has just opened up the comfort around the consumption of liquor while staying at home," he added.

While talking about the trends of the Indian market, Wadia said here consumers are

not only upgrading to international spirits but are also looking for newer whiskey and brands.

"Millennials, are totally clued into the latest trends and brands across the world. And with increasing aspirations, disposable incomes, and exposure to global brands, I believe they

are more open to experimenting and trying out newer things and different whiskeys from around the globe," he added.

Over the online sales and delivery of liquor in some states here, Wadia said the channel is still very small but "we believe that it definitely holds promise for the future of our category".

"Some states have been progressive and allowed e-commerce and online aggregators to deliver alcohol to consumers. It drives accessibility and reach, apart from also allowing consumers to make purchases in a safe and convenient environment," he said.

Jack Daniel's competes with brands such as Jim beam of Beam Suntory and Royal Challenge American Pride bourbon whiskey, recently launched by Diageo, through its Indian subsidiary United Spirits Ltd.

"We see competition as a positive development and welcome it. Given the fact that we have a heavy Scotch drinking legacy culture, with more brands coming into the American Whiskey space, not

only speeds up the awareness around American Whiskeys but also helps consumers to see multiple brands playing in this category which continues to enhance the salience of the segment," Wadia said.

Over the Jack Daniel's merchandise business, Wadia said it needed a bigger push and has launched its own online store in collaboration with its licensee in India.

"The merchandise helps us leverage the powerful equity of our globally iconic Jack Daniel's trademark by creating additional revenue streams and to connect with our consumers at a deeper level. And the response has been fairly positive and we continue to focus on expanding that," he said.

Globally, officially licensed Jack Daniel's merchandise is a huge draw among consumers. Jack Daniel's T-shirt is globally the second highest selling item after Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 whiskey and Jack Daniel's licensed products are sold across six continents and over 20,000 retailers worldwide, he added.

Auto industry expects car sales on fast lane in festive season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The auto industry expects car sales to be on the fast lane this festive season on the back of new launches and improved production but is cautiously optimistic on the road ahead once the festivities peter out.

The festive season, which usually witnesses a spike in automobile sales, begins this year on August 11 with Rakshabandhan stretching up to Diwali on October 25.

"We expect the festive season this year to be the best in terms of passenger vehicle sales on the back of new launches and improved production activity. The industry has been rolling out over 3 lakh units on an average in the past 4-5 months which is helping in retails," automobile dealer's body FADA President Vinkesh Gulati told PTI in an interaction.

He listed erratic monsoon in some parts of the country, inflationary pressures and the looming threat of a China-Taiwan war as some of the challenges to watch out for in the days ahead.

The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) represents over 15,000 automobile dealers across the country. Kia India Vice President and Head of Sales & Marketing Hardeep Singh Brar said that supply chain issues are now showing signs of easing off, and market sentiments remain bullish.

"We are optimistic that a good festive season is ahead of us in terms of sales," he added.

Tata Motors President



Passenger Vehicle and Electric Vehicles Shailesh Chandra said the company does not see a concern regarding the customer demand until the end of the festive season.

In an analyst call, he said that the automaker expects the vehicle supply to improve with better semiconductor availability in the second quarter. "Going forward the challenges we see is that the high inflation and interest rate may start impacting the auto demand while there's no stress as far as the second quarter is concerned," he stated.

As far as Tata Motors is concerned, the company remains focused on demand generation activities, Chandra noted. Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Director (Marketing and Sales) Shashank Srivastava said the demand seems to be steady at the moment.

"We have to watch out for the retails, currently we are digging conclusions based on wholesales and on the pending bookings...Retail sales have been below wholesales for the last few months... We also need to see how the economy performs overall and how the inflation and interest rates move," he noted.

28 firms secure Sebi's clearance to float IPOs worth ₹45,000-cr in Apr-Jul FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has given its nod to 28 companies to raise funds totalling Rs 45,000 crore through initial public offerings (IPOs) in April-July period of 2022-23 which has already seen 11 debutantes raising over Rs 33,000 crore.

Among the firms that have secured the regulator's clearance include Lifestyle retail brand FabIndia; Bharat FIH, a subsidiary of FIH Mobiles and a Foxconn Technology Group; TVS Supply Chain Solutions; Blackstone-backed Aadhar Housing Finance; Macleods Pharmaceuticals and Kids Clinic India, which operates super-specialty mother and baby care chain Cloudnine.

These firms are yet to announce the launch date of their IPOs and are waiting for the right time to float their issues as current market conditions are challenging, merchant bankers said. "Current environment is challenging

and companies with approvals in hand are waiting for the right window of opportunity to launch the initial share-sales. In fact, many of them have concluded the roadshows and are waiting for the right time," Prashant Rao, Director and Head Equity Capital Markets, Anand Rathi Investment Banking, said.

