

OPINION 6

CWG: COMING OFF
WITH FLYING COLOURS!

WORLD 8

CHINA'S ANOTHER MASSIVE
MILITARY DRILLS AROUND TAIWAN

MONEY 10

INDUSTRY HAILS PM'S CALL TO
MAKE INDIA A DEVELOPED NATION

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY AUGUST 16, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

SIMONA HALEP
WINS 3rd WTA
CANADIAN TITLE
11 SPORT



India set to make major leap in Amrit Kaal, says Modi, invokes nari shakti

Corruption, nepotism
two challenges before
India, says PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech on Monday sought to aspire the country to make a major leap forward in the "Amrit Kaal" of the next 25 years even as he asserted that the world has realised "political stability, dynamism in policies and speed in decision making" in India.

In his 83-minute speech, delivered without the aid of teleprompter, the Prime Minister invoked the power of "nari shakti", affirming that the next 25 years will belong to women, and sought to draw attention to "two big challenges" of "corruption and nepotism" and asked countrymen to support him in his "fight" against them.

Addressing the country from the ramparts of Red fort, the Prime Minister said, "We started our journey with the mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, but gradually the countrymen have added more colours to it with Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas. So, we have seen our collective power and collective potential." Dressed in a traditional kurta and churidar pyjama paired with a blue jacket and a white "safa" with tricolour stripes, Modi unfurled the national flag amid a 21-gun salute by the indigenously-developed howitzer gun, ATAGS, which he noted with pride was the first from Red Fort in 75 years.

Modi also recalled that in 2014 he was the "first Indian born in free India", who got the privilege to "sing praises of glory to my dear countrymen from the ramparts of the historical Red Fort".

The Prime Minister said India has gained enormous confidence in the comity of nations with its 75 years of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation on the occasion of the 76th Independence Day, at the Red Fort in New Delhi on Monday

PTI

journey and is ready to make major leap forward in the "Amrit Kaal" of next 25 years.

"One hundred and thirty crore countrymen after several decades of experience have shown the world the importance of a stable Government, the power of political stability, policies and how trust develops in the policies. The world too is now able to understand it. And now when there is political stability, dynamism in policies, speed in decision making, ubiquity and universal trust, then everyone becomes a partner in development", he said.

"The nation should now only be setting big goals. That big goal is a developed India and nothing less," Modi declared in his ninth consecutive address from the historic Fort as he also spoke about challenges of dynastic politics. India has entered a decisive era in its battle against corruption, which, he said, is eating the

country like termites. "Corruption hollowing the country like a termite, we've to fight it. We've to raise awareness against 'Parivaarवाद' to realise the strength of our institutions, to take the country forward on the basis of merit," he said.

Making it clear that the battle against twin evils is needed to move forward decisively, Modi said, "Those who looted India in the past Governments are paying for their sins now. We are confiscating their ill-gotten gains. I need your support in this fight against corruption. We need to take on both corruption and the corrupt. Several institutions in India have been shackled by nepotism. It is not limited to just politics. This promotes corruption. We need to free the country from this nepotism as this is impeding the growth of the nation."

Continued on Page 2

'Self-obsessed' Govt trivialising freedom fighters' sacrifices: Sonia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday vowed to fight attempts to "distort" historical facts for political gains with party president Sonia Gandhi alleging that a "self-obsessed" Government is hell-bent on "trivialising" the sacrifices of freedom fighters.

Sonia's attack came a day after the BJP released a video narrating its version of events that led to India's partition in 1947. The video was an indictment of the top Congress leadership at the time and showed pictures of Jawaharlal Nehru and Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The Congress also took a

strong exception to the exclusion of India's first Prime Minister Nehru in the Karnataka Government's newspaper advertisement on freedom fighters and termed the BJP action "pathetic".

The party hit out at the Prime Minister following his Independence Day address, saying he has let the country down by not discussing the promises made by him in the last eight years and by not giving an account of his tenure.

"Friends, we have achieved a great deal in the last 75 years, but today's self-obsessed Government is bent on trivialising the great sacrifices of our freedom fighters and the glorious achievements of the

country, which can never be accepted," Sonia said in her message on India's 76th Independence Day.

"Congress will strongly oppose any misrepresentation of historical facts and every attempt to put great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Abul Kalam Azad in the dock based on falsehood for "political gains", she said.

She said that in the last 75 years, India has left an indelible mark on the international arena in all fields including science, education, health and information technology through the hard work of its talented people.

Continued on Page 2

India gifts Lanka recce aircraft a day before China docks spy ship

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/
AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/
COLOMBO

Ahead of the scheduled docking of a Chinese spy ship at Hambantota port on Sri Lanka's southern coast, India on Monday handed over a Dornier maritime surveillance aircraft to the Sri Lankan Navy in the presence of Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

India is deeply concerned over a Chinese spy ship scheduled to dock at the Lankan port for seven days from Tuesday. The Chinese ship is equipped with surveillance and reconnaissance systems and can track Indian defence installations.

Addressing the ceremony in Colombo, Indian High Commissioner Gopal Baglay said security of India and Sri Lanka is enhanced by mutual understanding, trust and cooperation.

Vice Chief of Indian Navy Vice Admiral SN Ghormade, who is on a two-day visit to the country, accompanied by the Indian High Commissioner, handed over the maritime surveillance aircraft to the Sri Lankan Navy at its airbase in Katunayake adjoining the Colombo international airport.

"Security of #India and #Srilanka is enhanced by mutual understanding, mutual trust and cooperation. Gifting of Dornier 228 is #India's latest

contribution to this cause," Baglay said.

"Like fruits of other areas of cooperation with India, the gift of Dornier to @airforcelk is of relevance to and a step to meet its requirements for maritime safety and security. It is an example of India's strength adding to the strength of its friends," he said.

The aircraft was provided to Sri Lanka from the inventory of the Indian Navy to help the country meet its immediate security requirement. The Indian Navy has already provided extensive training to a team from Sri Lanka's Navy and the Air Force to operate the maritime surveillance aircraft.

Sri Lanka in 2018 had requested for two Dornier Reconnaissance Aircraft from India to enhance the maritime surveillance capabilities of the island nation. India will give two Dornier aircraft now being manufactured by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). Once these two-HAL manufactured aircraft are handed over, the Dornier aircraft will return to the Indian Navy.

Sri Lanka granted the permission two days back to Chinese ship "Yuan Wang 5" to dock at the Hambantota port on Tuesday. Sri Lanka has leased the deep water port, 250 kms from Colombo, to China on a 99 year lease.

Continued on Page 2



A Dornier 228 Maritime Patrol Aircraft being handed over to Sri Lanka Navy by the Indian authorities during a ceremony in Colombo on Monday

PTI

Edgy calm in Shivamogga after Veer Savarkar, Tipu poster row



Police personnel deployed to maintain law and order after a dispute between two groups over installing poster of Hindutva icon VD Savarkar and the 18th century Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan at Amir Ahmad Circle, in Shivamogga on Monday

PTI

PTI ■ SHIVAMOGGA

Prohibitory orders were clamped in Shivamogga city on Monday after two groups entered into a heated argument over the installation of a banner with a picture of Hindutva icon VD Savarkar on the occasion of Independence Day, police said.

Tense moments prevailed at Amir Ahmad Circle here, when one of the groups wanted to tie a picture of Savarkar on a high mast light pole while the other planned to install a picture of 18th century Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan.

Meanwhile, a person named Prem Singh in his mid twenties was allegedly stabbed by unidentified miscreants here when he was on his way home

after locking the shop, and probe was on to ascertain whether the incident has any links with the aforesaid incident, police sources said. He is currently undergoing treatment at McGann Hospital.

Earlier, as part of the 76th Independence Day celebrations, one group had tried to tie Savarkar's picture on the high mast light pole at the location, which was objected to by the other that wanted to install a picture of Tipu Sultan.

Allegedly there was an attempt by some to replace or damage the picture, police sources said, adding this led to a tense situation with a large number of people from both sides gathering there.

Police resorted to a mild

lathicharge to bring the situation under control and to disperse the crowd.

BJP and Hindu groups staged a protest demanding that they be allowed to install Savarkar's picture and wanted action against the other group for insulting their icon.

Authorities deployed additional forces in the area and clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code in the entire city.

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said police have taken all measures to maintain peace. "The incident should not have happened. I have ordered for strict action against miscreants and those trying to disturb peace," he told reporters in Bengaluru.

16 parks in Delhi named after unsung heroes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday dedicated to the people 16 parks bearing the names of several unsung heroes of the freedom struggle on the 76th Independence Day.

At an Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav event, Saxena unveiled a plaque of 'Lala Hardayal Park' at Jasola and dedicated to the people the remaining parks located across

the city. 'Lala Hardayal Park' was earlier known as "District Park, Jasola", they said.

DDA had sent a list of 16 parks to the Delhi Government a few months ago for renaming them after freedom fighters like Lala Hardayal, Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, General Shah Nawaz Khan, Gobind Behari Lal, Colonel Prem Sahgal and Basanta Kumar Biswas among others.

District Park, R-Block, Greater Kailash-I, has been

renamed as "Asaf Ali Park"; District Park, Sector-B, Vasant Kunj, as "Avadh Behari Park"; Park at Sector-C, Vasant Kunj as "Master Amir Chand Park"; District Park, Lok Vihar, Pitampura, as "Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon Park"; District Park, Sandesh Vihar, Pitampura as "General Shah Nawaz Khan Park"; District Park, Vikas Puri, as "Gobind Behari Lal Park"; District Park, Janakpuri, as "Satya Vati Park"; Park and Nursery, Sector 11,

Rohini, as "Colonel Prem Sahgal Park"; District Park, Part-1, Sector-29, Rohini, as "Basanta Kumar Biswas Park"; Green area, Sector-29, Rohini, as Bhai Balmukund Park"; District Park, Mayapuri, Phase II, as "Dr Shushila Nayyar Park"; Green area, Sector 28, Part I, Rohini, as "Hakim Ajmal Khan Park"; Park and Play Area, Sector B-4 Narela, as "Brij Krishna Chandiwalla Bagh"; District Park, Sector-11, Dwarka, as "Swami

Shraddhanand Park"; and Park no 27, Sector 11, Dwarka, as "Deenbandhu CF Andrews Park".

Saxena hoisted the national flag at Raj Niwas on Monday, paying homage to the martyrs and freedom fighters on the 76th Independence Day. The LG felicitated freedom fighter Gobind Vashista Narayan Pandey, a resident of Burari, who served in Azad Hind Fauj founded by Subhash Chandra Bose.

Raj MLA quits to protest atrocities against Dalits

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
JAIPUR/NEW DELHI

A Rajasthan Congress MLA on Monday sent his resignation to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, saying he did not have the right to stay as an MLA if he cannot protect the rights of his community. The development came two days after the death of a Dalit boy who was allegedly beaten by a school teacher in Jalore for touching a drinking water pot.

"When we fail to protect the rights of our community...we have no right to remain on the post. After listening to my inner voice, I resign from the post of the MLA so that I can serve the community without any position," Pana Chand Meghwal, the MLA from Baran-Atru constituency, said.

Meghwal said though the country is celebrating 76th Independence day, atrocities on Dalits and the other deprived classes continue. "I am hurt looking at the atrocities. I cannot express my pain in words, the way my community is being tortured," he said.

"Dalits are being killed for drinking water from a pot, sporting a moustache or riding a mare during a wedding.

"The judicial process is stalled and case files are passed from one table to the other. Cases of atrocities against Dalits are on the rise in the last few years. It seems there is no one to protect the rights of Dalits... Many times, I have raised such cases in the Assembly but no action was taken by the police," Meghwal rued.

Man arrested for repeated death threats to Ambanis

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a fresh death threat received by billionaire industrialist Mukesh Ambani and his family, the Mumbai Police on Monday arrested a 56-year-old man — identified as one Vishnu Bhowmik — for allegedly making as many as eight calls to Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital to hand out deaths threats to Ambani and his family members.

The hospital, managed by the Ambani family, received "eight to nine" threat calls — one after another — between 10.45 am and 12 noon, soon after the flag-hoisting ceremony got over at the hospital.

Confirming the development, hospital's CEO Dr Tarang Gianchandani said, "As soon as the flag hoisting ceremony was over we received, 8 to 9 calls between 10.45 am and 12 noon, one



after the other, from some unidentified person giving out death threats to our chairman Mukesh. We have lodged an FIR with the police. The police have initiated investigations. We have also beefed up our internal security."

Before long, the police traced the calls to one Vishnu Bhowmik, who is understood to have admitted to having made threat calls to Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital. Bhowmik was detained from Dahisar, a northern suburb of Mumbai.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

TERROR HITS VALLEY AFTER I-DAY EVENTS

Jammu: After the 76th Independence day celebrations passed off peacefully in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir during the day terrorists launched two back to back grenade attacks in Srinagar and the central Kashmir district of Budgam late in the evening in which one police personnel and one civilian received injuries on Monday. Earlier a constable who had got injuries in a Sunday encounter succumbed on Monday.

NITISH CABINET EXPANSION TODAY

Patna: The two-member cabinet in Bihar comprising Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his deputy Tejashwi Prasad Yadav will be expanded on Tuesday when about 30 members will be inducted from different constituents of the 'Mahagathbandhan'.

Two injured in back-to-back grenade attacks after I-Day celebrations in J&K

L-G Manoj Sinha hoists tricolour in Srinagar

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After the 76th Independence Day celebrations passed off peacefully in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir during the day terrorists launched two back to back grenade attacks in Srinagar and the central Kashmir district of Budgam late in the evening in which one police personnel and one civilian received injuries on Monday.

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha hoisted the Tricolour at Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium, Srinagar while Advisor Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar hoisted the tricolour at the main function held at M A Stadium in Jammu.

According to a police spokesman, "Terrorists hurled a grenade at Police Control Room Kashmir, resulting in minor injuries to one police personnel. In the second incident of grenade lobbing, "terrorists hurled grenade in Gopalpora Chadoora area of Budgam in which one civilian namely Karan Kumar Singh got injured. He has been shifted to Srinagar hospital for treatment where his condition is stated to be stable. Area cordoned off. Further details shall follow".

Meanwhile, a police constable, who was injured during a counter-terrorism operation in Srinagar on Sunday, succumbed to his injuries on Monday. According to police, a "chance encounter" broke out in Nowhatta area with terrorists Sunday late evening for which CRPF and police were on the job. Constable Sarfaraz Ahmad, a resident of Batote area of Ramban district, got



People wave the tricolour celebrating the 76th Independence Day, at Ghanta Ghar Lal Chowk in Srinagar on Monday

PTI

injured during the operation but succumbed to his injuries later in the hospital. "We pay rich tributes to the martyr for his supreme sacrifice made in the line of duty," Kashmir Zone Police tweeted.

Addressing the gathering after inspecting an impressive parade, LG Manoj Sinha said, "A befitting reply is being given to those who are trying to mislead our youth with a nefarious proxy war. A final blow is being dealt to the terror ecosystem operating at the behest of the neighboring country".

"We will push the last nail in the coffin of terrorism. Strikes, stone pelting and protests have become things of the past". "I appeal to the 1 crore 30 lakh citizens of Jammu and Kashmir to speak with one

voice against terrorism and atrocities on the innocent".

Sounding a note of caution Sinha said, "India, the mother of democracy, wants peace and welfare of the entire humanity, but we are also ready to defend our freedom, sovereignty and integrity with full zeal".

On the auspicious occasion, LG Manoj Sinha also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in taking the country, and Jammu and Kashmir, forward on the path of development.

Referring to the abrogation of Article 370 in J&K, L-G Sinha said that PM Modi had lit a lamp of modern economic and social development three years ago and added that the J&K administration has

achieved notable accomplishments in the past years. "Despite various challenges, we have completed 50,726 projects in the last financial year with a five times speed," L-G Sinha informed.

Calling it a "new dawn of hopes and dreams", the J&K Lieutenant Governor asserted that the UT is scripting history and is recording unprecedented performance in every sector.

Making an important announcement on the occasion LG Manoj Sinha said, "We have decided that a Gaurav Stambh shall be established in Srinagar in memory of the brave soldiers who have sacrificed their lives defending our beloved motherland. Listing out welfare measures for the

next of kin of bravehearts, LG Manoj Sinha said the Government has increased the compensation amount for the families of army personnel of Jammu and Kashmir martyred in the line of duty from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 25 lakh. The administration has decided to bear the cost of Jammu and Kashmir Police's martyr wards up to class 12th. Agniveers after military service shall get 10 percent reservation in the recruitments to be conducted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police. On the occasion of Independence Day, I also announce the reorganization of Village Defence Committees.

LG Manoj Sinha said, "I want to call upon the people of Jammu and Kashmir that this is a golden opportunity to restore the pride and excellence of Jammu and Kashmir.

Let us build a self-reliant Jammu and Kashmir for the coming generations and realize the dreams of our ancestors" Let us walk into the bright future of Jammu and Kashmir, he concluded.

Govt appoints 37 judges in HCs, 11 in Punjab & Haryana HC alone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Monday appointed 37 judges to various High Courts. As many as 11 Judges were appointed in the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

"With the notification of the appointments of another 11 High Court Judges in the Punjab & Haryana High Court by the government this year i.e. 2022, so far 138 appointments in various High Courts of the country has been made thus surpassing its earlier record of 126 High Court appointments in 2016," said Ministry of Law and Justice in statement.

"Last year i.e. 2021, the appointment tally in High Courts was 120 in addition to 9 appointments in the Supreme Court. Thus, the entire appointment process in higher judiciary has been put on a fast track," the statement added.

The 11 Judges appointed at Punjab and Haryana High Court are: Nidhi Gupta, Sanjay Vashisth, Tribhuvan Dahiya, Namit Kumar, Harkesh Manuja, Aman Chaudhary, Naresh Singh, Harsh Bunger, Jagmohan Bansal, Deepak Manchanda and Alok Jain. All are advocates and appointed as Additional Judges for a period of two years.