Going by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) data, total 28 companies obtained the regulator's clearance to tap the IPO route for fundraising during April-July 2022-23. Together, these firms are expected to mop up Rs 45,000 crore.

So far in current fiscal year, 11 companies have gone public to garner Rs 33,254 crore. Of these, a lion's share (Rs 20,557 crore) was raised by the public issue of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

All these companies hit the primary market during April-May and not a single public issue was launched after May, suggesting a dry spell in the



IPO market.

This came after as many as 52 companies tapped the primary market to raise a record Rs 1.11 lakh crore in the entire 2021-22. The impressive fundraising could be due to a slew of public issues from new age loss-making technology startups, strong retail participation and huge listing gains.

The lack of appetite for the IPO

in current fiscal year could be attributed to sharp correction in the secondary market, disastrous performance of new digital companies, like Paytm and Zomato, and poor post listing performance of LIC negatively impacting the sentiments, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Steel players expect Govt to withdraw export duty; to go ahead with capex plans

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The export duty imposed on certain steel products recently will not force steel makers to review their capital expenditure plans as top producers expect it to be a "short-term" move to stabilise inflation.

On May 21, the government hiked the duty on exports of iron ore by up to 50 per cent and for a few steel intermediaries to 15 per cent. It also waived customs duty on the import of some raw materials, including coking coal and ferro-nickel, used by the steel



industry.

The measures were taken to boost domestic availability, check inflation, stabilise prices of coal and address the issues of steel producers reeling under high input costs.

However, steel industry players had said imposition of export duties on steel products

will send a negative signal to investors and adversely impact capacity expansion projects under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

The Indian Steel Association (ISA), which represents the domestic steel companies, had said India may lose export opportunities and the decision may also impact the overall economic activity in the country.

According to the steel ministry, the sector's exports in FY22 increased by 25.1 per cent to 134.94 lakh metric tonnes (LMT), while imports dipped 1.7 per cent to 46.69 LMT.

Vodafone Idea says industry needs tariff increases at regular intervals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Struggling telecom operator Vodafone Idea Ltd says the industry needs to raise mobile tariffs at regular intervals as the sector still operates at unsustainably low prices and revisions will allow it to generate reasonable returns and support future investments.

The joint venture of Aditya Birla Group and Vodafone Group, which last year got a fresh lifeline after the government extended a relief package to the sector, said per user revenue remains lower than historic trends.

All three private telecom



operators — Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone-Idea Ltd (VIL) — last year raised charges for data, arresting average revenue per user (ARPU) declines. Despite this, "the industry still operates on unsustainably low tariffs", VIL said in its latest annual report.

India continues to have the lowest tariffs globally, while the proliferation of unlimited data bundles have led to India

having one of the highest data usage (per subscriber) in the world," it said.

The ARPU levels remain lower in comparison to historic trends, despite consumers getting much more value in terms of unlimited voice and daily data allowances, compared to five years ago.

"The company thus believes that the industry will have to further raise tariffs at regular intervals, which is essential for operators to generate reasonable returns on their capital employed and support future investments, including new technologies," the firm said.

1-2 FINISH FOR INDIA IN MEN'S TRIPLE JUMP



PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Elldhose Paul won a historic triple jump Gold in a 1-2 finish for India as the country bagged four medals on a Super Sunday on the concluding day of athletics competitions at the Commonwealth Games here. After the mad rush of four medals coming within 30 minutes, India's medal tally from athletics swelled to eight — 1 Gold, 4 Silver, 3 Bronze — the best in the CWG history outside the country and only second to the haul at the 2010 edition in Delhi. The 25-year-old Paul became only the sixth Indian to win a CWG Gold since legendary Milkha Singh won it in

1958 in 440 yards. The Ernakulam-born Indian Navyman led India's historic 1-2 finish with a best jump of 17.03m in his third attempt after opening with 14.62m. His jump was though wind-assisted and his second best was 16.63m. Before Sunday's jump, he had a personal best of 16.99m. Paul's Kerala statement Abdulla Aboobacker was second with a fifth round jump of 17.02m. Aboobacker, who has a season's and personal best of 17.19m, was at fourth spot at the end of the fourth round but soared to 17.02 in his next attempt to jump to second. Jah-Nhal Perinchief of Bermuda won the Bronze with

his best jump of 16.92m. The other Indian in the fray, Praveen Chitravel, who came to the CWG as the second best Indian with a season's best of 17.18m, finished at fourth with 16.89m. India has won four triple jump medals in the past editions but this is the first time two athletes from the country have got podium finishes. Mohinder Singh Gill had won a Bronze and a Silver in 1970 and 1974 editions while Renjith Maheswary and Arpinder Singh had finished third in 2010 and 2014 editions. The experienced Annu Rani also scripted history as she became the first Indian female javelin thrower to win