Ordinary citizens' freedom cannot be taken away: Kappan's daughter

Malappuram: As India celebrated its 76th Independence Day, the nine-year old daughter of Malayali journalist Siddique Kappan — booked and jailed under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in the Hathras conspiracy case — said in her school speech that went viral on social media that "ordinary citizens' freedom be not taken away. I am the daughter of a jailed journalist denied the basic civil rights available to all".

time asserted that it will take decisions based on its security concerns.

Meanwhile, in his Independence Day message, Baglay said India has been an active partner in catalysing the economic recovery of Sri Lanka. Indian investments in Sri Lanka in mutually beneficial sectors such as ports, renewable energy and infrastructure will be instrumental in this through employment generation and stepped up economic activities, he said.

The civilisational connect, shared heritage and abiding bonds between the people are the hallmark of India-Sri Lanka ties. Today, as we rapidly move forward on the path laid out by generations from antiquity, we also seek to strengthen these age-old linkages for posterity as well, he said.

People have to celebrate India's diversity, says PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining the importance for unity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence day speech said people have to celebrate the diversity of a big country like India as the country's many faiths and traditions are its pride.

Addressing the country from the ramparts of Red fort, Prime Minister said gender equality is the first condition for unity, he said, adding that women are now doing very well in different sectors, including science and people's representation.

"Our nation has proved that we have an inherent strength from our diversity and the common thread of patriotism makes India unshakeable," Modi said, as he termed India the "mother of democracy".

As against the opposition charge of eight years of the Modi-government "weakening" country's federalism, Modi underlined his faith in

cooperative federalism and the spirit of "team India", saying this is what he practised when he was Gujarat chief minister and a different party (Congress) was in power at the Centre.

"We may have different programmes and working styles but our dreams for the nation are not different," he said in an apparent appeal to opposition parties to work together to develop the country.

"The need of the hour today is cooperative competitive federalism along with cooperative federalism. We need competition in development," he said, adding that many states are doing good work.

Recalling freedom struggle, Prime Minister said many indulged in scare-mongering by saying India will be "ruined" and go into the "dark age" if the British left, but the country survived and kept growing due to its inherent strength, he said.

The people made efforts and proved that India has immense capacity to survive all odds even as "hundreds of

years of slavery" had inflicted "deep wounds" on it, he added.

The prime minister said India's growth story continued despite terrorism and proxy wars, natural calamities and even as success and failures and hopes and disappointments kept showing up.

The Prime Minister pointed out a tendency to undermine freedom fighters who were not highlighted for several decades and recalled tribal leaders who sacrificed their lives for the country.

"When we talk about the freedom struggle, we cannot forget to take pride of our tribal society living in forests. There are countless names like Bhagwan Birsa Munda, Sidhu-Kanhu, Alluri Sitarama Raju, Govind Guru, who became the voice of freedom movement and inspired my tribal brothers and sisters, mothers and youth in the remotest jungles to live and die for the motherland. It has been the good fortune of the country that there have been many aspects of the freedom struggle, Modi said.

Man...

From Page 1

Later in the day, the police placed Bhowmik - said to be a jeweller from Dahisar -- under arrest and booked him under section 506-2 (Punishment for criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The police are ascertaining the criminal records or otherwise of Bhowmik.

"The suspect has been arrested under section 506(2) for criminal intimidation and issuing threats. He had threatened Mukesh and abused him," a senior police official said.

Though the police have established the motive behind Bhowmik's multiple threat calls to the Reliance Foundation Hospital, the police said that arrested person appeared per se mentally unstable.

Meanwhile, the city police have beefed up security in and around Mukesh residence "Antilia" in south Mumbai.

Last month, the Supreme Court had ruled that Mukesh and his family in Mumbai could continue to have security provided by the Centre, while dismissing a petition challenging the provision.

The Centre had approached the Supreme Court after the Tripura High Court had accepted a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the Government security cover to the Ambanis. Mukesh and his family were given security cover by the Maharashtra Government based on an evaluation of threat perception by the Union Government.

Monday's was the third threat received by the Mukesh family, after the recovery of a Gelatin sticks' laden Scorpio and a threatening letter inside a vehicle on Carmichael Road, near the industrialist's residence on February 25, 2021.

Subsequently, a taxi driver had subdued the police about the possibility of a fresh threat to the industrialist and his family.

It may be recalled that on February 25 last year, a Gelatin sticks' laden Scorpio and a threatening letter inside the vehicle, in the vicinity of Mukesh 27-storey residence "Antilia" on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai.

The investigations into the sensational recovery of an explosive-laden SUV near Mukesh residence and the subsequent suspected murder of the vehicle owner Mansukh Hiran led to the arrest of 11 persons, including four police officers.

On September 3 2021, the NIA - in a voluminous charge-sheet filed in a Special NIA Special Court here --charged the ten accused - including dismissed Assistant Sub-Inspectors Sachin Waze, Riyazuddin Kazi, yester year encounter-specialist Pradeep Sharma, convicted constable Vinayak Shinde - with various offences under various sections of Indian Penal Code for murder, cheating and conspiracy.

India set...

From Page 1

Modi also rebutted the Opposition's charge that his Government was using federal agencies like the Enforcement Directorate to target its leaders over alleged corruption while slamming "parivarvad and bhai-bhaji-javad" (dynasty and nepotism).

"People saw that that some persons do not have enough space to hide their illicit money while many in the country do not have enough space to live, he said in an obvious pointer to the recovery of the huge amount of allegedly unaccounted cash and other assets during raids at the premises of some leaders of Opposition parties," he said.

Modi took on the efforts to "glorify" them, an apparent reference to the Opposition parties defending those accused of corruption.

"This mindset is not going to end unless there is a feeling of "nafrat" (hatred) for corruption and the corrupt and people are forced to look down upon them socially."

Along with corruption, Prime Minister simultaneously also strongly attacked dynastic politics. "In politics too, the dynasty has done the most injustice to the country's strength. Dynastic politics is aimed at a family's welfare and has no interest in the country's welfare," he said, asking people to join him in purifying Indian politics and institutions to rid the country of this to take the country forward.

Otherwise, everybody feels frustrated because they believe they did not get their due because they had no relatives to promote them, he added. This mindset is not good for any country, he said.

The Prime Minister said under his Government, he said,

over Rs two lakh crore which would have gone in wrong hands earlier has now been invested in the the country's development using direct benefits transfer.

"We are trying to bring back those who ran away after looting banks in the previous governments. We have seized their assets. Many people have been forced to live in jails. Our effort is that those who have looted the country pay back and we are creating conditions for it."

"Even the big people will not be able to escape," he said.

Modi said it was a historic day for India and the completion of 75 years of Independence was a time to move forward with a new resolve and also spoke strongly for cooperative federalism, celebrating the country's diversity, unity among citizens, gender equality, and research and innovation.

The Prime Minister cautioned the countrymen against complacency over the country's achievements in the last 75 years, and said it has to now focus its strength on fulfilling the "Panch Pran" in the next 25 years in the run up to the centenary of its independence.

He spelt out the five pledges as a resolve for a developed India; removing any trace of the colonial mindset; taking pride in our legacy; our strength of unity; and fulfilling the duties of citizens, which include Prime Minister and Chief Ministers as well.

"We have to move forward with these five resolves in mind and take up the responsibility to fulfil the dreams of our freedom fighters in the next 25 years when we attain 100 years of independence," Modi said.

In his address, the Prime

Minister specifically sought countrymen to correct their conduct towards women and take a pledge to change it for the better to not to lower their dignity. Modi said respect for women is an important pillar for India's growth and stressed the need to extend support to "Nari Shakti".

"A distortion has crept in our conduct and we at times insult women," he said, and asked, "Can we take a pledge to get rid of this from our behaviour and values?"

It is important that in speech and conduct "we do nothing that lowers the dignity of women," he said.

Speaking on the significance of a united nation, Modi said India has much to teach the world on the concept of unity which begins with the family structure.

Gender equality is the key to a united India, he said, adding that without equal importance to sons and daughters in family structures, the idea of unity will be lost.

"We should celebrate the diversity of India...At home too, the roots of unity are sowed when both the son and the daughter are equal. If they are not, the mantra of unity cannot reverberate. I hope we can get rid of this attitude of upper-lower or mine-others," Modi said.

Gender equality is a crucial parameter of unity," the prime minister said. He further said women power is present in all sectors of society and significant for the growth of the country. "If we look at 'nari shakti' in law, education, science and police, our daughters and mothers are making major contributions to India," Modi said.

He said citizens are proud of the strength of the women of India like Rani Laxmibai, Jhalkari Bai, Rani Chennamma, and Begum Hazrat Mahal. Indian women symbolise sacrifice and struggle, Modi added.

Wisemore Advisory Private Limited				
CIN : U74999HR2017PTC085774				
Regd Office : AR1017B, The Arealias, DLF Golf Links, Gurgaon, Haryana-122009				
Statement of Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter and three months ended 30 th June 2022				
Particulars	Quarter ended 30 June 2022 (Unaudited) (refer note 3)		Quarter ended 31 March 2022 (Unaudited) (refer note 4)	
	INR in millions		Year 31 March 2022 Audited	
Total Income from Operations	(0)	1,177	0	1,315
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(48)	1,112	(167)	840
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(48)	1,112	(167)	840
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(48)	2,976	(167)	840
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(1,398)	2,976	(167)	4,368
Paid up Equity Share Capital	869	869	869	869
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	3,506	4,904	1,928	4,904
Equity component of compulsory convertible debentures	—	—	—	—
Net worth**	4,375	5,773	1,237	5,773
Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt*	2,227	2,180	1,548	2,180
Debt Equity Ratio *	0.51	0.38	4.16	0.38
Earnings Per Share (of Rs. 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations)				
1. Basic :	(0.55)	12.79	(1.92)	9.66
2. Diluted :	(0.55)	12.79	(1.92)	9.66
Debt Redemption Reserve *	—	—	—	—
Debt Service Coverage Ratio *	(0.01)	21.22	(0.02)	2.85
Interest Service Coverage Ratio *	(0.01)	21.22	(0.02)	2.85
Disclosures pursuant to Regulations 52(4) and 52(7) Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015.				
- Credit Rating : CARE BB - (CE)				
- Change in credit rating : No				
- Asset Coverage Ratio : 437% (31 March, 2022 : 556%)				
- Debt Equity ratio : mentioned above				
- Debt Service Coverage Ratio : mentioned above				
- Interest Service Coverage Ratio : mentioned above				
- Previous due date for the payment of interest/ repayment of principal of non convertible debt securities and whether the same has been paid or not (as on 30 June, 2022)				
Previous due date for the payment of interest : NA				
Previous due date for the payment of principal : NA				
- Next due date for the payment of interest/ repayment of principal of non convertible debt securities				
Next due date for the payment of interest : 20 Nov, 2022				
Next due date for the payment of principal : 20 Nov 2022				
- Outstanding redeemable preference shares (Quantity and Value) : Not Applicable				
Net Worth ** (30 June, 2022) : INR 4,375 (31 March, 2022 : INR INR 5,773)				
- Net profit after tax : mentioned above				
- Earning per share : mentioned above				
- Debt Redemption Reserve (30 June, 2022) : NIL (31 March, 2022 : INR NIL)				
- There are no material deviation in the use of proceeds of issue of Non Convertible Debentures from the objects stated in the offer document (Regulations 52(7))				
Notes :				
1. Ratios have been computed as follows : - Earning per share (Basic & Diluted) = Profit after Tax / Weighted average number of equity shares - Debt Equity Ratio* = (Debt Securities + Borrowings other than Debt Securities-Unamortised Issue Expenses) / Equity (Equity share capital + Other Equity) - Interest Service Coverage Ratio = Profit before interest, tax and depreciation / Total Interest Expense - Debt Service Coverage Ratio* = (Profit after tax + Depreciation + Interest) / (Interest + Principal Repayment) - Asset Coverage Ratio = (Total Assets) / Debt (Amount due to Debenture Holders) *As per Debenture Trust Deed dated 12th August 2021 as amended time to time. ** Networth represents issued subscribed and paid up capital plus reserves and surplus. Reserves and Surplus includes Capital reserve, General reserve, Debenture redemption reserve, Securities premium account and Profit and loss account balance.				
2. In Accordance with Ind AS 108 on Segment Reporting, the Company has identified two business segments i.e Investment Activity and Management Consultancy.				
3. The above financial results of the Company for the quarter and for the period ended June 30, 2022 have been approved by the Board of Directors of the Company at the meeting held on 14th August, 2022.				
4. The figures of the quarter ended Mar 22 are balancing figures between audited figures in respect of the full financial year upto March 31, 2022 and the unaudited published year-to-date figures upto December 31, 2021, being the date of the end of the third quarter of the financial year which were subject to limited review.				
5. The figures of the quarter ended June 30, 2021 are the unaudited and unreviewed management internal reporting figures . However, management has exercised necessary due diligence to ensure that the financial results for the periods provide a true and fair view of the Company's affairs.				
For and on behalf of the Board of Directors Wisemore Advisory Private Limited (Sd./-) Vaishali Nigam Sinha, Managing Director, CIN : 02299472				
Place : Gurugram Date : 14 th August, 2022				

Free education, healthcare not freebies, says Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday asserted that free education and healthcare are not freebies and said if people are given access to them, India can become the top country in the world. He was speaking on the occasion of the country's Independence Day at the national Capital's Chhatrasal stadium.

Kejriwal stated that education and access to healthcare are not freebies or 'free ki revdi' and poverty can be eradicated from country if we are able to provide quality education to all.

"With folded hands, I want to underline that education is not a freebie. Parents, if they have to, may skip one meal but they would provide good education for their child. Parents don't give a freebie to the child but to secure their future. These 27crore kids are our kids, all of us Indians can eat less but we should resolve to give quality education to children. More than 39 developed countries became rich because



they provided good education to their children. We too can remove poverty from our country if we are able to provide free quality education to all," he added.

There has been political acrimony over the issue of freebies with the BJP accusing Kejriwal of using it as a 'bait' to trap people for power. Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, after inaugurating the Bundelkhand Expressway in Uttar Pradesh, cautioned people against what he called the "revdi culture" of offering freebies for garnering

votes and said it is "very dangerous" for the development of the country.

Modi had used 'revdi' as a metaphor for freebies being promised by some parties to woo voters and said the people, especially the youth, should guard against it.

"On average, we are spending ₹2,000 for the healthcare of every Delhiite. We can arrange for good healthcare facilities in ₹2.5 lakh crore for 130 crore Indians. We can open world-class mohalla clinics and hospitals in five years," he added.

Kejriwal said the country's

130 crore people need to come together and resolve to make India the number one country in the world. "We came together and chased the Britishers out. Today, if we come together, we can make India the top country in the world," he said.

Explaining his vision for India of the future, the chief minister laid stress on education and health, citing the two words 50 and 30 times, respectively, in his 40-minute speech. At the event where thousands of children were invited, Kejriwal said the country's 130 crore people need to come together and resolve to make India the number one country in the world.

"We came together and chased the Britishers out. Today, if we come together, we can make India the top country in the world," he said. Lamenting that many nations like Singapore that got independence after India or were destroyed during Second World War have surpassed it, the Delhi chief minister reiterated that education and healthcare are key to becoming a rich country.

Training programme for 50 women cab drivers launched

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena launched a training programme for 50 women cab drivers here on Monday, a move aimed at increasing the ratio of female drivers in the Capital's public transport sector. The LG also flagged off 40 electric cabs with women drivers on wheels.

East Delhi BJP MP Gautam Gambhir, Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar and other senior officials were present at the event held at the Institute of Driving and Traffic Research (IDTR) at Sarai Kale Khan.

According to a statement issued by Raj Niwas, the move is aimed at increasing the ratio of women drivers in Delhi's public transport sector and ensuring safety of women passengers.

Saxena also administered Prime Minister Narendra Modi's five pledges (Panch Pran) for 2047 — making a developed India, removing any sign of servility, pride in our rich heritage, unity in uplift-



ment of the nation and fulfilling our duties as citizens, it said. Saxena said this skill (driving) training of women drivers was in tune with the prime minister's call for women empowerment which also found mention in his Independence Day address.

Saxena said the meaning of independence would remain incomplete without the "economic freedom" of women -- their self-dependence. "This driving skill training programme for women drivers would open up new employ-

ment avenues for women and make them self-reliant. I am hopeful that the public transport sector in Delhi will have 50 percent of women drivers in coming years," Saxena said.

Lauding electric car fleet aggregator Blu Smart for roping in women drivers, the LG said while these cars would contribute to environment protection, the women cab drivers will ensure the safety of female passengers.

The women, under this scheme, can register directly with the transport department

or they can be roped in by private cab aggregators. All women drivers are provided free of cost training by IDTR and the cost of the training will be borne by the Transport Department and the Aggregators (50-50%), the statement said.

The trained women drivers will be taken in the fleet of the aggregators who have sponsored them. Under this initiative, 1,000 women will be given training and assured employment in the next one year, it added.

Red Fort decked up in tricolours, flowers and murals

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The iconic Red Fort in the national Capital was all decked up in tricolours, flowers and murals showcasing the key events that led up to India's freedom on Monday. To mark the celebration, flower petals were showered by MI-17 helicopters for the first time at the Red Fort just ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech.

The entrance of the Red Fort was guarded by two mechanised elephants — operated by a man sitting inside each of them — which became a big draw for people who were seen clicking selfies with them after the programme ended.

A bunch of tricolour balloons were also released in the air from the Red Fort, after the Prime Minister's speech ended. For the first time in 75 years, an indigenously developed

howitzer gun, ATAGS were used during the 21-gun salute at the Red Fort. Decorative scrolls depicting portraits of several freedom fighters from across India and the country's cultural and natural heritage were displayed on the walls of the Red Fort.

The spectators were filled with enthusiasm when the Prime minister Narendra Modi arrived at the Red Fort and unfurled the national flag at the Red Fort. PM Modi stayed consistent with a white sara with tricolour stripes and a long trail as his headgear. Donning a traditional kurta and churidar paired with a blue jacket and black shoes Before he arrived at Red Fort, PM paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat.

Prime Minister examined the inter-services and police Guard of Honour as he arrived at the Red Fort on Monday to deliver his ninth consecutive

Independence Day speech from the ramparts of the iconic monument.

He was received by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt. The Guard of Honour contingent for the PM consisted of one officer and 20 men each from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Delhi Police. Indian Air Force is the coordinating service.

The Guard of Honour was commanded by Wing Commander Kunal Khanna. The Air Force Contingent in the Prime Minister's Guard was commanded by Squadron Leader Lokendra Singh, the Army contingent by Major Vikas Sangwan and the Naval contingent by Lt Commander Avinash Kumar. The Delhi Police contingent was commanded by Additional DCP (East Delhi) Achin Garg.

After unfurling the national flag, PM Modi delivered his



ninth consecutive speech, which lasted for nearly 83

minutes (1 hour and 23 minutes).

Spl steps taken to ensure 7,000 invitees follow Covid-19 protocol at Red Fort

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

On the Independence Day there were multi-layered security cover, robust arrangements and facial recognition system cameras, amid heavy police presence at the historic Red Fort from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation.

Since morning, National Security Guard (NSG) snipers, elite Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) commandos, 400 kite catchers, canine units and sharpshooters on buildings were part of the airtight security arrangements in place in view of the terror attack threats ahead of the Independence Day celebrations. Further, a five-kilometre area around the Red Fort was marked as a "no kite flying zone" till the tricolour

was hoisted. With Covid cases on the rise in the national Capital, special measures were taken at the Red Fort to ensure that the 7,000 invitees followed Covid-19 protocols.

Body temperature of every attendee was checked at the entry point and a two-feet distance of between seats was maintained. Masks and sanitisers were also distributed among the attendees.

Forces continue to remain on high alert to thwart any untoward incident as police have intensified patrolling and deployed extra pickets at vital installations based on intelligence inputs received from central agencies, a senior police officer said.

Borders were sealed to ensure no untoward incident took place in the national capital even as police warned

of strict action against anyone trying to disrupt the law and order situation.

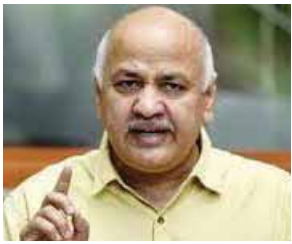
Dependra Pathak, Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) had on Friday said provisions of Section 144 were instituted in the capital. Anti-drone systems from Defence Research and Development Organisation and other security agencies remain installed, he said.

During Modi's Independence Day address in 2017, a kite had landed just below the podium. The prime minister had, however, continued with his address unfazed.

The police had on July 22 issued an order prohibiting the flying of aerial objects such as paragliders, hang gliders and hot air balloons, and this will remain in force till August 16, police said.

Kejriwal model only blueprint that can make India world leader: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Red Fort mentioned that he wants to make India an aspirational society and a developed nation.

"I would like to say that an aspirational society cannot be

developed without making quality education available for every child. If children do not get good education, parents will keep struggling to provide good education to their children, people will run around hospitals to avail health treatment and if the government will be a bystander, then the country will not develop," said Sisodia.

Sisodia said that the foundation of a developed country in the next five years can be laid by ensuring excellent education and healthcare services for all.

PM interacts with NCC cadets on Independence Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

On the occasion of Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday interacted with NCC cadets dressed in traditional attire and seated in the geographical formation of the map of India in front of Red Fort's ramparts.

The cadets were seated at 'Gyan Path' in front of the Red Fort's ramparts in the geographical formation of the map of India. They were wearing clothes of the regions they were representing, symbolising

India's cultural diversity.

After his speech on the 75th anniversary of India's independence, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi walked into the Gyan Path enclosure. He waved at and greeted the cadets. The prime minister encouraged the cadets from Punjab and Gujarat to perform their folk dances -- Bhangra and Garba -- as he cheered for them.

He also shook hands with some cadets, striking brief interactions. A total of 792 NCC cadets (Army, Navy and Air Force) from different schools across the country took part in the festival of national

fervour.

Khushi Panday (20), Bhavana (20), Smrutiranjana Mallicka (19) and Abhinash Parida (20) were among 30 NCC cadets representing Odisha.

All of them have come to Delhi for the first time. "It feels so proud to represent the state. All the hard work we have put in has given fruits," Khushi said.

On interacting with PM Modi, Bhavana said: "It felt unreal and we never thought we will get the chance to meet and greet the prime minister of the country."

48-yr-old shopkeeper arrested for selling 'Chinese manjha'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 48-year-old shopkeeper for allegedly storing and selling the illegal 'Chinese manjha' in west Delhi's Nihal Vihar area. The accused has been identified as Ashok Kumar, a resident of Shiv Ram Park, Nihal Vihar.

According to Sameer Sharma, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer district, on Sunday around 4 pm during patrol in Shiv Ram Park, Nihal Vihar, police noticed illegal Chinese manjha kept in a shop.

"A total of 170 bundles of illegal Chinese Manjha were recovered from his shop. A case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and Environment Protection Act was registered in Nihal Vihar Police Station and the accused was arrested, the DCP said.

Kumar revealed that he runs a tea shop and in order to earn money, he was selling the illegal Chinese manjha, police said.

Earlier, another man, 43 years old, was arrested from northwest Delhi's Mahendra Park area with over 200 cartons of Chinese manjha in his possession.

Army man, 2 brothers thrashed by four bouncers in G'gram club

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In yet another case, an army man and his two brothers were allegedly thrashed by four bouncers of a club in Sector 29 in Gurugram. All three were injured badly in the incident that happened Sunday night, police said. Reportedly, the bouncers did not stop beating the three brothers even after a police team reached there after someone called the 112 helpline.

Police had to call for reinforcement, but by the time it arrived, the assailants had fled.

On August 9, an MNC manager and his friends were thrashed by some private bouncers and managers of Casa Denza club in Udyog Vihar. Police had arrested seven accused including a manager the next day.

According to the complaint filed by Naik Sunil Kumar, a native of Rohtak in Haryana, he along with his two brothers, Khajan Singh and Anil Kumar, had gone to Friction club Sunday late night to celebrate a party.

"It was around 11.20pm when we entered the Friction club. We were dancing and enjoying ourselves. Around 20 minutes later, the music in the club stopped. My brother Anil made a request to play a song, but two bouncers came and denied the request," Naik said in his complaint, according to the police.

"They then started an argument with us and were joined by two others, and took us outside the bar where they thrashed us with sticks," he said.



"They threatened to kill us if we visited the club again," the army man added.

Following the complaint, an FIR has been registered against four unidentified bouncers of Friction club under sections 323 (causing hurt), 506 (criminal intimidation), and 34 (common intention) of the IPC at Sector 29 Police Station.

"An FIR has been registered. We are verifying the facts and action will be taken as per the law," said Dr Kavita, ACP, DLF.

This has been the second incident in the Cyber City area in a week, where bouncers of some club have beaten the patrons.

Domestic help tries to kill herself after being thrashed, stripped over theft charges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 43-year-old domestic help at a south Delhi farmhouse attempted suicide after she was allegedly humiliated by her employer, who also stripped and thrashed her before locking her up in a room without clothes after an occultist brought by the family concluded that she stole valuables from the villa nearly 10 months ago.

According to Benita Mary Jaiker, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, on August 10, a police control room (PCR) call was received at Maidangarhi police station regarding a woman who had consumed poison and she had been taken to hospital.

"The police team also reached the Hospital at Chhatarpur.

Subsequently, the statement of the woman was recorded wherein she alleged that she works as a servant and she was physically

assaulted and beaten by her owner and other members of her owner's family for extorting confession of a theft incident that occurred at her owner's house 10 months ago," said the DCP.

"She further told police that due to torture humiliation caused by her owner and her family members she consumed some poison.

A case under sections 330/323/341/506/34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered at Maidan Garhi police station and investigation was taken up," said the DCP.

"During investigation, on August 12, other appropriate sections of law including 328/354/354(B)/355/348/109/120B IPC were also added," said the DCP.

"On August 15, one of the accused identified as Seema Khatoun (28), a resident of Ansal Villa, Satbari has been arrested. Efforts are being made to arrest the remaining accused persons," said the DCP.

DIAL launches DigiYatra application

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), the airport operator at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport on Monday announced the soft launch of the 'DigiYatra' application, which passengers can now use for faster e-boarding through the airport.

The application will store all valid documents for the passenger, including the boarding pass for each journey and a vaccine certificate, with passengers boarding domestic journeys only required to show their face in front of a facial recognition system (FRS) at all checkpoints at Terminal-3. Once the passenger downloads the app, he or she is required to register his or her phone number and Aadhar card details, then, take a selfie, add vaccination details and scan the boarding pass.

Under the DigiYatra project, a passenger will pass through various checkpoints at the airport through paperless and contactless processing, using facial features to establish the identity which would be linked to the boarding pass.



"DIAL had installed the required facility at Terminal 3 of Delhi Airport and already conducted its DigiYatra trials. Nearly 20,000 passengers had the seamless and secured travel experience after using the facility during the trials," its statement noted.

These 20,000-odd passengers then submitted their biometric and other details through kiosks at Terminal 3 for their specific flights.

Now, passengers will submit their biometrics and other details through this app and it will remain stored for all the flights he or she will take at the Delhi airport's Terminal 3. A

passenger need not submit the biometric details at Terminal 3 before each flight.

The beta version of the DigiYatra app is available on the Android platform and will be available on the iOS platform in a few weeks, the DIAL said, adding the app will be used by the passengers to do their entire biometric registration.

After downloading the app, the passenger will have to register his or her phone number and Aadhar card details. Then, the passenger has to take a selfie, add vaccination details and scan the boarding pass, it said.

Opp asks PM to look inwards after he hails nari shakti in I-Day speech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Monday called out Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he hailed 'nari shakti' in his Independence Day speech, asking him to look inwards and at his party's attitude towards women.

Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort, Modi urged people to pledge not to do anything that lowers the dignity of women, saying a mentality to insult them in speech and behaviour has crept in.

TMC MP Derek O'Brien reminded the Prime Minister of the "Didi o Didi" comment made by him on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during an election rally in the State.

"Let's pledge to wipe out misogyny," said Prime Minister @narendramodi today. Completely agree, Sir. Should we start with you, leading by example," wrote O'Brien on Twitter, attaching a video of Modi making the reference to Mamata in his speech.

Congress leader Pawan Khera too posted a video compilation of the



Prime Minister's remarks on women, including comments made on the floor of the House, on Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury in the Rajya Sabha over her laughter which was condemned as being 'sexist', his comment on Mamata and the "50-crore girlfriend" remark about Congress leader Shashi Tharoor's wife, Sunanda Pushkar.

"If anyone needs the most to take a pledge to respect women, then it is this person," wrote Khera referring to the video. Shiv Sena leader and Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said Modi's words did not match the actions on the ground. "If we look at Maharashtra not having any woman in cabinet with even the women and

child portfolios being handed by male ministers. Even the labour force participation is rapidly decreasing and the government is not able to address them, she said. There is also the matter of 33 per cent reservation being championed by the BJP, and despite having a full majority, it has not been implemented. So, those are the issues that we are looking at in 25 years from now. We also have to look at how policies have impacted the women on ground," Chaturvedi said. She also referred to the 'Sulli and Bulli deals' incident in which women were berated and auctioned on social media.

CPI general secretary D Raja urged the PM to examine the attitude of his own party men with regards to women. "It is not just about women. All humans should be treated with respect in society. This is not happening because the mindset is being controlled by a party which believes in the Manusmriti, patriarchy and caste system. This government has the numbers in both the Houses of Parliament, yet they have not passed the women reservation bill.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hailing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech as "invigorating", Union Ministers and BJP leaders on Monday said he set the vision for a "Param Vaibhav Bharat" and reiterated his commitment towards women empowerment and fight against corruption.

Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah said it inspires every Indian to contribute towards making the country prosperous.

"PM Shri @narendramodi gave a wonderful speech from the Red Fort. It inspires every Indian to contribute towards making a prosperous India," Shah tweeted.

Shah said the Prime Minister reiterated his commitment towards women empowerment and asserted



Prime Minister Narendra Modi said from the Red Fort are: respect for women and people's campaign against corruption in the country. Every Indian has to come forward for an effective fight against corruption," Singh said.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal described Modi's speech as "invigorating". It will galvanise us for the 25 years of 'Amrit Kaal'.

"As we mark Independence Day, an aspirational India dreams big.

It is at the cusp of a renaissance helping us realise our glorious destiny and role as a fountainhead of hope for the world," Goyal added.

BJP Yuva Morcha president Tejasvi Surya said it was a different Modi during the speech.

And he was "more audacious, more hopeful and more aggressive."

Executive, legislature, judiciary equal repositories of Constitutional trust: CJI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India NV Ramana on Monday said the executive, legislature and the judiciary are "equal repositories" of constitutional trust, and the Constitution dispels the notion that delivery of justice is the responsibility of courts only. The CJI, who hoisted the national flag at the Supreme Court premises here on the 76th Independence Day, referred to Article 38 of the Constitution on the Directive Principles of State Policy and said it was the responsibility of the State to secure a social order in which "justice, social, economic and political," are rendered.

"Under the constitutional framework, each organ has been given a unique obligation. The notion that justice is only the responsibility of the court

is dispelled by Article 38 of the Indian Constitution which mandates the State to secure justice: social, economic and political. Every deed of each organ of the State has to be in the spirit of the Constitution. I must note that all the three organs of the State, i.e., the executive, legislature and the judiciary, are equal repositories of constitutional trust," he said.

The CJI said the apex court gives strength to pursue disputes to the citizens and they know that it would stand with them when things go wrong. He said the judicial system goes by the commitment to the written Constitution and enjoys immense faith reposed by the people. "The legislature may not be able to foresee the issues which might come up during the implementation. By interpretation of statutes, the courts have given effect to the true intent of the legislature. The

courts have breathed life into the statutes, by making them relevant to contemporary times," CJI Ramana said.

Our judicial system is unique not only because of its commitment to the written Constitution and its spirit but also because of the immense faith reposed by the people in the system, he said. "People are confident that they will get relief and justice from the judiciary. It gives them the strength to pursue a dispute. They know that when things go wrong, the judiciary will stand by them. The Indian Supreme Court is the guardian of the Constitution in the world's largest democracy," he said.

The CJI referred to the Constitution and its schemes including Article 142 and said they give wide-ranging powers and jurisdiction to the Supreme Court to do complete justice. The Indian judiciary, since its

inception, has strived to fulfill the constitutional aspirations and, through interpretative exercise, has also strengthened various independent institutions, be it the Election Commission, CVC, CAG and so on, he said.

The CJI referred to constitutional schemes, rules, regulations and judgments in responding to the statement of Supreme Court Bar Association president Vikas Singh that the collegiums, especially the high court collegiums, did not consider the "best" candidates for the judgeship in higher judiciary. The SCBA has been seeking the appointment of Supreme Court lawyers as high court judges.

"We all know. You all are constitutional lawyers and you know the procedures of the appointment of judges. You know the rules, regulations, the judgements, everything and



on several occasions he (SCBA president) has raised the issue. I do not want to elaborate," the CJI said.

He highlighted the contributions of lawyers in framing the Constitution and laying the foundation of independent India whose citizens are shaping the global future by occupying key positions across the world. Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju and bar leaders led by SCBA president Vikas Singh and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta attended the event.

5 cr selfies with Tiranga posted on Govt website, says Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Culture on Monday said more than five crore selfies with the Indian flag have been uploaded on the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign website so far and termed it a "stupendous achievement".

In a stupendous achievement, more than five crore 'Tiranga' selfies have been uploaded on the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' website," the ministry said in a statement.

As India embarks on its 76th year of Independence, wrapping up the 75 week countdown to August 15, 2022

was the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' initiative of the government driven by the nodal ministry for 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' --

the Ministry of Culture, the statement said.

The achievement of five crore 'Tiranga' selfies has been achieved this afternoon at around 4 pm, thanks to the participation of everyone across India and the world celebrating this special moment in India's history, it said.

Grand celebrations were held at the Red Fort by the government to mark the 76th Independence Day as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' with Prime Minister Narendra Modi sharing the roadmap for the next 25 years -- 'Amrit Kaal', it said.

The prime minister had given a call on July 22 to join the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' movement by hoisting or displaying



the national flag at homes. The Culture Ministry, the nodal agency for the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', had also appealed to people upload selfies or photographs with 'Tiranga' on the campaign's website.

The commemoration of 75 years of India's Independence started on March 12, 2021 as a 75-week countdown to August 15, 2022 and will continue till August 15, 2023, it said.

Desi howitzer used for 21-gun salute

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An Indian-designed-and-manufactured howitzer was for the first time used for the customary 21-gun salute at Red Fort before Prime Minister Narendra Modi commenced his address to the nation on Monday. The PM mentioned this achievement in his speech and saluted the armed forces for supporting his vision for a self-reliant India.

"The sound that we always wanted to hear, we are hearing it after 75 years. It is after 75 years that the tricolour has got the ceremonial salute at the Red Fort for the first time from a made-in-India gun," Modi said in his address to the nation.

The Prime Minister also spoke about the indigenously manufactured Brahmos supersonic missile. In January, India inked the first export order with the Philippines for the missile system. The order is

worth over 375 million dollars.

BrahMos Aerospace, an India-Russian joint venture, produces supersonic cruise missiles that can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or land platforms. Some other countries have also shown interest in procuring the Brahmos missiles.

As regards the 'desi gun,' so far, British guns have been used for the ceremonial salute. Also, for the first time, MI-17 helicopters showered flowers at the Red Fort during Independence Day celebrations. Modi said all Indians will get inspired and feel empowered on hearing this made-in-India gun roar. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has designed the howitzer or the Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) under the government's 'Make in India' initiative.

"For the first time after 75 years, the Made-in-India can-

non has saluted the Tricolour from the Red Fort. Will there be any Indian who will not be inspired by this sound? My dear brothers and sisters, today I want to congratulate the soldiers of the army of my country from my heart," Modi said.

"I salute the way the army jawans have shouldered this responsibility of self-reliance in an organised way and with courage...He stands firmly in the middle when there is no gap between death and life," he said.