a medal, a Bronze, with a best effort of 60m in her fourth attempt. The 29-year-old was well below her season's best and national record of 63.82m but that was enough for a third-place finish behind two Australians -- world champion Kelsey-Lee Barber (64.43m) and Mackenzie Little (64.27m). Rani's medal came on a day the country was celebrating National Javelin Day to mark Neeraj Chopra's historic gold in Tokyo Olympics on the same day last year. Before Rani, Kashinath Naik and Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra had won a Bronze and a Gold in the men's javelin throw respec-

tively. Naik had won the medal at the 2010 Delhi Games, while Chopra won the gold in Gold Coast in 2018. The other Indian in the fray, Shilpa Rani was seventh with a best of 54.62m. Veteran race walker Sandeep Kumar added another Bronze in men's 10,000m event with a personal best time of 38:49.21. The other Indian in the fray, Amit Khatri finished ninth with a season best time of 43:04.97. Kumar's medal was the second in this edition after Priyanka Goswami's Silver in the same event on Saturday. He also became only the second Indian male race walker to win a medal in CWG after Harminder Singh, who won a Bronze in 20km event in the 2010 edition. Kumar also holds national record in both 20km and 50km race walk events. But, he was competing in 10,000m as the 20km event was not there in the Birmingham CWG.

'Influence of late Nikolai in my career is unmatched'

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Coaches may come and go but late Nikolai Snesev will have a special place in star steeplechaser Avinash Sable's heart for his contribution in his overall growth as an international athlete. Sable beat a strong field of Kenyan athletes to win Silver in the 3000m steeplechase at the Commonwealth Games on Saturday and it was the Belarusian, who instilled that self belief in the army man. Snesev tragically passed away in 2021 after he came back to India that year, following a long gap. "I will never forget what coach Nikolai Snesev did for me. Many coaches will come and go in my life but his influence on my career has been life-changing. He changed my belief. I have never seen a more honest coach in my life," Avinash choked up while speaking about Snesev. "The preparations for the Olympics were going well when he left us (died in March 2021). It was a really difficult time for me. I would have never believed that Indians could fight Kenyans. I thought Indians go to international events just to participate. He changed that for me," he added. "Indians have the ability to do well in all events at the world level. We have to believe that we have skills and talent. We should not be intimidated when we are up against international athletes. It is not as difficult as we often think," Avinash said.



Gold Rush in Boxing

Nikhat Zareen, Amit Panghal, Nitu grab maiden CWG yellow metals

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

The indomitable Nikhat Zareen added a Commonwealth Games light flyweight (50kg) title to her bulging trophy cabinet while Amit Panghal (51kg) began his redemption journey with a much-needed Gold winning show, here on Sunday. Nikhat, who is on a winning spree since the Nationals last year, asserted her dominance over Northern Ireland's Carly McNaul as she punched her way to a comprehensive 5-0 win in her maiden CWG appearance.



Panghal, on the other hand, avenged his 2018 Commonwealth Games final loss against Kieran MacDonald by clinching the title with a comprehensive 5-0 win over the favourite. Indian boxers made it three out of three Golds on the day as young Nitu Ghanghas (48kg) too reigned supreme on her CWG debut.

Sagar Ahlawat will play his final bout later tonight. The India pugilists will return with seven medals from Birmingham, two less than the previous edition. Nikhat started off the year by clinching a Gold at the prestigious Strandja Memorial tournament before going on to become a world champion. The Telangana boxer, who dropped from 52kg to 50kg for the CWG, glided around the ring, landing hooks and tight jabs at will. Her defence was equally impressive. Such was her dominance that when the nine minutes ended there was no

doubt which way the decision would go. Having lost to a Briton four years ago at the same stage in Gold Coast, the 26-year-old Panghal was at his aggressive best against MacDonald as he clinched the yellow metal with a 5-0 verdict. With the Gold, Panghal also put his disappointing Tokyo Olympics outing where he made a round of 16 exit, behind. Nitu, on the other hand, upstaged 2019 world championships Bronze medallist Demie-Jade Resztan of England by a 5-0 unanimous verdict. The first Indian boxer to take the ring, Nitu, competing in her first CWG, looked completely in control throughout the nine minutes, giving the home boxer no chance. "I am so happy, I can hardly breathe," Nitu told reporters. The legendary MC Mary Kom had won the coveted yellow metal in the same category at the 2018 Games.

Sindhu, Sen one step away from maiden Gold



PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu stayed on course for an elusive Gold medal while Lakshya Sen regained his rhythm just in time to enter his maiden final at the Commonwealth Games here on Sunday. Sindhu rode on her superior technical superiority to outwit Singapore's Yeo Jia Min 21-19, 21-17 in a 49-minute contest to reach her second successive final. The Indian had also beaten her in the team event. In the following match, world number 10 Sen lost his way after a dominating start against 87-ranked Jia Heng Teh of Singapore. Sen however recovered to complete a 21-10, 18-21, 21-16 win in the men's singles semifinals. Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty ensured a third Gold medal match for India on Monday when they downed Malaysia's Chen Peng Soon and Tian Kian Men 21-6, 21-15 to reach the men's doubles final. The world number 7 duo was too



good for the Malaysians. It could have been an all-Indian men's final but an error-prone Kidambi Srikanth squandered a first game advantage to lose to lower-ranked Tze Yong Ng of Malaysia 21-13, 19-21, 21-10. The world number 42 Tze had shocked reigning world champion Yew Kean Loh of Singapore in the quarterfinal. The last edition's Silver medallist will now fight for the Bronze and so will the Indian women's doubles pairing of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichane who lost to the seasoned Malaysian combine of Thinnah Muralitharan and Pearly Koon Le Tan in the semifinals in straight games.

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Star Indian para table tennis player Bhavina Patel won a Gold medal in the women's singles class 3-5 at the Commonwealth Games here on Saturday. The 35-year-old from Gujarat, who had won a Silver at Tokyo Paralympics, prevailed 12-10, 11-2, 11-9 over Nigeria's Ifechukwude Christiana Ikpeoyi to cap off a superb show at the quadrennial event. Bhavina reached the world No. 2 ranking by winning the Silver medal in the individual category at the 2011 PTT Thailand Open.

Bhavina wins Gold, Sonalben bags Bronze medal in para TT



Besides, she also won a Silver medal in the women's singles class 4 at the Asian Para Table Tennis Championships in Beijing in 2013. In 2017, Bhavina bagged a Bronze in the Asian Para Table Tennis Championships in Beijing. Sonalben Manubhai Patel also gave India a medal, claiming a Bronze in women's singles class 3-5.

If I am training right I become my own psychologist: Vinesh

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

A drastic change in training regimen and the extra push that her family gave enabled Vinesh Phogat to turn the tide after a forgettable last 12 months during which she "hit rock bottom mentally". A premature exit from the Tokyo Olympics, where she went in as the top seed, injury issues and run-ins with the wrestling federation pushed her into an abyss. The 27-year-old's existing training methods were not yielding results. She had to go back to the drawing board. After undergoing an elbow surgery in September, Vinesh only wanted to get her training right. "If my training is going right, I feel fine mentally as well," she said after easing to a 53kg Gold at the Commonwealth Games on Saturday. "Only I know what I have done to win this medal. It feels a lot more special considering what I have gone through over the past 12 months," said Vinesh who is now a three-time CWG Gold medallist. Vinesh, who had to really dig deep to win the trials to make the CWG squad, was struggling for sparring partners in her category. The women were not strong enough so she decided to train with the U-15 boys. "She was not getting the required training earlier, now she is. That is the difference according to me," said national coach Jitender Yadav on Vinesh's victorious comeback.

Sharath-Sathiyan settle for Silver

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

The seasoned Indian pair of Sharath Kamal and G Sathiyan was outsmarted by familiar foes Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford of England in the men's doubles final at the Commonwealth Games here on Sunday. The Indian duo had to settle for Silver for the second successive edition after losing 11-8, 8-11, 3-11, 11-7, 4-11 to the English combine. It was a repeat of the 2018 final in Gold Coast and to the disappointment of the Indians, it was the same result. The Indian contingent has been getting tons of support from the crowd here but at the NEC table tennis arena on Sunday, English fans outnumbered the Indians. With very little separating the two pairs, the Indians began well with Sathiyan hitting a crisp forehand winner to go 1-0 up in the gold medal match. Drinkhall and Pitchford fought back in the second game. A down the line backhand from



Pitchford made it 5-1 for England. The Indians were having a tough time retrieving the serve with their opponents mixing things up. Sharath's returns from the backhand were yielding mixed results. Pitchford's cross court winner after a long rally gave England a 7-5 lead before they levelled the tie. The English pair ran away with the third game which had the best rally of the match which Indians won after trading a series of booming forehands far away from the table.