The Prime Minister also talked about the decision of the armed forces to not import around 300 items. "The resolution of our country is not small when the armed forces make a list and decide not to import 300 defence products," he said. "In this resolution, I can see the seed of a bright future of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' that will convert this dream into a banyan tree. Salute! Salute! Salute to my army officers!"



Modi said.

The prime minister said India is becoming a manufacturing hub and that people from around the world are coming to the country to try their luck.

"Which Indian wouldn't be proud when our Brahmos is exported to the world? Today the Vande Bharat train and our metro coaches are becoming objects of attraction for the world," he said.

The government has initiated a series of measures in the last few years to boost domestic defence manufacturing.

Indian tricolour flutters at edge of space

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian tricolour was unfurled at the edge of space at an altitude of nearly 30 km by a BalloonSAT launched by an organisation promoting awareness about space sciences in the country.

SpaceKidz, the Chennai-based organisation, shared a video on its social media platforms of the Indian tricolour fluttering away to glory attached to a helium balloon that reached to the edge of space. "We released the BalloonSat on January 27 this year from Chennai. It unfurled the Indian tricolour at an altitude of nearly 30 km," Srimathy Kesan, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Space Kidz India told PTI.

The video was released on Monday to mark the completion of 75 years of



Independence, she said.

Kesan said a GoPro camera attached to the BalloonSat captured the video of the tricolour fluttering in space.

The payload sent into the upper reaches of the atmosphere were recovered after it splashed into the sea.

Space Kidz had encouraged 750 girl students from government schools across the country to develop AzaadiSat, which

was set for launch on August 7 onboard the maiden flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)-D1.

The SSLV-D1 failed to put the AzaadiSat and Earth Observation Satellite-02 in the desired orbit. The mission failed because the SSLV-D1 placed the satellites in an elliptical orbit rather than a circular one, leaving them "unable."

Coronavirus intranasal vaccine proven safe: Bharat Biotech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech on Monday said its intranasal coronavirus vaccine (BBV154) has proven to be safe, well-tolerated and immunogenic in the Phase-3 clinical trials.

In a statement here, the Hyderabad pharma firm said that the vaccine, designated BBV154, was tested on 3,100 subjects across 14 locations in India. The booster jab of BBV154 was tested on 875 subjects who had received the two doses of Covid-19 vaccines used in India. The trials were conducted in 9 trial sites across India.

The vaccine candidate was evaluated earlier in phase I and II clinical trials with successful results.

BBV154 has been specifically formulated to allow intranasal delivery. In addition, the nasal delivery system has been designed and developed to be cost-effective in low and middle-income countries, a press release from the vaccine maker said.



BBV154 was developed in partnership with Washington University St Louis, which had designed and developed the recombinant adenoviral vectored constructs and evaluated them in preclinical studies for efficacy.

Product development related to pre-clinical safety evaluation, large-scale manufacturing scale-up, formulation, and delivery device development, including human clinical trials, was conducted by Bharat Biotech, the statement added.

The Centre partially funded product development and clinical trials through the Department of Biotechnology's, COVID Suraksha programme.

Two separate and simultaneous clinical trials were conducted to evaluate BBV154 as a primary dose (2-dose) sched-

ule and a heterologous booster dose for subjects who have previously received 2 doses of the two commonly administered Covid vaccines in India.

Suchitra K Ella, Joint Managing Director, Bharat Biotech, said, "On this Independence Day, we are proud to announce successful completion of clinical trials for BBV154 intranasal vaccine. We stay committed and focused on innovation and product development; this is yet another achievement for the multidisciplinary teams at Bharat Biotech." If approved, the intranasal vaccine will make it easier to deploy in mass immunisation campaigns with an easy to administer formulation and delivery device, she further said.

Heterologous booster dose studies were conducted for safety and immunogenicity in approximately 875 subjects, where a booster dose (3rd dose) of BBV154 intranasal vaccine was administered to study participants who were previously vaccinated with licensed COVID vaccines.

TTP recaptures areas in Swat district, Pak Army planning air raids

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

With the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) recapturing areas in Swat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and abducting scores of Pak army personnel post the killing of Al Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Pakistan army is planning to carry out air raids on the Balochs to check rebellion in its ranks.

The TTP, dominated by the Afghan origin Pashtuns, has launched Operation Al Badr to target the Pakistani security forces and reoccupy territory in Swat in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region of Pakistan.

The issue of the possible airstrike was discussed by Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa with the British authorities during his visit for the passing out parade of the British army, said prominent security analysts.

The issue of carrying out air raids on the Baloch liberation fighters has gained currency following the killing of a



Lt Gen Sarfaraj Ali when the Baloch fighters hit a military helicopter in which he was travelling, reports said.

Since the air raids on the Balochs invite criticism from the Western world, the Pakistani establishment is seeking to preempt such moves by taking up the issue with the British authorities, the analysts said.

Earlier, the US had relied on the Pakistan army for its war on terror but Islamabad had sheltered then Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden for over a decade after he masterminded in the twin tower attacks in New York that took a toll of 3,000 in 2001.

CCPD directs BIS not to transfer scientist till ward completes 12th

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

To ensure that education of an adolescent girl does not get hampered due to the sudden transfer of her handicapped father, the office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) has directed the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to not transfer its Chennai-based senior scientist, a locomotor disabled, to Mumbai till his ward completes her Class 12th exams next year.

Court Commissioner Upma Srivastava in her order issued on June 28, 2022 also warned the BIS that failing to comply with its court order will result in referring the case to Parliament. The Office of the CCPD was set up under Section 57 of The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation) Act, 1995, passed by Parliament.

The BIS is a statutory body working under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public distribution. The Court has been constituted following the Parliament

Suffering with locomotor disability, complainant Balakrishnan, E-grade Scientist with the BIS had approached the Court against the 'sudden transfer' order by the BIS, stating that the move would cause him hardship as his daughter was at the prime phase of her education career.

As his daughter is in Class 12th, he wants to remain in Chennai or can be shifted near-

er to his hometown, the senior scientist, a single parent, said, adding that his 93-year-old father is also totally dependent on him, said the complainant. In response, Sachidananda Kumar, Scientist C, Deputy Director on behalf of the BIS had submitted that the decision for transfer of the complainant along with 85 other officers was taken by the placement committee constituted by the competent authority of the Bureau.

"Transfer of the complainant was affected during the annual rotational transfer exercise only, considering the volume of work being dealt by the Bureau which has increased manifold and optimum utilization of manpower being the primary requirement," he added.

Kumar also submitted that the complainant has been posted at his hometown or near his hometown almost throughout his entire career with the Bureau till date after considering his physical condition.

To this, Balakrishnan argued that his is "not in the sensitive post.... As per transfer policy, he is not due for transfer as his daughter is studying in 12th Class."

However, disposing off the case in favour of Balakrishnan, the Court said the "respondent (BIS) shall also file the Implementation report of this recommendation order within 3 months of the date of this recommendation failing which, this Court shall presume that the respondent has not implemented this Recommendation and the matter shall be reported to the Parliament."

I dream of India where no one goes hungry: Mamata

First fend off ED, CBI and then dream for India, says BJP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after her senior Cabinet colleague Partha Chatterjee and his close aide Aripa Mukherjee were arrested for keeping unexplained ₹50 crore in cash and her senior party leader and national executive member Anubrata Mondal was picked up by the CBI for his alleged role in cattle smuggling case, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said she has dream of an India which is free from hunger, where women could live without fear and children could see the light of education.

Taking to the Twitter on the occasion of 75th anniversary of India's Independence Banerjee wrote, "I have a dream for India! For the people, I want to build a nation where no one goes hungry, where no woman feels unsafe, where every child sees the light of education, where all are treated equally, where no oppressive



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hoists the national flag during 76th Independence Day celebrations, at Red Road in Kolkata on Monday

forces divide the people & harmony defines the day," adding it was her "promise "it is my promise to the people of this great nation that I shall strive everyday for our dream India." In a statement that once again tended to speak about her pan Indian plans Banerjee who had suddenly withdrawn into a shell following the arrests of two of her senior party members — Chatterjee TMCstrongman Mondal—on Monday sounded more assertive writing about her pan Indian design plans.

While a senior Left politician said her latest tweet "is aimed at the national opposi-

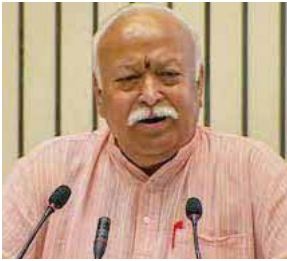
tion parties — asking them not to write her off in the race of leadership when it comes to opposition unity — but she has lost that chance after Partha Chatterjee's arrest and more so after she openly supported Anubrata Mondal who is named in cattle smuggling." The BJP leadership went a step ahead asking her first to "fend off Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation and then dream for India." Senior saffron leader Dilip Ghosh said how "the CM herself appealed to her supporters from a public meeting in Behala to remain by her side if she were to be arrested.

India needs to be self-reliant: Mohan Bhagwat

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Monday said India got freedom after a lot of struggle and it needs to be self-reliant.

Addressing a gathering at the RSS headquarters in Maharashtra's Nagpur city after hoisting the national flag on India's 76th Independence Day, Bhagwat said the country will give the message of peace to the world. He also said people should think what they can give to the country rather than ask what the country or society is giving them. "Today is the day of pride and resolution. The country got freedom after a lot of struggle, it needs to be self-reliant. Those who want to be independent need to become self-reliant in everything," he said. Bhagwat said the RSS has worked for creating an awareness about "desh bhakti" (patriotism) and imbining it in the people of the country. "You need to maintain relations with the world but on your own terms, and for it you need to become that capable. Those who want



to be independent should also become capable in respect of their security," he said. Bhagwat said the tricolour tells us how the country should be and how it will be when it becomes big in the world. "That country will not rule over others, it will spread love across the world and sacrifice for the interest of the world," he said. In the coming times, till such a nation is built, people should not ask what the country and society gives them, but should think what they are giving to the country. "You should leave this question and ask yourself what I am giving to my country and society. Amid our own progress, we should live our lives thinking about the progress of the country and society, this is what is needed," he said.

Committed to fulfilling promise of 20L jobs, says Nitish Kumar

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday asserted that his new Government was not only committed to fulfilling the promise of 10 lakh jobs, made by his deputy Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, but would like to exceed the employment generation target twice over.

The "historic announcement, made on a historic day", was applauded by Yadav, who has returned as the deputy CM after five years and was among those present at the Independence Day function. Delivering an extempore speech, Kumar turned towards Yadav and said, "We are together and we have this concept of 10 lakh jobs. We will do it. I would say, we shall be aiming for 20 lakh jobs. We will make efforts to achieve this target through both government and private sectors." The young deputy CM told reporters afterwards exultingly, "It is a historic decision made by the chief minister on a historic occasion. There can be no bigger issue today than job creation. It should silence those who were questioning what happened to my promise." The RJD leader had promised 10 lakh jobs during



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav during a 76th Independence Day function, in Patna on Monday

the assembly polls of 2020. Kumar, who last week dumped BJP in a stunning political manoeuvre, also took a veiled dig at his former ally, speaking about the futility of a population law and the efficacy of better education of women for achieving an improved fertility rate. "What was the experience of China after it introduced population law? It has since been always revising the num-

ber of children it will allow its citizens to have. We had statistical data to suggest fertility rates declined in women with a high level of education. We worked in that direction and we are close to achieving our target," he said. The need for population control through legislation was one of the many issues on which Kumar's JD(U) fought with the BJP until the two parties parted ways.

Insulting to call welfare schemes as freebies: KCR

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao on Monday tore into the ruling BJP at the Centre over the freebies debate, alleging it was "insulting" to dub welfare schemes as freebies.

Rao, the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) supremo, also launched a broadside against the NDA government at the Centre, alleging it was hurting federal values, weakening states financially and also centralising powers.

KCR, as Rao is known, charged the Centre with imposing enormous burden on the poor and middle classes by imposing taxes on various products, including milk and construction of graveyards.

Wading into the row over freebies, the Chief Minister said, "people's welfare is the primary responsibility of the governments." "It is blame-worthy that the Centre, without properly fulfilling that responsibility, is insulting by calling welfare schemes as freebies," Rao

said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recently said freebies are a spoke in India's effort to become self-reliant and also a burden on taxpayer and criticised some opposition parties for engaging in the politics of freebies. Further, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had hit out at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for giving a "perverse twist" to the debate on freebies, saying the AAP leader putting education and health in that category is an attempt to create fear in the minds of the poor. In his Independence Day address after hoisting the national flag at the historic Golconda Fort here, Rao said the makers of the nation's Constitution put in place a federal structure as they wanted the Centre and states together to lead the march of progress. "The present Central government in Delhi is hurting federal values.

Odisha gears up preparations to deal with 'medium flood' in Mahanadi basin

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government is gearing up its preparation to deal with a 'medium flood' in the Mahanadi river basin even as several areas across districts have been inundated due to heavy rain over the last few days, officials said on Monday. Chief Secretary SC Mohapatra held a meeting during the day to review the preparedness of the district administrations to tackle the situation, they said.

The water level in the river is gradually rising due to downpour in the upper catchment areas in Chhattisgarh after a depression moved in the north-west direction, the CS said.

The situation has been aggravated by heavy rainfall in the western districts of the state, he said. "We are expecting that 10.5 lakh cusec water will flow through Mundali barrage near Cuttack by Monday evening, which may cause a medium flood in the delta region," the chief secretary said. Collectors of districts concerned have been asked to remain on alert and monitor the situation.



People hold a giant national flag with 630ft as its length, 205ft as its breadth and 3600 sq-ft as area of its Ashok Chakra on the occasion of the 76th Independence Day, in Kolar on Monday

Over 500 participate in marathon on I-Day in Nilgiris

PNS ■ WELLINGTON/NILGIRIS

Brigadier Sunil Kumar Yadav, the athletic commandant of MRC Wellington led the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations on Monday by felicitating ex-soldiers and organising a mini marathon for the Army personnel to promote national integration along with spirit of healthy life style. More than 500 participants including women and children took part in the marathon covering varied distances of 5 km to 10 km. Winners were issued certificates and souvenirs.

The event turned out to be a memorable day for the retired and serving personnel and their family members as the Wellington establishment is a major hub of peacetime Army operations and the bond among the Thambis remain as unique and strong despite the years, according to Brigadier Yadav, who himself took part in the marathon.



Six Bihar cops suspended for allowing Anand Mohan house visit

PTI ■ SAHARSA/PATNA

Six police personnel in a North Bihar district were on Monday suspended in connection with an embarrassing incident involving controversial politician Anand Mohan who was taken to the State capital in judicial custody and allegedly allowed to visit his residence there.

According to a statement issued by the district police, the suspensions have been ordered by Lipi Singh, the Saharsa superintendent of police, who was directed by the Police Headquarters to inquire into a photograph of Anand Mohan that had gone viral on social media.

Mohan, who is serving life sentence for the murder of IAS officer G Krishnaiah, was brought to Patna last week to be produced before a court, said the Saharsa police, adding that departmental action has been ordered against all the suspended policemen.

A photograph in which he can be seen flanked on either side by wife Lovely Anand and son Chetan Anand, who is an RJD MLA, went viral two days after the visit, drawing sharp reactions from the BJP which declared it as "return of jungle raj". "The convicted father of a ruling party MLA is roaming freely.

Bilkis Bano case: All 11 life term convicts released under Guj Govt's remission policy

Godhra: All the eleven convicts sentenced to life imprisonment in the 2002 post-Godhra Bilkis Bano gang rape case on Monday walked out of the Godhra sub-jail after the Gujarat government allowed their release under its remission policy, an official said. A special CBI court in Mumbai on January 21, 2008, sentenced the eleven accused to life imprisonment on the charge of gang rape and murder of seven members of Bilkis Bano's family. Their conviction was later upheld by the Bombay High Court. These convicts had served more than 15 years in jail after

which one of them approached the Supreme Court with a plea for his premature release. The apex court had directed the Gujarat government to look into the issue of remission of his sentence following which the government formed a committee, said Panchmahals Collector Sujal Mayatra, who headed the panel. "A committee formed a few months back took a unanimous decision in favour of remission of all the 11 convicts in the case. The recommendation was sent to the state government, and yesterday we received the orders for their release," said Mayatra.

Karnataka Cong takes out mega 'Freedom March' in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Congress on Monday took out a mega 'Freedom March' in the city to commemorate 75 years of independence with thousands of people participating from various parts of the state. The march is being led by senior party leaders, including former chief minister Siddaramaiah, All India Congress Committee general secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala, party state chief D K Shivakumar, his brother and MP D K Suresh, and former state unit president Dinesh Gundu Rao. It would pass through

important routes including Anand Rao Circle, Freedom Park, Corporation, Town Hall, Minerva Circle, VV Puram and from there to the National College Ground, a party worker said. National flags were placed all across the way as people walked from Sangolli Rayanna's statue near the Bengaluru City Railway Station and the march would culminate in a public meeting at the National College Ground in Basavanagudi. The event is seen as a show of strength by the Congress ahead of state Assembly elections next year.

2 hurt in clash between TRS, BJP cadre during 'padayatra'

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Two persons suffered injuries when a clash broke out between the supporters of the ruling TRS and the BJP during state BJP president and MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar's ongoing 'padayatra' in Jangaon district of Telangana on Monday. The clash, including stone-pelting, occurred at Devarupalla in the district and two persons suffered minor injuries, police said. Both sides are expected to lodge complain with the police on the incident, they said. Kumar, who resumed his

'padayatra' after the incident, alleged that "TRS goons" pelted stones leaving two BJP activists injured. "TRS goons pelted stones leaving 2 @BJP4Telangana karyakartas injured during #PrajaSangramaYatra3 at Devarupalla on #IndependenceDay. "Is this Gandhian politics preached by TRS?", he tweeted. Though BJP is peacefully carrying out the 'padayatra', the TRS is creating unrest, he said. Alleging that "police behaved like TRS karyakartas", the State BJP president said he spoke to DGP M Mahendar

Reddy and sought immediate action on the incident. Meanwhile, State Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao, who spoke to reporters at Jangaon, said the BJP should say as to what it has done for people. Observing that a lot of development has taken place during the TRS regime, he said Sanjay Kumar should first understand the welfare and development that took place on the ground. Kumar began the third phase of his 'padayatra' on August 2 from the temple town of Yadadri.