The Indians were able to take the final to the decider after course correction in the fourth game. However, Drinkhall and Pitchford took a huge six point lead from 4-4 to gain six gold medal points in the fifth game. They converted the very first one drawing a huge roar from the crowd. The Indian pair shook hand with its opponents who once again proved better on the day. With the Silver, 40-year-old Sharath increased his CWG medal count to 11 with the



Sreeja misses Bronze by whisker

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

India's Sreeja Akula suffered a heartbreaking loss at the Commonwealth Games here as she went down to Australia's Yangzi Liu 3-4 in a close Bronze medal play-off. Sreeja went down 11-3, 6-11, 2-11, 11-7, 13-15, 11-9, 7-11 after staging a slew of comebacks in a match that lasted more than one and a half hour. mixed doubles Gold medal match scheduled later on Sunday.

Women's hockey team win medal after 16 years

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Skipper Savita Punia led from the front with a spectacular display as the Indian women's hockey team overcame the stopwatch controversy to beat New Zealand 2-1 in shootout and win the Bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games here Sunday. This is the team's first medal at CWG in 16 years. Leading 1-0, India conceded a penalty corner with less than 30 seconds to go for the final hooter, as the match went into shootout after Olivia Merry's equaliser. In the regulation time,

India got the lead through Salima Tete in the 29th minute. Coming off their heart-breaking loss to Australia in a controversial semifinal, India showed the intent to wrap up their campaign with a win and earn a podium finish. The Indians were done in by a horrendous timing faux pas in the shoot-out against Australia. In the shootout on Sunday, India captain and goalkeeper Savita showed her class, pulling off three spectacular saves to give her side its third CWG medal. After Megan Hull put New



Zealand ahead, an agile Savita denied Rose Tynan, Katie Doar and Olivia Shanon, while Sonika and Navneet scored for India to register a famous win. "We knew it wouldn't be easy, so before we came, we worked every minute and every second. I am so proud. We fought as a team," Savita said. On the pressure of being a goalkeeper in the shootout, she said, "The pressure is always there, but all credit goes to my coach (Janneke Schopman) who told me 'you are good, so just believe in yourself and watch the ball'."

Viswanathan Anand becomes FIDE deputy president

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Indian chess legend Viswanathan Anand was on Sunday elected deputy president of FIDE, the sport's world governing body, while incumbent president Arkady Dvorkovich was re-elected for a second term. Five-time world champion Anand was part of Dvorkovich's team. Dvorkovich received 157 votes as against 16 by his rival Andrii Baryshpolets while the number of invalid votes was 1 and abstentions stood at 5. The elections to the world

chess body were held during the FIDE Congress which is being conducted here alongside the 44th Chess Olympiad. After an illustrious career during which he won numerous titles and honours, the Chennai-based Anand has in recent times cut down on his tournament play and focussed on coaching. He shot to prominence as a teenager and became India's first ever Grandmaster after winning the world junior title and have since led the country at the global level in chess. He also won five world titles with the last being the world rapid title in 2017.

A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND APPROACH WAS REQUIRED AFTER LAST YEARS' T20 WC: ROHIT

PTI ■ LAUDERHILL

A disastrous campaign in the last T20 World Cup has forced the Indian team to bring about a radical change in its attitude and approach, skipper Rohit Sharma has said.

Rohit is now gearing up to lead the Indian side in the upcoming edition of the T20 showpiece in Australia, but before that, they have the Asia Cup to deal with.

Speaking on Star Sports show 'Follow the Blues', Rohit said, "We've made it very clear after the T20 World Cup in Dubai, where we didn't qualify for the finals, that we felt there needed to be a change in our attitude and approach in how we play our game."

India will enter the Asia Cup as defending champions.

With Team India adopting a more aggressive batting style in the past few months, Rohit spoke about how the squad is getting ready for the upcoming challenges.

"If the message is clear from the captain and the coach about where the team is trying to head, then the individuals will definitely try to do that. For that to happen they need freedom and clarity and that's what we are trying to do. We are trying to give them as much freedom as possible."

When asked about his experience of captaining a team with so many young leaders, Rohit said, "I know it's very exciting honestly to create so many leaders around the team because it's always a good sign."

"And you want the guys to handle the pressure, who understand the game and know each other really well. And when they are leading the team, all these things can happen."

India have had six different cap-



'Turned to slowers to unsettle WI batters'

PTI ■ LAUDERHILL

India pacer Avesh Khan's redemption, after being whacked around the Caribbean grounds with strong wind and short boundaries, came about after he slowed down his pace following skipper Rohit Sharma's advice.

Khan said he has received "enormous amount of confidence" from Rohit and coach Rahul Dravid when he was struggling to come to grips with the strong wind and short boundaries.

The bowler's match-winning performance (2/17 in 4 overs) helped India seal the T20I series against West Indies with a 59-run victory in the fourth match here on Saturday.

"They have given me an enormous amount of confidence, despite the fact I did not perform well in my last two games."