Chhattisgarh: 5 of family killed in house wall collapse in Kanker after heavy rain

Kanker: A couple and their three children were killed on Monday after a wall of their house collapsed in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district which has been witnessing incessant rains since the last two days, officials said. The incident took place in the morning at Irpanar village in Pakhanjore area when Parimal Malik, his wife and their three children were sleeping in their mud house, Kanker Collector Priyanka Shukla said. As per preliminary infor-

mation, a wall of the house crashed on them. All the five family members died on the spot, she said. After being alerted, a team of the district administration and police officials went to the spot on a boat as the area has been cut off from the main road due to the overflowing Korenar river, the official said. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel expressed grief over the incident and directed Kanker district administration to provide compensation to the

victims' family under provisions of Revenue Book Circular (RBC), a government statement said. Shukla said officials have been directed to provide compensation to the kin of the deceased under the RBC provisions. The collector and Kanker Superintendent of Police Shalabh Sinha also went to Pakhanjore, which witnessed heavy downpour in the last two days affecting normal life, to assess the situation.

Speeding truck kills five 'padayatri pilgrims', injures four in Pali in Raj

Jodhpur: Five pilgrims died and four were injured as a truck ran over them during their 'padayatra' in Rajasthan's Pali district early on Monday, police said. The pilgrims were walking from Bhilwara to a temple in Jaisalmer's Ramdevra. The accident took place at around 1 am when they were crossing the road to get some food in Rohat police station limits, the police said. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla expressed grief over the incident. "The death of people

going from Bhilwara's Raipur area to Ramdevra is very sad," he said. Birla, MP from the state's Kota-Bundi seat, also wished a speedy recovery of those injured. Rohat police station SHO Uday Singh said while three pilgrims Pappu, Girdhari and Pawan died on the spot, two others Sushila and Paras succumbed to injuries at the hospital in Jodhpur, he said. The four injured — Narayan, Jagdish, Balu and Mukesh — are under treatment, he said.

Property dispute: Man kills father, two sisters

Baghpat: A man in his 20s killed his father and two sisters over a property dispute in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat district, police said on Monday. The accused was identified as Amar alias Lakshay, they said. Superintendent of Police Neeraj Jadaun said a few days ago Amar's father Brijpal (60), a resident of Chaudharan Patti in the Baraut police station area, dispossessed his son from his property owing to his wrong activities.

Angry over this, Amar killed his father and sisters Anuradha (17) and Jyoti (24) using a sharp-edged weapon on Sunday night, he said. Amar's mother informed police about the incident on Monday morning, the SP said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem, he said. A case has been registered against the accused who is on the run, the SP said, adding efforts are on to nab him.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

India, a developed nation

In I-Day speech, PM talked about five pledges. People can honour these pledges, but can politicians too?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech is important for spelling out a big ambition: making India a developed nation by 2047. He has unfolded a long-term roadmap for the government as well as the people, which lays out several goals for the next 25 years. He talked about five pledges for 2047: having developed India, removing any sign of servility, pride in heritage, unity, and fulfilling our duties. The five pledges are part of the same continuum; each of them is linked with the others. Similarly, the goals that are to be achieved with the five pledges are also intertwined with each other. A developed nation is not just one with a high per capita income; that is the necessary but not the sufficient condition. A developed nation is also predicated upon the individual liberty of and equality among citizens. It is a well-known fact that the developed nations, which are mostly Western, are not just the richest with citizens enjoying high standards of living; they are also the freest countries in the world. In those countries, people can say and do anything, however weird, so long as they don't hurt or bother others. This is the reason that people from India and other countries want to go and settle in Canada, the US, the UK, Australia, and other developed nations. India can also become one such, provided the political class and the society strive to eradicate servility and the conditions that generate it.



Pride in heritage, unity, and a feeling of responsibility to carry out our duties will make our country stronger, confident, and resilient. PM Modi is an inspiring leader, whose charisma wins elections and stimulates people to participate meaningfully in public life. There is no doubt that people at large would respond enthusiastically to his call for making India a developed nation. The real problem, however, lies with politicians. Will they, including those in the Bharatiya Janata Party, follow his exhortations in letter and spirit? One is not very sure of the answer. The Central Government has tried to be fiscally prudent as much as possible, even during the most trying corona times; it has never succumbed to the appeals made by economists and experts before every Union Budget that the government of the day should commence on a spending spree because 'this time it is different.' Every year there is some pretext or the other for indulging in profligacy. The Modi Government has never bitten that bait. Modi has also started speaking against freebies, something which has been opposed by many anti-BJP leaders, especially Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. But, unfortunately, not BJP government in states has shown much initiative to stop freebies and moderate populism; at least there is nothing on the record to suggest that. In short, while the people of India will honour the pledges Modi wants them to take, one is not sure about politicians' sincerity on that count.

PICTALK



Students of Anjuman Islam College take a selfie to mark the 76th Independence Day

PTI

The menace of trafficking

Despite several measures, human trafficking goes on unabated.

It must be the Govt's priority to check this inhumane trade

Human trafficking in India isn't new and has been going on for a long time. In recent years, a large number of cases have been reported from abroad. Most of these trafficked victims are sent to Gulf countries on the pretext of giving jobs but they find themselves locked up in small shanties and forced to work as domestic helps, and pushed into prostitution. Many young girls are forced into marriages. Nonconsensual organ donation is also rampant. Most of the victims are women and children below age 15. As per Government data in 2022, the Indian Mission in Kuwait alone received 1,637 human trafficking-related complaints by domestic workers till June. It had received 2,390 such complaints by domestic workers in 2021. The number of cases reported is definitely much lesser than the actual figures. All the victims are semi-literate, people from poor backgrounds, mostly from Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Andhra, and Telangana. Officially the number of cases has come down but that may not be the right picture as the conviction rate has fallen sharply from 27 per cent in 2016 to 10 per cent in 2020.



It is also reflected in the US Government's annual report, in which India figures in the Tier-2 category in 2022. This category has countries that aren't doing enough to stop human trafficking. Nearly 65 per cent are females; and we aren't even talking about the women trafficked within India. Though the Government has also taken many measures in the interest of migrant workers, including registration and submission of details of the job they are going for etc, but the trafficking cartels are always able to circumvent and the low conviction rate emboldens them further. The Government of India has signed many agreements with the countries where the maximum number of people are sent. Despite these agreements, the situation hasn't changed much. For that, a victim has to file a complaint which is often not feasible. He or she is in the custody of the handler who is not only powerful but also has a say in the system. There are several laws to deal with and book the culprits for trafficking like the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956, and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. Provisions have been added to Section 370 and 370 (A) of the Indian Penal Code to deal with human trafficking. But then making laws is one thing and implementing them quite another.

CWG: Coming off with flying colours!

Indian sportspersons have done the nation proud with their exceptional performance in Birmingham Commonwealth Games

Indian athletes performed well in the recently concluded Birmingham Commonwealth Games (CWG) by securing a tally of 22 gold, 16 silver, and 23 bronze medals and fourth position after Australia, England and Canada. The Ernakulam-born Navyman, 25-year-old Eldhose Paul won a historic triple jump gold and became the sixth Indian to win a CWG gold since legendary Milkha Singh won it in 1958 in 440 yards. India bagged four medals on the concluding day of the athletics competition coming within 30 minutes and the medal tally from Athletics swelled to eight - 1 gold, 4 silver, and 3 bronze which is the best in the CWG history outside the country and only second to the haul at the 2010 edition in Delhi.

The Indian women's hockey team overcame the stopwatch controversy to beat New Zealand 2-1 and win the bronze medal. PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen achieved gold in women's and men's singles in Badminton. A total of 215 athletes represented India in 15 disciplines. Almost all states and Union territories were represented, among which Haryana with 39 athletes had the highest representation followed by Punjab (26), Tamil Nadu (17), and Maharashtra and Delhi (14 each).

India has its own geography of sports. The medal prospects come in a wide range of sports, each of which enjoys popularity in a different region. The northern states of Haryana and Delhi had a representation in contact sports like Judo, Wrestling, and Boxing. Haryana has excelled by producing some of the best Indian athletes across events such as Boxing, Track & Field events, and Cycling. In the women's hockey team which narrowly missed out on an Olympic medal, eight women in the squad of 18 were from Haryana. Several boxers and wrestlers like Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik, and Jasmine Lamnoriya have many medals. The southern states of Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala have a



talent in Racquet sports such as Badminton, Squash, and Table Tennis. The sportspersons from this region distinguished themselves by achieving recent successes. Badminton stars PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth come from Telangana and at least seven squash players and five table tennis players come from Tamil Nadu. In North-East, Assam, having the 15th highest population in India and almost negligible resources in comparison to Haryana and Tamil Nadu, sent seven athletes to Birmingham. Andaman & Nicobar Islands with a population of four lakhs has done remarkably well in cycling by giving Esow Alben, the first Indian cyclist to reach the top 10 of the world rankings. Analysing the sports scenario and the performance of athletes, it is clear that most of the star athletes who performed well come from humble family backgrounds, and if better facilities are provided to our youth their performance can be improved. Reacting to a report submitted by the amicus curiae, senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan suggested that the 'narrow' phase 'sport' be replaced by 'physical literacy' which is a term "firmly established as right in

MOST OF THE STAR ATHLETES WHO PERFORMED WELL COME FROM HUMBLE FAMILY BACKGROUNDS, AND IF BETTER FACILITIES ARE PROVIDED TO OUR YOUTH, THEIR PERFORMANCE CAN BE IMPROVED

the leading sporting nations of the world", the Supreme Court has asked the Centre and States to respond to a report recommending sports to be expressly made a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution. A bench led by Justice L. Nageshwar Rao had directed the Centre to respond to the report's view to establishing a 'National Physical Literacy Mission' to "give effect to the right by establishing and implementing a responsibilities matrix that includes curriculum design, compliance monitoring and review, grievances redress and self-correction mechanisms". "All school boards, including CBSE, ICSE, State Boards, IB, IGCSE, should be directed to ensure that from the academic year, at least 90 minutes of every school day will be dedicated to free play and games", Mr Sankaranarayanan's report in the apex court recommended. He suggested that the State government ought to ensure that from the current academic year, "all non-residential colleges and schools should compulsorily allow access during non-working hours to neighbourhood children to use sports facilities for free, subject to basic norms of

identification, security, and care". The report further emphasized that 180 days' time should be given to educational institutions to publish a 'Physical Literacy Policy' and create a committee to address cases where there is a failure in responsibilities to deliver the right to physical literacy of students.

Moreover, the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) emphasized on sports to be given due importance in the newly introduced inter-disciplinary pattern of education. Sports should be integral and made a compulsory part of education because it helps in developing good health, discipline, team spirit, and character building. A module including credits on Entrepreneurship, sports, life coping and communication skills should be worked out and should be made mandatory for all students right from high school onwards. The central and state governments should invest more and more in sports. Haryana is a living example to follow.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PORTFOLIO DISTRIBUTION IN MAHARASHTRA

Sir — Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde distributed portfolios, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) getting several key ministries, including the Home and Finance that will be handled by Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis. Shinde kept Urban Development and 11 other ministries with himself. Had taken oath as the chief minister on June 30 with the support of the BJP. Fadnavis was sworn in as his deputy.

In addition to Home and Finance and Planning, Fadnavis will also handle Law and Judiciary, Water Resources, Housing, Energy and Protocol portfolios. Another important portfolio — the Revenue Department — has been given to BJP leader Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, who had quit the Congress a few months before the 2019 Assembly elections to join the saffron party. Apart from the Urban Development Department, CM Shinde has kept with himself General Administration Department, Public Works Department (public sector undertakings), Information and Public Relations, Transport, Marketing, Social Justice, Disaster Management, Relief and Rehabilitation, Soil and Water Conservation, Environment and Climate Change and Minority Development. With this it has to be seen that how it works in coming months for the benefit of the Maharashtra and its people.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

CHINESE MANJHA MENACE

Sir — This refers to 'Spirits run high but 'Chinese manjha' threat cuts deep' (Aug 14). Chinese manjha is famous for cutting kites but this manjha is menace to birds, animals and human lives. Notwithstanding being banned by the government people youngsters and children don't drag their feet and desist from buying this Chinese manjha. They are in high spirits on the occasion of Sankranti and some particular occasions as 15 August and 26th January etc. There are great and stupendous kite flying competitions and festival all over

Vande Matram deserves credit



Even as we celebrate the Azadi Ka Amrit Mohotsav, the song Vande Mataram — that had a glorious background of our freedom movement, seems almost forgotten today.

Though the name of the great novelist and writer Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay is still somewhat in the minds of the people of my time but it is difficult to say that how much the present generation has come to know him. It may be surprising to hear but it is a fact that today even after 75 years of independence, Vande Mataram song is not well appreciated by the present generation. The history of India's freedom struggle is by far inspired by Vande Mataram song. Though the song was composed in 1875 or 1876 and was published in a monthly publi-

cation in 1881. The song has created a great enthusiasm throughout the country. Many young people sacrificed their lives by singing this song. Martyrdom of Khudiram Bose is the fittest example. The lyrics of the song impressed Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore so much that compelled him to compose a tune to the song. Tagore sang the composition in a conference at Calcutta in 1905. Unfortunately Rishi Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was never given due respect. There is a road called Bankim Chatterjee Street in the heart of the Kolkata but that's it. On his birth and death anniversary Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is seen in the news paper paying tribute to him. Prime Minister Modi talked about Ravindra Nath Tagore and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose during the assembly elections in Bengal but he had nothing to say about Rishi Bankim and Vande Mataram.

Unfortunately at a time when the country is celebrating its 75th independence day, the central government has not taken initiative to restore the glory of Vande Mataram.

Deb Prasad Ghosh | Jamshedpur

India. They take delight and indulge in flying kites with Chinese manjha imperiling the lives of birds, animals and humans. They are not mindful of this Chinese menace.

They dump pieces of manjha on the roads endangering the lives of birds, animals and humans. Birds, animals and humans get entangled and succumb to injuries. Mostly birds fall prey to this manjha menace. People and children must be mindful and thoughtful of birds, animals and humans while flying kites. They must take an account of their actions whether they are detrimental to others or not. One must never use 'Chinese manjha'. And also children and adults must bear in mind and be wary that they must not fly kites on the terrace or roof of the buildings without parapet walls.

Zubair Khan | Hyderabad

CLOSED MINDS

Sir - In India debate is seen as a law and order problem and hence censorship is enforced to control the controversy. The attempt to ban books stems from the classificatory sense in which certain objects and opinions does not fit in the logic of the order. Ideas which are considered as threatening to the very root of the country are banned on the labels being erotic, threatening ethnicity and public motives. The ban on books culture threatens the democracy and diversity of India alongwith their freedom of expression. Hence now there is a contradiction between correctness on one side and creativity on the other.

Ashwani Tomar | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

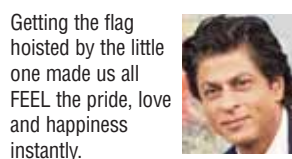
Greetings on this very special Independence Day. Jai Hind!



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



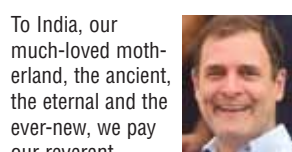
US president — Joe Biden



Actor — Shah Rukh Khan



Cricketer — Sachin Tendulkar




Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

FIRST COLUMN

GOAL OF RAM RAJYA MUST BE FULFILLED

Universal wellbeing is key to Ram Rajya




RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR **NIKUNJ JI**

We all know that India attained its political independence on August 15, 1947. During the period of struggle for independence, the toiling masses of India bared their chests to the volleys of bullets and shed their blood and sacrificed their property and family-life for the emancipation of Mother India. Many mothers lost their sons and many wives lost their husbands.

In fact, it was all a tale of tears on a long and torturous journey to freedom. And yet there was so much enthusiasm and so high was the spirit of people, for all believed that, with the dawn of independence, the days of national humiliation, abject poverty and enormous suffering, caused by foreign domination, would be over and there would ensue an era of human dignity, social and economic justice, self-rule and self-reliance.

Almost all had then the vision of a united, strong, dynamic and prosperous India, which because of its great cultural heritage, would again rise to a place of high esteem among the comity of nations. Ultimately, this strong aspiration for a free India was fulfilled on the midnight of August 15, 1947 but, alas, it was accompanied with the national trauma of partition and the subsequent mass-migrations, communal riots and gory bloodshed.



However, the people thought that this man-made calamity would soon be over and then would usher in the era of Ram Rajya. But, not even a full year had passed by when Babu Gandhi, the father of the nation, the proponent of Ram Rajya, was hit fatally by an assassin's bullet. However, the people did not lose their fond hope; they thought that there were other leaders who, year after year had been swearing by the name of Babu Gandhi, would fulfill the cherished dream of Ram Rajya.

Also, they thought that, since the country had given to itself a Constitution and a system of democratic elections, they would now have a government of the people, by the people and for the people and, so, the days of misery caused by a foreign government would be over. But, it is now being felt by all that such a vision was a mere mirage with there being no real water to quench people's thirst for love, unity, peace and plenty. They felt that the system does not ensure a government for the people and, perhaps, there would be no end to their long travails and tribulations.

Now, it is upon the leaders of today's generation to fulfill their promises. All will give the leaders best wishes for their successes and would give them full co-operation for ending rampant corruption, crime, killings and fissiparous tendencies. But, let everyone of the leaders and the motley crowd read these writings on the wall that firstly, without universal love, feeling of brotherhood, compassion for the deprived and the weaker sections, integrity and purity of mind, nothing can be done for the wellbeing of the people.

Secondly, for cultivating all these qualities, universal spiritual knowledge and meditation are essential. Thirdly, that this is, perhaps, the last chance. If nothing practical is done to raise the moral standard of society even now, then there will really be a deluge — a deluge of tears of the poor and the suffering millions, mixed with bloodshed by fanatics, criminals, communalists and grossly body-conscious people!

Hence, it is high time that we take these lessons, do some heart-searching, throw off the yoke of vices, and change for the better.

(The author is a spiritual educator.)

Saving fertiliser subsidy with DBT

The Government should stop routing subsidies through manufacturers and give these as direct benefit transfer



UTTAM GUPTA

“

IN 2008-09, FERTILISER SUBSIDY HAD CROSSED ₹100,000 CRORE MARK. DURING 2020-21 AND 2021-22, IT WAS ₹138,000 CRORE AND ₹162,000 CRORE, RESPECTIVELY. DURING 2022-23, IT IS EXPECTED TO TOUCH THE ₹250,000 CRORE MARK

”

plurge in fertiliser subsidy in the last three years is giving jitters to policy makers, especially the Union finance ministry, which has to foot the bills. Fertiliser subsidy amounts to payments made to manufacturers or importers to cover the excess of the cost of production/import and distribution over a low maximum retail price (MRP, the price asked by the Union Government to charge from the farmers).

These payments are under two broad categories viz. (i) urea, main source of nitrogen or 'N' supply; (ii) phosphate or 'P' and potash or 'K' fertilizers – commonly known as non-urea fertilizers – popular fertilizer in this category being diammonium phosphate (DAP) and muriate of potash (MOP).

In the case of urea, the Government exercises 'mandatory' control on MRP and reimburses the manufacturers/importers for the excess of the cost of production (C&F landed cost in case of imports) and distribution or 'cost of supply' in short over the MRP as subsidy on a 'unit-specific' basis under the New Pricing Scheme (NPS) in vogue since 2003. As for non-urea fertilizers, it fixes 'uniform' subsidies on a per nutrient basis for all manufacturers and importers under another scheme called the Nutrient Based Scheme (NBS) introduced in 2010.

The two most crucial factors impinging on subsidy are: (i) the cost of supply and (ii) MRP, as subsidy on each ton of fertilizer produced (or imported) and sold is nothing but the difference between the two.

The total quantity of fertilizer sold is the third important factor which when multiplied with subsidy on each ton gives aggregate subsidy payments, as reflected in the budget.

India is overwhelmingly dependent on imports for meeting its fertilizer requirements, the extent of dependence in each fertilizer segment being Phosphate (90 per cent), Potash (100 per cent), Urea (33 per cent), Gas (50 per cent). Their landed cost on Indian shores is determined by an interplay of global demand and supply forces.

Then, there are add-ons such as customs duty (CD), port handling and internal transportation cost in case of fertilizer import in finished form and 'processing cost' (a catch all phrase for raw material or RM cost, interest, depreciation, return on equity; overheads, including wages and salaries, packaging, etc.) in case where fertilizer is produced in India using imported RM. Then, there are taxes and duties.

Apart from CD on imports of non-urea fertilizers and RMs @5 per cent (except rock phosphate and sulphur which attract 2.5 per cent), all fertilizers attract GST* (Goods and Services Tax) @ 5 per cent.

Phosphoric acid and ammonia (RMs used for making non-urea fertilizers

attract GST @ 12 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. Natural gas (it is outside GST) attracts VAT which can go up to a high of 21 per cent, say in Uttar Pradesh.

In view of the above, the cost of supply is largely beyond the control of manufacturers and importers. As for MRP, here again, given the political fallout of any hike, particularly urea, no government dares touch it. How crucial its role is, may be gauged from the following:

In his budget speech for 1998-99, Yashwant Sinha, finance minister under the Vajpayee Government, had proposed an increase of Rs 1,000 per ton in the MRP of urea. However, in a bid to avoid giving an impression that the hike was big, he presented the increase as Re 1 per kg instead of expressing it on a per ton basis, which is the normal practice. But the trick didn't work. Sinha was forced to roll back 50 per cent of the hike on the very next day and balance in less than two weeks.

Believe it or not, for almost two decades since 2002, there has been no increase in urea MRP (sans a marginal 10 per cent hike in 2010). Even for non-urea fertilizers, although the NBS allows for an increase in their selling prices, the Modi Government has de facto put a freeze on them as well since April 2021.

Hamstrung by the above factors, successive governments have helplessly watched fertilizer subsidies rising continuously which has acquired alarming proportions in recent years. Only in 2008-09, it had crossed ₹100,000 crore mark. Now, we see this happening for

three consecutive years. During 2020-21 and 2021-22, the subsidy outgo was ₹138,000 crore and ₹162,000 crore, respectively. During 2022-23, it is expected to touch the ₹250,000 crore mark.

What is the road ahead? The answer is hidden in an analysis by the chief economic advisor (CEA) in the Economic Survey FY 2015-16. According to it, as much as 24 per cent of the subsidy is spent on inefficient producers, 41 per cent is diverted to non-agricultural uses, including smuggling to neighboring countries, and 24 per cent is consumed by larger, presumably richer farmers. That leaves a tiny 11 per cent for small and marginal farmers who should be getting the maximum benefit of the subsidy.

Look at diversion of urea which could be as high as 30 per cent currently notwithstanding the much trumpeted neem coating (since 2015-16, all manufacturers/importers are required to do it). Out of total annual sales of 35 million tons, the quantity that gets diverted hence, doesn't deserve subsidy works out to around 10.5 million ton. Taking the average subsidy per ton of ₹71,400/- (250,000/3.5), eliminating diversion can yield savings of about Rs 75,000 crore.

From total sales, deduct the quantity diverted, we get the quantum of urea actually used by the farmers. This works out to 24.5 million tons (35 – 10.5). Of this, consumption by medium and large farmers (land holding over 2 hectare) is about 25 per cent or 6.1 million tons. If they are excluded from the subsidy scheme, this will

result in savings of about ₹44,000 crore (0.61x71,400).

There is tremendous scope for improving efficiency of fertilizer use. A 10 per cent increase in urea use efficiency translates to savings of 2.45 million tons (24.5x0.1). Taking subsidy of ₹71,400/- on each ton, this will yield savings of about ₹17,500 crore (0.245x71,400).

All put together, it is possible to garner savings of ₹136,500 crore (75,000 + 44,000 + 17,500). But, to get there, the government will require to embrace far reaching pricing and subsidy reforms.

The Government should stop routing subsidies through manufacturers; instead, it may be given as direct benefit transfer (DBT) only to the small and marginal farmers. All suppliers should be free to sell fertilizers at market determined prices. Urea import should be freed even as import of non-urea fertilizers is already free.

This will ensure competition amongst suppliers and survival of the fittest, i.e., those who can supply at low cost. With no subsidized fertilizer in the market (as subsidy goes to farmer's account), diversion will be completely eliminated. Moreover, in view of MRP reflecting fertilizer's true cost, farmers will use them efficiently.

The Government also needs to review the taxes and duties. It makes no sense to impose tax on fertilisers only to be reimbursed as an additional subsidy. Customs duty on all fertiliser imports and RMs used in their making should go. Gas should be brought under GST and put under five per cent slab.



POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE REAL INTENT OF PM TO MARK AUG 14 AS 'PARTITION HORRORS REMEMBRANCE DAY' IS TO USE THE MOST TRAUMATIC EVENTS AS FODDER FOR HIS CURRENT POLITICAL BATTLES. —CONGRESS LEADER JAIRAM RAMESH



TODAY, ON 'PARTITION HORRORS REMEMBRANCE DAY', I PAY HOMAGE TO ALL THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES DURING PARTITION, AND APPLAUD THE RESILIENCE OF ALL THOSE WHO SUFFERED. —PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Oppn needs good leader, good narrative, cohesion

There is still time for the Opposition to get organised. The 2024 polls will be between the BJP and the regional parties

How has democracy worked in India@75?

By and large, it has done well with power getting transferred 17 times smoothly. So we can pat ourselves that we have done well as the world's largest democracy.

But where it could have been better is the status of Opposition, which is a good hallmark of democracy. As we celebrate the Diamond Jubilee, it is time to look back and look ahead about the status of the Opposition, which has had its ups and downs.

When the first general elections were held in 1952, the Congress swept polls at the Centre and in states. But by the 1962 elections, the Communists, socialists, the Swatantra Party, and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh had started making dents. There



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The author is a senior journalist.)

were times when it played a successful campaign against Nehru's failure on Chinese aggression, Indira Gandhi's Emergency, Rajiv Gandhi's Bofor's scam, the Mandal agitation, the Mandir movement, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019, the farmers' agitation, etc.

Currently, we have a weak and divided opposition. Some feel that the secret of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's success is the divided Opposition.

Since the Opposition lacks a bold plan, a new narrative, and leadership, it has no answer for Modi versus who. Moreover, emerging regional satraps like Mamata Banerjee, Mayawati, and K Chandrasekhar Rao disagree with names other than theirs.

The Congress has been steadily losing states since Modi

entered the national scene in 2014. Today, a weakened Congress is the main Opposition party. It got just 52 seats to match the BJP's 300-plus in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Sticking to the Gandhis, the party suffers from a lack of leadership, cadre, adequate funding, and strategy to check the BJP.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) was the main Opposition party in the post-independence period. The Communist movement was strong in the erstwhile Madras presidency and later in the linguistically carved out Andhra Pradesh.

Even after a split in 1964, the Left parties played a significant role over the decades.

The Left supported the VP Singh government in 1989. They played kingmaker roles for the

two United Front governments during 1996-98 and the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) between 2004 and 2008. The decline began with the 2009 elections and continues till now. Registering its worst ever poll performance in over six decades, the Left Front managed just five seats in the 2019 polls.

At another level, Jayaprakash Narain, Ram Manohar Lohia, and others ran a socialist stream since the mid-1970s. Their Janata movement paved the way for the emergence of some present-day leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav (Rashtriya Janata Dal), Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party), Deve Gowda (Janata Dal-Secular), and Naveen Patnaik (BJD).

The rise of so-called lower castes, religious identities, lin-

guistic groups, the emergence of the backward classes, the Hindutva identity politics of the BJP, insurgency and autonomy movements, and regional parties have taken centre-stage since the eighties.

After the 1990s, the Congress had to ride piggyback on regional parties as it lost the so-called upper caste votes to the BJP and the backward and Dalit castes to the Samajwadi Party and the BSP. It helplessly witnessed 'Mandal' and 'Kamandal' movements in the Hindi belt.

The Dravidian parties had dug in their heels in Tamil Nadu since 1967. The DMK and the AIADMK have alternately been ruling Tamil Nadu since 1967. Left and Congress alternate in Kerala. Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have new regional satraps.

The Congress has come a long way from Nehru's days. Indira Gandhi faced a strong Opposition after she imposed an Emergency in 1975. Despite a lack of numbers, half a dozen Opposition leaders, including Indrajit Gupta, Somnath Chatterjee, and Madhu Danavate, managed to unseat Rajiv Gandhi in the Bofors scam. PV Narasimha Rao (PM during 1991-96) was bold enough to dismantle the command economy and make a 360-degree turn toward a Rightwing economy despite the strong opposition from within his party and Opposition parties.

Vajpayee ran his coalition government well from 1998 to 2004. Still, the 2004 elections were a battle between the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Congress-

led UPA. Nominating Manmohan Singh as prime minister, Sonia Gandhi ran the government supported by Left parties by remote control. Since Modi entered the national scene, the BJP has been winning state after state. He represents an authoritarian leadership as well as a hard-line Hindu ideology. He promised change and held out hope to the electorate. However, the South, except in Karnataka, is eluding the BJP. The superior organisational capacity of these regional linguistic parties has made them resistant to the BJP's inroads.

At the end of 75 years, the Opposition needs a good leader, a good narrative, and cohesion. There is still time to get organised and put up a spirited fight. The 2024 polls will be between the BJP and the regional parties.

Boredom, loneliness plague Ukrainian youth near front line

AP ■ SLOVIAANSK (UKRAINE)

Anastasiia Aleksandrova doesn't even look up from her phone when the thunder of nearby artillery booms through the modest home the 12-year-old shares with her grandparents on the outskirts of Sloviansk in eastern Ukraine.

With no one her age left in her neighborhood and classes only online since Russia's invasion, video games and social media have taken the place of the walks and bike rides she once enjoyed with friends who have since fled.

"She communicates less and goes out walking less. She usually stays at home playing games on her phone," Anastasiia's grandmother, Olena Aleksandrova, 57, said of the shy, lanky girl who likes to paint and has a picture of a Siberian tiger hanging on the wall of her bedroom.

Anastasiia's retreat into digital technology to cope with the isolation and stress of war that rages on the front line just seven miles (12 kilometers) away is increasingly common among young people in Ukraine's embattled Donetsk region.

With cities largely emptied after hundreds of thousands have evacuated to safety, the young people who remain face loneliness and boredom as painful counterpoints to the fear and violence Moscow has unleashed on Ukraine.

"I don't have anyone to hang out with. I sit with the phone all day," Anastasiia said from the bank of a lake where she sometimes swims with

her grandparents. "My friends left and my life has changed. It became worse due to this war."

More than 6 million Ukrainians, overwhelmingly women and children, have fled the country and millions more are internally displaced, according to the U.N. Refugee agency.

The mass displacement has upended countless childhoods, not only for those having to start a new life after seeking safety elsewhere, but also for the thousands who stayed behind.

In the industrial city of Kramatorsk, seven miles (12 kilometers) south of Sloviansk, the friendship between 19-year-old Roman Kovalenko and 18-year-old Oleksandr Pruzhyna has become closer as all of their other friends have left the city.

The two teenagers walk together through the mostly deserted city, sitting to talk on park benches. Both described being cut off from the social lives they enjoyed before the war.

"It's a completely different feeling when you go outside. There is almost no one on the streets, I have the feeling of being in an apocalypse," said Pruzhyna, who lost his job at a barber shop after the invasion and now spends most of his time at home playing computer games.

"I feel like everything I was going to do became impossible, everything collapsed in an instant."

Of the roughly 275,000 children age 17 or younger in the Donetsk region before Russia's invasion, just 40,000 remain, the province's regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko told The Associated Press last week.



According to official figures, 361 children have been killed in Ukraine since Russia launched its war on Feb. 24, and 711 others have been injured.

Authorities are urging all remaining families in Donetsk, but especially those with children, to evacuate immediately as Russian forces con-

tinue to bombard civilian areas as they press for control of the region.

A special police force has been tasked with individually contacting households with children and urging them to flee to safer areas, Kyrylenko said.

"As a father, I feel that children

should not be in the Donetsk region," he said. "This is an active war zone."

In Kramatorsk, 16-year-old Sofia Mariia Bondar spends most days sitting in the shoe section of a clothing shop where her mother works.

A pianist and singer who wants to study art at university after she fin-

ishes her final year of high school, Sofia Mariia said there is "nowhere to go and nothing to do" now that her friends have left.

"I wish I could go back in time and make everything like it was before. I understand that most of my friends who left will never come back, no matter what happens in the future," she said. "Of course it's very sad that I can't have all the fun like other teenagers do, but I can't do anything about it, only cope with it."

Her mother, Viktoriia, said that since the city has mostly emptied out, she manages to sell only one or two items per week.

But with the danger of shelling and soldiers playing the streets, her daughter is no longer allowed to go out alone and spends most of her time by her mother's side in the store or at their home on the outskirts of Kramatorsk where the threat of rocket strikes is lower.

"I keep her near me all the time so that in case something happens, at least we will be together," she said.

Of the roughly 18,000 school-age children in Kramatorsk before Russia's invasion, only around 3,200 remain, including 600 preschoolers, said the city's head of military administration, Oleksandr Goncharenko.

While officials continue to push residents to evacuate and provide information on transportation and accommodation, "parents cannot be forced to leave with their children," Goncharenko said. When the school semester begins on Sept. 1, he said lessons will be offered online for those

who stay.

In Kramatorsk's verdant but nearly empty Pushkin Park, Rodion Kucherian, 14, performed tricks on his scooter on an otherwise deserted set of ramps, quarter pipes and grind rails.

Before the war, he said, he and his friends would do tricks in the bustling park alongside many other children. But now his only connection to his friends — who have fled to countries like Poland and Germany — is on social media.

He's taken up other solitary activities just to keep himself busy, he said.

"It's very sad not to see my friends. I haven't seen my best friend for more than four months," he said. "I started cycling at home so I don't miss them as much."

In Sloviansk, 12-year-old Anastasiia said she can't remember the last time she played with someone her own age, but she's made some new friends through the games she plays online.

"It's not the same. It's way better to go outside to play with your friends than just talking online," she said.

Her best friend, Yeva, used to live on her street, but has evacuated with her family to Lviv in western Ukraine.

Anastasiia wears a silver pendant around her neck — half of a broken heart with the word "Love" engraved on the front — and Yeva, she said, wears the other half.

"I never take it off, and Yeva doesn't either," she said.

S Korea offers North economic benefits for denuclearisation

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Monday offered "audacious" economic assistance to North Korea if it abandons its nuclear weapons programme while avoiding harsh criticism of the North days after it threatened "deadly" retaliation over the COVID-19 outbreak it blames on the South.

In a speech celebrating the end of Japan's colonisation of the Korean Peninsula, Yoon also called for better ties with Japan, calling the two countries partners in navigating challenges to freedom and saying their shared values will help them overcome historical grievances linked to Japan's brutal colonial rule before the end of World War II.

Yoon's televised speech on the liberation holiday came days after North Korea claimed a widely disputed victory over COVID-19 but also blamed Seoul for the outbreak. The North insists leaflets and other objects flown across the border by activists spread the virus, an unscientific claim Seoul describes as "ridiculous."

North Korea has a history of dialing up pressure on the South when it doesn't get what it wants from the United States, and there are concerns that North Korea's threat portends a provocation, which could possibly be a nuclear or major missile test or even border skirmishes. Some experts say the North may stir up tensions around joint military exercises the United States and South Korea start next week.

Yoon, a conservative who took office in May, said North Korea's denuclearisation would be key for peace in the region and the world. If North Korea halts its nuclear weapons development and genuinely commits to a process of denucleari-



sation, the South will respond with huge economic rewards that would be provided in phases, Yoon said.