However, Rohit bhai and Rahul Sir's support have given me the confidence both on and off the field... And told me that rough patches do happen," Khan told reporters after the match.

Khan had leaked 54 runs in six overs on his ODI debut in Port-of-Spain last month. In the ensuing first two T20Is in St Kitts, he continued to bleed runs but Rohit, regardless of his pacer's struggles, had tasked Khan with defending nine off the final over in the second T20.

Khan failed to deliver, but the

team management kept backing him.

"They also backed me by saying that an average performance in two matches do not make anyone a bad bowler, especially in T20s, given how the format is."

"I was backed the same way in this match too and I am happy that I performed well. They provided me necessary support during the South Africa tour as well."

"When a player is constantly encouraged by the captain and coach to perform well, it automatically motivates him to give his best. Rohit bhai is a fantastic leader. Not only me, he always backs and supports everyone in the team," Khan added.

tains in the past eight months owing to a combination of factors.

"I think it's very important to have that leadership, but obviously, you know we play the IPL and it's a 10-team tournament. So there will be 10 captains which at some stage will be a part of the Indian team as well."

"You know, I think it's fantastic because honestly my job is much lesser as these guys understand everything pretty well. So, it's just about if someone's having a thought, how am I going to back up that thought. For me as captain that is my role and that is what I'm trying to do," he said.

Looking ahead, Rohit mentioned that the role of coach Rahul Dravid is vital for the Indian team.

"With Rahul bhai I have played some games with him as he was my first captain when I made my ODI debut. So, obviously we have some kind of understanding. I have spent a lot of time in the NCA when I was injured and he was there."

"We had regular chats happening all the time and he was closely following my game as well," he said.

The 'Hitman' also spoke about the importance of having a coach whose vision and belief aligns with the team.

"When he (Dravid) became a coach here, we met and sat together in a room for a while and decided how we want to take this thing forward and he was pretty much on the same thought process as to what I was thinking."

"That made it a little easier for me to give out a clear message to the boys because we don't want to create confusion among the group; and of course, we wanted him to change the style of cricket as well."

"We wanted to play a certain way in all three formats and he was ready to accept all of that."



Zimbabwe beat B'desh by 5 wickets, seal ODI series

AP ■ HARARE

Zimbabwe trounced Bangladesh by five wickets in the second ODI. With that, the hosts clinched an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Batting first, the Bangla Tigers hoarded 290/9, courtesy of the fifties from Tamim Iqbal (50) and Mahmudullah (84*). Chasing 291, the hosts stumbled at the start, but centuries Sikandar Raza (117*) and Regis Chakabva (102) steered them home (291/5).

Raza has been a man possessed in the limited-over duels played this year. This series has been no different for the all-rounder. In addition to picking three wickets, Raza brought up his fifth ODI ton (10 to seal the series for the hosts. Notably, it's his fifth fifty-plus score in a span of seven innings in ODIs, including a 135* in the last outing.

Chakabva had class written all over him in the pivotal duel. The wicket-keeper batter clobbered a hostile-look-

ing 102 off 75 deliveries, studied with 10 fours and two sixes. It was his maiden ODI ton. He has breached the 1,000-run mark (1,057) while averaging 21.57. He also fetched a colossal 201-run stand alongside Raza to put Zimbabwe back in the chase.

Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal hit half centuries as Bangladesh scored 290-9. Coming in at 127 for three in the 24th over Mahmudullah was unbeaten on 80 at the close of the 50-over innings.

Captain and opener Tamim followed up his half-century in a five-wicket loss on Friday by making 50 before becoming the first Bangladesh batter to fall, with 71 runs on the board.

Mahmudullah scored his runs off 84 balls with his knock including three sixes and three fours at Harare Sports Club.

Tamim, who on Friday became the first Bangladeshi to score 8,000 ODI runs, was equally brisk, reaching his total off 45 deliveries.

World No.1 Medvedev ends ATP title drought



AP ■ LOS CABOS

World number one Daniil Medvedev won his first ATP title of 2022 on Saturday, roaring past defending champion Cameron Norrie 7-5, 6-0 in the final of the hardcourt tournament in Los Cabos, Mexico.

Medvedev snapped a five-match losing streak in finals — a stretch that included his agonizing five-set loss to Rafael Nadal in the Australian Open final in February.

He also came up short this year in 's-Hertogenbosch and Halle. He didn't get a chance at Wimbledon, where Russian and Belarussian players were banned because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

His first trophy since he won the US Open last year — denying Novak Djokovic a calendar Grand Slam — comes just as he launches the final build up to his title defense in the final Grand Slam of 2022.

Next he'll defend his Canadian Open title before tackling the Cincinnati Masters.