Yoon's proposal wasn't meaningfully different from previous South Korean offers that have already been rejected by North Korea, which has been accelerating its efforts to expand its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programme leader Kim Jong Un sees as his strongest guarantee of survival.

"We will implement a large-scale programme to provide food, providing assistance for establishing infrastructure for the production, transmission and distribution of electrical power, and carry out projects to modernize ports and airports to facilitate trade," Yoon said.

"We will also help improve North Korea's agricultural production, provide assistance to modernize its hospitals and medical infrastructure, and carry out initiatives to allow for international investment and financial support," he added, insisting that such programmes would "significantly" improve North

Korean lives.

Inter-Korean ties have deteriorated amid a stalemate in larger nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang, which derailed in early 2019 over disagreements in exchanging a release of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against the North and the North's disarmament steps.

North Korea has ramped up its testing activity in 2022, launching more than 30 ballistic missiles so far, including its first demonstrations of intercontinental ballistic missiles since 2017. Experts say Kim is intent on exploiting a favourable environment to push forward his weapons programme, with the UN Security Council divided and effectively paralysed over Russia's war on Ukraine.

North Korea's unusually fast pace in weapons demonstrations also underscore brinkmanship aimed at forcing Washington to accept the idea of North Korea as a nuclear power and negotiating badly economic benefits and security concessions from a position of strength, experts say. The US and South

Korean governments have also said the North is gearing up to conduct its first nuclear test since September 2017, when it claimed to have detonated a nuclear warhead designed for its ICBMs.

In face of growing North Korean threats, Yoon has vowed to bolster South Korea's defense in conjunction with its alliance with the United States and also strengthen security ties with Japan, which is also alarmed by the North's nuclear and ballistic weapons programme.

South Korea's relations with Japan declined to post-war lows over the past several years as the countries allowed their grievances over history to extend to other areas including trade and military cooperation.

While Yoon has called for future-oriented cooperation with Japan, history may continue to pose an obstacle to relations. The countries have struggled to negotiate a solution after Japanese companies rejected South Korean court rulings in recent years to compensate South Koreans who were subject

to wartime industrial slavery, an issue that could cause further diplomatic rupture if it results in the forced sales of the companies' local assets.

"In the past, we had to unshackle ourselves from Imperial Japan's political control and defend our freedom. Today, Japan is our partner as we face common threats that challenge the freedom of global citizens," Yoon said. "When South Korea and Japan move toward a common future and when the mission of our times align, based on our shared universal values, it will also help us solve the historical problems that exist between our two countries."

While Washington has said it would push for additional sanctions if North Korea conducts another nuclear test, the prospects for meaningful punitive measures are unclear. China and Russia recently vetoed US-sponsored resolutions at the UN Security Council that would have increased sanctions on the North over its ballistic missile testing this year.

North Korea's state media said Monday that Kim exchanged messages with Russian President Vladimir Putin and celebrated their strengthening ties.

Kim said the countries' relations were forged by the Soviet contributions in Japan's World War II defeat and that they were strengthening their "strategic and tactical cooperation and support and solidarity" in the face of enemies' military threats. Putin said closer ties between the countries would help bring stability to the region, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

North Korea has repeatedly blamed the United States for the crisis in Ukraine, claiming the West's "hegemonic policy" justified Russia's offensive in Ukraine to protect itself.

Cheney, Murkowski: Trump critics facing divergent futures

AP ■ JUNEAU (ALASKA)

They hail from their states' most prominent Republican families. They have been among the GOP's sharpest critics of former President Donald Trump. And after the Jan. 6 insurrection, they supported his impeachment.

But for all their similarities, the political fortunes of U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming are poised to diverge on Tuesday when they're each on the ballot in closely watched primary elections.

Cheney faces daunting prospects in her effort to fend off the Trump-backed Harriet Hageman, increasingly looking at a life beyond Capitol Hill that could include a possible presidential campaign. Murkowski, however, is expected to advance from her primary and is already planning to compete in the November general election.

The anticipated outcomes at least partially stem from the nuanced politics of each state. Wyoming is a Republican stronghold, delivering Trump his strongest victory of any state in the 2020 campaign.

Alaska, meanwhile, has a history of rewarding candidates with an independent streak. But Murkowski enjoys an additional advantage in the way elections are being conducted in Alaska this year. Winner-take-all party primaries, like the one Cheney is facing, have been replaced by a voter-approved process in which all candidates are listed together. The four who get the most votes, regardless of party affiliation, advance to the general election in which ranked voting will be used.

Murkowski benefits from avoiding a Republican primary, "which she would have had a

zero percent — I mean zero percent — chance of winning," said Alaska pollster Ivan Moore.

Murkowski has 18 challengers in her primary, the most prominent being Republican Kelly Tshibaka, whom Trump has endorsed.

The Alaska Democratic Party, meanwhile, has endorsed Pat Chesbro, a retired educator.

In an interview, Murkowski insisted she would be among the candidates advancing from the primary and said her success requires, in part, coalition building. "That's kind of my strong suit, that's what I do," she said.

For his part, Trump has been harsh in his assessment of Murkowski. At a rally in Anchorage last month with Tshibaka and Sarah Palin, whom he's endorsed for Alaska's only House seat, he called Murkowski "the worst. I rate her No. 1 bad."

Trump participated in a telerally for Tshibaka on Thursday while Murkowski mingled with supporters at a campaign office opening in Juneau, which boasted a spread that included moose chili and smoked salmon dip. Murkowski said Trump isn't a factor in the campaign she's running.

He is going to do what he's going to do," she said. But she told supporters the campaign will be challenging.

Murkowski was censured by Alaska Republican Party leaders last year over numerous grievances, including the impeachment vote and speaking critically of Trump and her support of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's nomination.

Tuckerman Babcock, a former state Republican Party chair who is running for state Senate, said Murkowski has lost the support of many Alaska Republicans, which he called a "political reality over a record of many years."

Dutch court expects Nov verdicts in MH17 downing trial



AP ■ THE HAGUE

Verdicts in the Dutch trial in absentia of three Russians and a Ukrainian charged with involvement in the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 are expected to be delivered on Nov. 17, the court announced Monday.

The court said the date is "provisional" and that reading the verdict will likely take half a day.

The marathon trial opened on March 9, 2020, at a top-security courtroom near Amsterdam's Schiphol, the airport the doomed Kuala Lumpur-bound flight set off from on July 17, 2014. It was shot down over war-torn eastern Ukraine hours later, killing all 298 passengers and crew.

An international team of investigators and prosecutors named four suspects in the downing: Russians Igor Girkin, Sergey Dubinskiy and Oleg Pulatov as well as Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko. They are charged with murdering all those who died.

None of the suspects has been arrested or sent to the Netherlands, so their trial went ahead in their absence. Only Pulatov is represented by a team of defense lawyers, who say he insists he is innocent.

Prosecutors in December urged the judges to sentence all four men to life imprisonment.

The trial is being held in the Netherlands because about two-thirds of those killed were Dutch.

China silent on details of talks with Lanka as its high-tech ship set to dock at Hambantota port

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Monday said Sri Lanka has allowed its satellite and missile tracking ship to berth at the Hambantota port on Tuesday, but declined to reveal details of talks with Colombo leading to the bankrupt island's government reversing its earlier stand to defer the high-tech vessel's entry.

"As you said, Sri Lanka has given Yuan Wang-5 the permission to berth at its port," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing here, responding to a question about Colombo giving its nod for the ship to berth at Hambantota Port days after asking it to defer the visit following reported concerns expressed by India and the US. Wang, however, declined to go into details of Beijing's talks with Colombo in relation to the berthing of the ship.

"As for the specific questions that you



raised, we have mentioned China's position quite a few times," Wang said when asked about what were the "consultations" that were held and the "concerns" addressed.

After Sri Lanka asked it to defer the entry of the ship, China on August 8 reacting angrily said it was "completely unjustified" for certain countries to cite the so-called "security concerns" to pressure Colombo and "grossly interfere" in its internal affairs.

Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry statement on August 13 said that Colombo held extensive consultations about "certain concerns". The Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry in its statement explained that it had on August 5 requested the Chinese embassy that the visit of the Chinese ship scheduled between August 11 and 17 to Hambantota port be deferred "in light of certain concerns raised with the ministry" until the conduct of further "consultations on the matter." "The government has since

engaged in extensive consultations at a high level through diplomatic channels with all parties concerned, with a view to resolving the matter in a spirit of friendship, mutual trust, and constructive dialogue, taking into account the interests of all parties concerned, and in line with the principle of sovereign equality of states," the statement said.

The Chinese embassy on August 12 applied for clearance of the new dates — from August 16 to 22 — "for replenishment purposes of the vessel".

"Having considered all material in place", the clearance to the Chinese embassy "was conveyed for the deferred arrival of the vessel between August 16 and 22", the Sri Lankan statement said.

The ship with some 2,000 sailors on board with facilities to track satellites and intercontinental missiles will berth at the Hambantota Port which China has taken for a 99-year lease as a debt swap.

Philippines eyes US helicopters after scrapping Russian deal

AP ■ MANILA

Philippine officials are considering a US offer to provide heavy-lift helicopters like its widely used Chinooks after Manila scrapped a deal to buy military choppers from Russia due to fears of Western sanctions, the Philippine ambassador to Washington said on Monday.

Then-President Rodrigo Duterte approved the cancellation of the signed deal to buy 16 Russian Mi-17 helicopters due to concerns over possible Western sanctions, which could hamper fast bank transfers of the income Filipino workers send home from the US and other Western countries, Ambassador Jose Romualdez said.

Romualdez said Washing-



ton did not pressure the Philippines to drop the 12.7-billion-peso (USD 227 million) deal with the Russians.

But following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, countries that would purchase Russian equipment could face Western sanctions, he said.

"I think it was really prudent specially for President Duterte to approve the cancellation of that contract because it can save us a lot of trouble," Romualdez told an online news conference organised by Manila-based for-

eign correspondents.

The US offer to sell Boeing CH-47 Chinooks was discussed as early as last year by former Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, in Washington even before Duterte was persuaded by key Cabinet members to cancel the deal, Romualdez said.

One of Duterte's Cabinet members, Finance Secretary Sonny Dominguez, warned Duterte then that Western countries may withhold assistance that could help the Philippines deal with and recover from coronavirus outbreaks, two Philippine officials told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the issue publicly.

China holds another massive military drills around Taiwan

As US Congressional delegation visits Taipei



PTI ■ BEIJING/TAIPEI

China resorted to more high-intensity military drills around Taiwan on Monday as one more American Congressional delegation visited the self-ruled Island claimed by Beijing, challenging its 'one China' policy.

The new drills come less than a fortnight after Beijing launched unprecedented war games in retaliation to US House Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, sparking fears of a Chinese invasion of the breakaway island.

The US Congressional delegation led by Massachusetts Democratic Senator Ed Markey arrived in Taipei on an unannounced two-day visit on Sunday, close on the heels of Pelosi's visit on August 2, the highest-level visit by US official in 25 years, which riled Beijing.

The five-member delegation is visiting the self-governing island to "reaffirm the United States' support for Taiwan" and "will encourage stability and peace across the Taiwan Strait," a spokesperson for Markey said in a statement.

The delegation includes Democratic Representative John Garamendi, Alan Lowenthal and Don Beyer, and Republican Representatives Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen, CNN reported.

In response to Pelosi's visit, China held its biggest military drills in the busy Taiwan Strait from August 4 to 10.

On Monday, China announced yet another round of military drills in retaliation to the visit by another US delegation.

Senior Colonel Shi Yi, the spokesperson for the Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), said that his Command has organised joint combat-readiness security patrol and combat training exercises involving troops of multiple services and arms in waters and airspace around Taiwan Island on Monday.

According to Shi, this is a solemn deterrent to the United States and the Taiwan authorities, which have repeatedly played political tricks and undermined peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits,

a PLA press release said.

The troops' Command will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard China's national sovereignty and the peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits, it said.

The group led by Markey met with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen on Monday.

Reacting to the US Congressional delegation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing that it is a gross violation of the 'one China' policy.

A handful of US politicians are "colluding" with Taiwan separatist forces and attempting to challenge the 'one China' principle.

"They are overestimating themselves and doomed to fail," he said.

The US delegation members will also meet Foreign Minister Joseph Wu during the visit, and will also hold discussions with the Taiwanese parliament's Foreign Affairs and National Defense committee on security and trade issues, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The Taiwanese foreign ministry added that it sincerely welcomed the delegation, and thanked them for demonstrating the US' strong support toward Taiwan despite escalating tensions with Beijing.

"Authoritarian #China can't dictate how democratic #Taiwan makes friends, wins support, stays resilient & shines like a beacon of freedom," Wu wrote in a post on the ministry's Twitter account.

Markey's spokesperson said the delegation "will meet with elected leaders and members of the private sector to discuss shared interests including reducing tensions in the Taiwan Strait and expanding economic cooperation, including investments in semiconductors."

On Sunday, the Taiwanese Defence Ministry tweeted that 6 People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels and 22 PLA aircraft around Taiwan's surrounding region were detected and its armed forces have monitored the situation and responded to these activities with aircraft, naval vessels, and land-based missile systems.

Myanmar court convicts Suu Kyi on more corruption charges

AP ■ BANGKOK

A court in military-ruled Myanmar convicted the country's ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, on more corruption charges on Monday, adding six years to her earlier 11-year prison sentence, a legal official said.

The trial was held behind closed doors, with no access for media or the public, and her lawyers were forbidden by a gag order from revealing information about the proceedings.

In the four corruption cases decided Monday, Suu Kyi was alleged to have abused her position to rent public land at below market prices and to have built a residence with donations meant for charitable purposes. She received sentences of three years for each of the four counts, but the sentences for three of them will be served concurrently, giving her a total of six more years in prison.

She denied all the charges, and her lawyers are expected to appeal.

She already had been sentenced to 11 years in prison on sedition, corruption and other charges at earlier trials after the military ousted her elected government and detained her in February 2021.

Analysts say the numerous charges against her and her allies are an attempt to legitimize the military's seizure of power while eliminating her from politics before the military holds an election it has promised for next year.

Suu Kyi and her co-defendants have denied all the allegations and their lawyers are expected to file appeals in the coming days, said the legal official, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to release information and feared punishment by the authorities.

Other top members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party and her government have also been arrest-



ed and imprisoned, and the authorities have suggested they might dissolve the party before the next election.

The army seized power and detained Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, 2021, the day when her party would have started a second-five year term in office after it won a landslide victory in a November 2020 general election. The army said it acted because there had been massive voting fraud, but independent election observers did not find any major irregularities.

The army's takeover sparked peaceful nationwide street protests that security forces quashed with lethal force, triggering armed resistance that some U.N. Experts now characterize as civil war. The military government has been accused of human rights abuses including arbitrary arrests and killings, torture, and military sweeps that include air attacks on civilians and the burning of entire villages.

Suu Kyi, 77, has been the face of opposition to military rule in Myanmar for more than three decades. She won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize while under house arrest.

Her five years as its civilian government leader were marked by repression and military dominance even though it was Myanmar's most democratic period since a 1962 coup.

Suu Kyi has been charged with a total of 11 counts under the Anti-Corruption Act, with each count punishable by up to 15 years in prison and a fine.

In Monday's verdicts, the

legal official said Suu Kyi received a three-year prison sentence for building a residence for herself in Naypyitaw, allegedly with money donated for a charitable foundation named after her mother that she chaired.

She received a three-year sentence for allegedly taking advantage of her position to rent property in Yangon, the country's biggest city, for the same foundation, the official said.

The two other cases decided Monday involved parcels of land in Naypyitaw for which she allegedly abused her authority to rent at below market prices for the foundation. She received a sentence of three years for each of those cases.

The three cases pertaining to offenses in Naypyitaw are to be served concurrently.

The former mayor of Naypyitaw, Myo Aung, was a co-defendant in both cases relating to granting permits to rent the land. Ye Min Oo, the former vice mayor, is a co-defendant in one case and Min Thu, a former member of the Naypyitaw Development Committee, in the other. Each received sentences of three years.

The government Anti-Corruption Commission, which filed the case, had alleged that the rental fees agreed upon by the Naypyitaw Development Committee were lower than the rate fixed by the Ministry of Planning and Finance, so that the rental agreement deprived the state of revenue it should have received.

Af marks 1 year since Taliban seizure as woes mount

AP ■ KABUL

The Taliban on Monday marked a year since they seized the Afghan capital of Kabul, a rapid takeover that triggered a hasty escape of the nation's Western-backed leaders, sent the economy into a tailspin and fundamentally transformed the country.

Bearded Taliban fighters, some hoisting rifles or the white banners of their movement, staged small victory parades on foot, bicycles and motor cycles in the streets of the capital. One small group marched past the former U.S. Embassy, chanting "Long live Islam" and "Death to America."

A year after the dramatic day, much has changed in Afghanistan. The former insurgents struggle to govern and remain internationally isolated. The economic downturn has driven millions more Afghans into poverty and even hunger, as the flow of foreign aid slowed to a trickle.

Meanwhile, hard-liners appear to hold sway in the Taliban-led government, which imposed severe restrictions on access to education and jobs for girls and women, despite initial promises to the contrary.

A year on, teenage girls are still barred from school and women are required to cover themselves head-to-toe in public, with only the eyes showing.

Some are trying to find ways to keep education from stalling for a generation of young women and underground schools in homes have sprung up.

A year ago, thousands of Afghans had rushed to Kabul International Airport to flee the Taliban amid the U.S. Military's chaotic withdrawal from Kabul after 20 years of war — America's longest conflict.

Some flights resumed relatively quickly after those chaotic days. On Monday, a handful of commercial flights were scheduled to land and take off from a runway that last summer saw Afghan men clinging to the wheels of planes taking off, some falling to their death.

Schoolyards stood empty Monday as the Taliban announced a public holiday to mark the day, which they refer to as "The Proud Day of Aug. 15" and the "First Anniversary of the Return to Power."