ROGERS SAN JOSE FINAL

San Jose: Shelby Rogers, ranked 45th in the world, qualified for the WTA hardcourt tour-

namment final in San Jose, California, on Saturday with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over 19th-ranked Veronika Kudermetova.

Rogers reached her first final since 2016 and will be seeking a first WTA Tour title when she takes on No. 12 Daria Kasatkina.

Rogers continued an impressive week that included an opening win over former US Open champion Bianca Andreescu and a victory over world number three Maria Sakkari, the top seed.

The 28-year-old hasn't dropped a set all week. Rogers will be playing her first final since Rio de Janeiro in 2016. She was runner up at Bad Gastein in 2014.

KANEPI VS SAMSONOVA

Washington: Estonia's Kaia Kanepi, trying to end a nine-year WTA title drought at age 37, advanced to the Washington Open final on Saturday by defeating Australian Daria Saville 6-3, 6-1.

World number 37 Kanepi will play for the crown against 60th-ranked Liudmila Samsonova, who routed China's Wang Xiyu 6-1, 6-1 in the other semi-final at the ATP and WTA hardcourt event, a US Open tune-up.

Kanepi seeks her fifth career WTA title but her first since the 2013 Brussels Open. She won her only WTA hardcourt title at Brisbane in 2012.

In her first WTA final since a 2021 Australian Open tuneup at Melbourne, Kanepi needed only 73 minutes to dispatch Saville, who was in her first WTA semi-final since 2018 at Acapulco.

"I played my best match," Kanepi said. "Everything was very smooth for me. I hit a lot of lines."

Fraser-Pryce runs world leading 10.66 sec for 100m

AP ■ CHORZOW

Jamaican sprint star Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce ran a world-leading 10.66 seconds to win the women's 100 metres on Saturday at the Silesia Diamond League meeting in Poland.

Crowned 100m world champion for the fifth time last month in Eugene, Oregon, Fraser-Pryce finished ahead of American Aleia Hobbs (10.94) and Ivory Coast's Marie-Josée Ta Lou (11.00) in Chorzow.

"I always come into races expecting to run fast! Last year I set a meeting record here," said Fraser-Pryce.

"Last year I felt a lot of pressure on me and this year I decided to just have fun. It is amazing to be this consistent. I am always excited to compete and see what I can do."

It was her second Diamond

League win of the season over 100m following victory in Paris.

The 35-year-old was 0.06sec off her personal best set last August in Lausanne.

Fraser-Pryce took Gold in 10.67sec at the recent world championships, coming home ahead of Shericka Jackson and Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah in a Jamaican sweep.

With Thompson-Herah bidding for a sprint double at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, world champion Jackson continued her strong season in Poland as she won the 200m in 21.84sec.

World Bronze medallist Trayvon Bromell triumphed in the men's 100m in 9.95sec, ahead of compatriot and silver medallist Marvin Bracy and Jamaica's Ackem Blake. Reigning Olympic and world champion Emmanuel Korir of Kenya won the 800m.

Ten Hag loses 1st game as Man Utd manager

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Erik ten Hag's reign as Manchester United manager got off to a nightmare start as Brighton registered their first ever victory at Old Trafford with a 2-1 win on the opening weekend of the Premier League season.

Any hope of a fresh start for United after a miserable 2021/22 season was wiped away within 45 minutes as Pascal Gross struck twice to put Brighton in command.

Alexis Mac Allister's own goal gave United a foothold in the game, but they rarely looked like getting back on level terms, showing the scale of the task lying ahead for Ten Hag.

The former Ajax boss left Cristiano Ronaldo on the bench after he only returned to pre-sea-



son training last week.

Ronaldo is reportedly seeking an exit from Old Trafford to play CL football this season.

But without the five time Ballon d'Or winner, United had no focal point to their attack as Christian Eriksen started in an unfamiliar role as a false nine. The outcome could have

been very different had Bruno Fernandes not blazed over a glorious chance on six minutes.

The nadir of a nightmare campaign for United last season as they finished sixth in the Premier League came in a 4-0 defeat to Brighton in May, and the Seagulls quickly settled into their passing rhythm.

Messi, Neymar combine to script PSG's 5-0 win

AP ■ CLERMONT

Lionel Messi scored twice in the second half, including with a stunning overhead kick, as Paris Saint-Germain began their defence of the Ligue 1 title with a 5-0 demolition of Clermont on Saturday.

Neymar was also in outstanding form for a PSG side who did not miss the injured Kylian Mbappe, with the Brazilian opening the scoring in Clermont before setting up Achraf Hakimi and

Marquinhos for further goals before half-time.

Messi then exchanged passes with Neymar before sidefooting in the visitors' fourth goal with 10 minutes left.

Yet Messi saved the best for last, darting into the box four minutes from the end to control a Leandro Paredes pass on his chest with his back to goal, before converting with an acrobatic overhead kick.

That goal had the crowd at Clermont's Stade Gabriel-Montpied

singing the name of the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, who endured a difficult first season in Paris.

PSG's victory in new coach Christophe Galtier's first league game in charge was achieved despite Mbappe missing the trip due to an adductor injury.

Mbappe also missed last week's 4-0 defeat of Nantes in the season-opening Champions Trophy due to suspension.

Messi had opened the scoring in that game, while Neymar netted a brace.

The duo therefore already have six goals between them this season, with PSG looking in ominous form.

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit in the court of executive magistrate Barbil, Dist- Keonjhar, I Rajen Kumar Gupta aged about (56) S/o- Basudeb Ram Gupta, At- Joda Basti, Joda, Po/Ps-Joda Dist-Keonjhar, do hereby by solemnly affirm that my actual Name is Rajen Kumar Gupta in all records and manner. But wrongly mentioned as Rajen Gupta in my Daughter Ritu Gupta CBSE Delhi one Board Certificate Bearing Roll No. 6107995, Regn No. B114/53044/0080. That my both name Rajen Kumar Gupta and Rajen Gupta one and same person. That the fact above are true the best of my Knowledge.
Sd/-Rajen Kumar Gupta

Rahul & Virat set to return for Asia Cup T20

The 2022 edition of the Asia Cup T20 tournament will take place in the United Arab Emirates from August 27. The tournament was initially supposed to take place in Sri Lanka, but due to the ongoing political and economic crisis there, it was shifted to the UAE, but Sri Lanka will remain the host. This year, in preparation for the T20 World Cup, which will be held in Australia from October 16 to November 13, the Asia Cup will be played in the T20I format, making the upcoming matches, in which India will face Pakistan at least twice, crucial. Ahead of the team selection in Mumbai on Monday for the multi-nation event, **DRITI ATRI** takes a look at the 15 players who can find a place in the squad.

OPENERS: Even though since the end of last year's T20 World Cup, India have tried as many as eight players as openers, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul are



almost certain to be picked. And with Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, and Virat Kohli also capable of batting at the top in case of any mishap, there are almost negligible chances for a reserve opener.

MIDDLE ORDER: Virat Kohli will make his comeback for India in the Asia Cup after taking a break from the West Indies tour. He will bat at his usual number three position, and in the middle, joining him will be Suryakumar Yadav. The Mumbaier has established himself in the white-ball format



of the game. **WICKETKEEPER:** Even though there are options in the form of Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson, and Dinesh Karthik, Rishabh Pant is almost certain to be picked up as India's first choice wicketkeeper-batter. His numbers in white-ball cricket are not as high as they are in Test cricket, but he cannot be dropped.

ALL ROUNDERS: Hardik Pandya and Ravindra Jadeja are two of the best all-rounders in world cricket at the moment, and both of them are almost cer-

tain to be picked. Apart from contributing with the bat and ball, both are excellent fielders and now also have the experience of leading an IPL side, which will come in handy as the tournament progresses. **FINISHER:** There's no one better than Dinesh Karthik in the world at the moment as a number seven batter. The veteran Indian stumper made a sensational comeback to the Indian shortest format side and is now on his way to the big events.

PACERS: Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah are definite starters, and with Hardik Pandya to support them with the ball in hand now, India is likely to stick with the duo for the Asia Cup.


SPINNER: Even though Yuzvendra Chahal wasn't included in the Indian team for the five T20Is against West Indies, he is still India's first choice white-ball spinner, and

despite competition from Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, Axar Patel, and Kuldeep Yadav, he will get the nod.

RESERVES: Since the squad for the Asia Cup is almost likely to be the one that India will field in the T20 World Cup later this year, it becomes interesting to see which other four players get the selectors' nod. Since Harshal Patel is out of the Asia Cup due to an injury, there are question marks over his availability for the T20 World Cup as well. But India have enough options to replace him and the likes of Deepak Chahar, who will return to action for the first time since February 20 against Zimbabwe this month, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Shami will be in the fray. As far as a back-up middle order batter is concerned, Shreyas Iyer is likely to get the nod of selectors over Deepak Hooda, who has also impressed

in the limited chances he has had so far. And in the back-up spinner category, Axar Patel is likely to pip Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, and Kuldeep.

India's likely squad for the Asia Cup: Rohit Sharma (Captain), KL Rahul, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Dinesh Karthik, Ravindra Jadeja, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah, Yuzvendra Chahal, Shreyas Iyer, Axar Patel, Deepak Chahar, Arshdeep Singh



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