"Reliance on God and the support of the people brought this great victory and freedom to the country," wrote Abdul Wahid Rayan, the head of the Taliban-run Bakhtar News Agency. "Today, Aug. 15, marks the

victory of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan against America and its allies occupation of Afghanistan."

On the eve of the anniversary, former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani defended what he said was a split-second decision to flee, saying he wanted to avoid the humiliation of surrender to the insurgents. He told CNN that on the morning of Aug. 15, 2021, with the Taliban at the gates of Kabul, he was the last one at the presidential palace after his guards had disappeared.

Tomas Niklasson, the European Union's special envoy to Afghanistan, said the bloc of nations remains committed to the Afghan people and to "stability, prosperity and sustainable peace in Afghanistan and the region."

"This will require an inclusive political process with full, equal and meaningful participation of all Afghan men and women and respect for human rights," Niklasson wrote.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said an international responsibility toward Afghanistan remains after the NATO withdrawal.

"A regime that tramples on human rights cannot under any circumstances be recognized," she said in a statement. "But we must not forget the people in Afghanistan, even a year after the Taliban takeover."



New Zealand river's personhood status offers hope to Maori

AP ■ WHANGANUI (NEW ZEALAND)

The Whanganui river is surging into the ocean, fattened from days of winter rain and yellowed from the earth and clay that has collapsed into its sides. Logs and debris hurtle past as dusk looms.

Sixty-one-year-old Tahī Nepia is calmly paddling his outrigger canoe, called a waka ama in his Indigenous Maori language, as it is buffeted from side to side.

Before venturing out, he first asks permission from his ancestors in a prayer. He says his ancestors inhabit the river and each time he dips his paddle into the water he touches them.

"You are giving them a massage," Nepia says. "That's how we see that river. It's a part of us."

In 2017, New Zealand passed a groundbreaking law granting personhood status to the Whanganui River.

The law declares that the river is a living whole, from the mountains to the sea, incorporating all its physical and metaphysical elements.

The law was part of a settlement with the Whanganui Iwi, comprising Maori from a number of tribes who have long viewed the river as a living force.

Five years after the law was passed, The Associated Press followed the 290-kilometre river upstream to find out what its status means to those whose lives are entwined with its waters.

and a chance to reverse generations of discrimination against Maori and degradation of the river.

Whanganui Maori have a saying: Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au: I am the river, and the river is me.

Nepia, a caretaker at a Maori immersion school, is among a group of expert waka ama paddlers who have been training for the World Sprint Champs in Britain.

He learned to swim when his uncle threw him in the river at age 8. He first paddled on the river in a traditional Maori long canoe in 1979, when he and about 20 co-workers at a slaughterhouse got together for a regatta on Waitangi Day, commemorating the 1840 treaty signed between the British and Maori.

Considered New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi has long been a source of contention.

For 30 years, New Zealand's government has been negotiating with tribes that brought grievances under the treaty, which guaranteed sovereignty over their traditional lands and fisheries.

The Whanganui River deal is among dozens of settlements forged in recent years.

At its mouth in the town of Whanganui, the river is permanently discoloured from the erosion that has come from turning what was once forest along the banks into farmland. The excessive sediment suffocates fish and plant life.

"We need to grow trees instead of chopping them down," Nepia says. "The water shouldn't be like that."

With war nearby, US shows support for Poland on army holiday

AP ■ WARSAW

Polish officials were marking their nation's Armed Forces Day holiday on Monday alongside the US army commander in Europe and regular American troops, a symbolic underlining of NATO support for members on the eastern front as Russia wages war nearby in Ukraine.

Gen. Darryl Williams, the new commanding general of US Army Europe and Africa, was in Warsaw to attend the ceremony in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Nearby American, as well as British troops, stood alongside displays of military equipment.

The national holiday commemorates Poland's victory in 1920 over Soviet Russia in a key battle credited with stopping the Bolshevik army's westward advance.

"Years pass, but one thing is constant — when Russia tries to rebuild its empire, it is always an



evil empire. It always commits war crimes," Polish Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak told reporters ahead of the ceremony, adding that it didn't matter whether Russia was under imperial rule, or being led by communists or today's President Vladimir Putin.

American troops have taken part before in the August 15 celebration before but it is the first one since President Joe

Biden announced at a NATO summit in late June that Washington was establishing its first permanent US base in Poland.

The newly named Camp Kosciuszko in Poznan, western Poland, is a shared Polish-US base that becomes the permanent headquarters in Poland for the US Army's V Corps, and the easternmost US Army base in Europe.

Kenya's Ruto declared Prez after last-minute chaos

AP ■ NAIROBI

After last-minute chaos that could overshadow a court challenge, Kenya's electoral commission chairman on Monday declared Deputy President William Ruto the winner of the close presidential election over five-time contender Raila Odinga, a triumph for the man who shook up politics by appealing to struggling Kenyans on economic terms and not on traditional ethnic ones.

Ruto received 50.49% of the votes with more than 7.1 million, the chairman said, while Odinga received 48.85% with more than 6.9 million in last Tuesday's peaceful election. But just before the declaration, four of the seven electoral commissioners told journalists they could not support the "opaque nature" of the final phase of the vote-verification process.

"We cannot take ownership of the result that is going to be announced," vice chair Juliana Cherera said, without giving details. At the declaration venue, police surged to impose calm amid shouting and scuffles before electoral commission chair Wafuka Chebukati announced the official results — and said the two commissioners still with him had been injured.

The bizarre scene played out as a choir at the venue continued to sing.

The sudden split in the commission came

minutes after Odinga's chief agent said they could not verify the results and made allegations of "electoral offenses" without giving details or evidence. Odinga didn't come to the venue. Now Kenyans wait to see whether Odinga will again go to court to contest the election results in a country crucial to regional stability. This is likely the final try for the 77-year-old longtime opposition figure backed this time by former rival and outgoing President Uhuru Kenyatta, who fell out with his deputy, Ruto, years ago.

"ANY results IEBC Chairman Wafuka Chebukati announces are INVALID because he had no quorum of commissioners to hold a plenary and make such a weighty decision. The ongoing process at Bomas is now ILLEGAL," Odinga spokesman Makau Mutua asserted in a tweet. "It is not over until it is over," Odinga's running mate Martha Karua, a former justice minister, tweeted.

Candidates or others have seven days to file any challenge over the election results. The Supreme Court will have 14 days to rule.

Streets across Kenya that were already crowded with expectant supporters exploded, in places with jubilation, in others with anger. Shouting "No Raila, no peace," Odinga supporters burned tires in the crowded Nairobi neighborhood of Kibera as night fell.

SBI to sustain loan growth of 15% in current fiscal, says Chairman



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India (SBI) has said it expects to sustain credit growth of about 15 per cent in the current fiscal with rising demand from retail and corporate borrowers despite hardening of lending rate.

The country's largest lender reported a 14.93 per cent rise in advances to Rs 29,00,636 crore in the first quarter ended June 30, 2022 as compared to Rs 25,23,793 crore during the same period a year ago.

Of this, retail loan registered a growth rate of 18.58 per cent while corporate advances improved by 10.57 per cent

year-on-year at the end of June quarter.

SBI chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara also said that the bank will soon come out with only YONO which is YONO 2.0 with many more advanced features and functionalities.

"The digital leadership journey of the bank is continuing. More than 96.6 per cent of the transactions are now routed through alternate channels. The registered users on YONO have already crossed 5.25 crore, a big milestone and which has created a significant value for the bank. Sixty-five per cent of the new savings accounts are opened through YONO," he said at an analyst

SBI raises benchmark lending rates by up to 50 basis points

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India (SBI) on Monday raised its benchmark lending rates by up to 50 basis points (or 0.5 per cent), a move that will lead to an increase in EMIs for borrowers.

The increase in lending rate comes days after the Reserve Bank of India hiked its benchmark lending rate by 50 basis points to tame inflation.

External Benchmark based Lending Rate (EBLR) and Repo-Linked Lending Rate (RLLR) have been raised by 50 basis points while the hike in Marginal Cost of funds-based Lending Rate (MCLR) is 20 basis points across all tenure.

The revised rates are effective from August 15, as per the information posted on SBI website.

SBI's EBLR rose to 8.05 per cent and RLLR increased

by similar 50 basis points to 7.65 per cent.

Banks add Credit Risk Premium (CRP) over the EBLR and RLLR while giving any kind of loan, including housing and auto loans.

With the revision, one-year MCLR has increased to 7.70 per cent, from the earlier 7.50 per cent, while for two years it rose to 7.90 per cent and for three years to 8 per cent. Most of the loans are linked to the one-year MCLR rate.

With the increase in lending rate, EMIs will go up for those borrowers who have availed loans on MCLR, EBLR or RLLR.

From October 1, 2019, all banks including SBI have migrated to an interest rate linked to an external benchmark such as RBI's repo rate or Treasury Bill yield. As a result, monetary policy transmission by banks has gained traction.

call recently.On maintaining 15 per cent credit growth, he said, "I am quite hopeful the reason behind is kind of a term loan and also the underutilisation of the working capital, which is all aggregating to almost Rs 5 lakh crore, and the pipeline is almost Rs 1.2 lakh crore. So, I'm quite hopeful that we should be in a position to sustain this in the subsequent quarters."

Corporate book should grow to the extent of about Rs 2.5-3 lakh crore during the year, he said, adding, even in SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) there are traction and pipeline is getting created.

With the latest rate hike by RBI, the repo rate (short term lending rate at which banks borrow from the central bank) increased to 5.40 per cent, an increase of 140 basis points since May this year. On the prevailing economic situation, Khara said the effect of the Covid pandemic has subdued to a large extent, thanks to the governments' massive vaccination programme. The economy is almost on track with the resumption of air travel and removal of other containment measures by most of the countries, he said.

PM's call for making India a developed nation by 2047 inspirational, doable: Industry bodies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for turning India into a developed nation by 2047 is inspirational and eminently doable, industry bodies said on Monday.

Industry chambers also highlighted the key role to be played by India Inc in realising the prime minister's vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat or self-reliant India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday set an ambitious target of making India a developed nation by 2047 and made a renewed pitch for cutting import dependence and boosting domestic manufacturing.

Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 76th Independence Day, Modi coined 'Panch Pran' or lifeblood resolves for the nation when it celebrates its 100th year of independence in 2047.

The first of them is to make India a developed nation.

"When the prime minister gives a call to the nation that nothing short of achieving a status of a developed nation for India would suffice, that is a great inspiration for all of us," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said, adding, "the country is committed to become self-sufficient in most



of the critical areas, including renewable energy, as reiterated emphatically by the prime minister."

He said it is up to Indian industry to rise up to the call given by the prime minister that India would not lag behind in fulfilling requirements of the global market, adding that the PM's call for making India a developed nation is eminently doable.

CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said that the prime minister's inspiring vision of a developed India by 2047 invokes the collective spirit of 130 crore Indians to bring about change.

"Prime minister's vision sets the template for the agenda for India@100 that CII is in the process of developing. India's youth can be an important supplier of skilled

manpower to the world, and education and healthcare will be central areas of focus for the years ahead," Banerjee stated.

Ficci President Sanjiv Mehta welcomed the direction shown by the prime minister by announcing the 5 pledges for India's vision for 2047.

"The hon'ble prime minister has also called upon the private sector to play a key role in the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The Indian industry will continue to play a key role in achieving this vision," he added.

India, which is the world's sixth largest economy with a GDP of USD 2.7 trillion, is currently classified as a developing nation.

A developed country is typically characterised by a relatively high level of economic growth, a general standard of living, and higher per capita income as well as performing well on the Human Development Index (HDI) that includes education, literacy and health.

India was classified as a 'third-world' country at the time of independence from British rule in 1947. But over the past seven decades, its GDP has grown from just Rs 2.7 lakh crore to Rs 150 lakh crore.

Scindia: Civil aviation sector's safety, security paramount

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The safety and security of the country's civil aviation space is "paramount" and all occurrences, including minor issues, are reported, according to Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Against the backdrop of various incidents involving SpiceJet and other carriers in recent times, the civil aviation minister also said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has set a target of carrying out 3,709 checks this year as part of its annual surveillance plan.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the target was around 2,775 checks.

Responding to a query about safety during a recent interview with PTI, Scindia said the civil aviation sector is the one where the occurrence reporting rate is 100 per cent.

"We make sure that every occurrence is reported, whether it is a very minor issue or any other thing. The safety and security for us as a civil aviation ministry is paramount. It is the primary responsibility of airlines. For both safety and security, we have the regulators in place that monitor compliance on those parameters. BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security) for security and DGCA for safety," he said.

In the last few months, there have been instances of Indian carriers facing technical snags, especially in the case of SpiceJet. On July 27, DGCA directed SpiceJet to operate only 50 per cent of its flights for eight weeks and decided to keep the airline under enhanced surveillance in the wake of a spate of technical snags suffered by the carrier's planes.

DGCA has an annual surveillance plan and a detailed roster is put out in this regard every year.

Airlines, flight training organisations and drone school organisations, among other entities, are covered under the surveillance plan.

"DGCA has kept a stiff target of 3,709 checks in their annual surveillance plan... I am confident that they will reach the target of 3,709 checks this year. They are very clear in terms of ensuring a safe environment. Safety for us is paramount," Scindia said.

According to the aviation regulator, an improved version of the Annual Surveillance Programme (ASP) has been prepared based on experiences gained during 2009-2021 and comprises all directorates under DGCA.

Luxury carmakers see record sales in 2022 on festive push

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading luxury carmakers expect 2022 to turn out to be the best ever in terms of sales, bettering the 2019 volumes, as the demand remains robust for high-end models.

The companies also expect the ongoing festive season to be robust in terms of dispatches despite the chip shortage woes continuing.

The domestic luxury car volumes stood at around 40,000 units in 2019, the best ever dispatches recorded by the industry in a year so far.

"The industry has become more resilient and with the third wave of Covid not being so severe, there has been a steady revival," Lexus India President Naveen Soni told PTI in an interaction.

The luxury car market is on V-shaped recovery path with strong demand from the luxury consumers mainly attributed to change in consumer behaviour, more successful



start-ups, younger affluent consumers and local production leading to a higher sense of value, he added.

Soni noted that the current year has started well, both for the industry and for Lexus India.

"We are hoping that the demand for luxury cars will exceed the pre-pandemic level of 2019, which was the highest ever while the demand for Lexus in India has crossed our highest ever demand this July since the launch of operations in 2017," he added.

When asked about festive sea-

son sales Soni stated: "We are looking at demand for Lexus cars to be three times of the best demand we have seen since the brand launch in 2017." Lexus cars being hybrids are high on technology with higher dependence on semiconductor availability, however, the brand is trying its best to deliver cars to customers on time, he added.

Mercedes-Benz India MD & CEO Martin Schwenk said the company expects the strong sales momentum from the second quarter to continue in the coming festive period, as the customer sentiment remains very positive.

"The challenges, however, continue to be on the supply side, as we expect the semiconductor shortage to sustain during the festive period," he added.

The company's product launches however remain unchanged and it will bring in the much awaited EQS luxury sedan this festive period both in its AMG and series versions, Schwenk noted.

Bulish on retail sector, Lulu Group plans to develop more shopping malls in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Lulu group, which has built five shopping malls in India with Rs 7,000 crore investment, now plans to develop about a dozen more malls as the UAE-based group sees huge growth opportunities in the Indian retail space.

The group has five operational malls in India at Kochi, Trivandrum, Thrissur, Bengaluru and Lucknow, comprising about 3.7 million square feet of leasable area. Shibu Philips, Director-Shopping Malls of Lulu Group India, said the Indian retail market is still "under-utilised" with the share of organised retail being still low.

"India is an extremely important market for Lulu. It is a young population whose per capita income and consumption is increasing. It is a very under-utilised market because if you look at the organised retail, it is still only 12 per cent. So, I believe that there is a lot of opportunity here if you have the right business model. Lulu is completely focused on India," he told PTI in an interview.

In the first phase of shopping mall business in India, Philips said the Lulu group invested about Rs 7,000 crore to develop five shopping malls, of which Bengaluru property is not owned by it.

Ola Electric to enter e-car segment, likely to launch first model by 2024

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ola Electric on Monday said it will foray into the electric car segment with plans to launch its first model by 2024.

The company, which struggled with deliveries for its electric scooters after it announced entry into the segment exactly a year ago, has set an ambitious target of selling 10 lakh electric cars by 2026-2027.

In a press conference, Ola founder and CEO Bhavish Aggarwal said Ola Electric aims to provide a range of electric two-wheelers to electric cars which are priced in the range of Rs 1 lakh to



Rs 50 lakh. "We definitely have a full roadmap in the works in the car space... We will definitely have cars at the entry price market. We're starting with a premium car and that comes out in 18 to 24 months," he said when asked about the company's plans for electric cars.

He further said, "We are envi-

ment.

IRDAI has sought innovative ideas/solutions for automated death claim settlement using technology and tech-based solution to curtail miss-selling of insurance products

The regulator is also looking for technology-enabled solutions to identify uninsured motor vehicles and ensure issuance of mandatory motor third party insurance, and technology-based distribution of insurance products, including micro insurance in "difficult terrains and less penetrable areas".

Fraud mitigation/ prevention in motor insurance by using technology is another area identified for Bima Manthan 2022.

IRDAI said the participants of Bima Manthan 2022 will get an opportunity to exhibit their innovative solutions before an eminent jury and win exciting prizes.

World shares mostly higher after China cuts key rate

AP ■ BANGKOK

World shares were mostly higher early on Monday after China's central bank cut a key interest rate and Japan reported its economy picked up momentum in the last quarter.

US futures edged lower and oil prices fell more than USD 2. Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo and Sydney advanced while Hong Kong and Shanghai fell.

The People's Bank of China cut its rate on a one-year loan to 2.75 per cent from 2.85 per cent and injected an extra 400 billion yuan (USD 60 billion) in lending markets after government data showed July factory output and retail sales weakened.Beijing is aiming to shore up sagging growth in the world's second largest economy at a politically sensitive time when President Xi Jinping is believed to be trying to extend his hold on power.

The ruling Communist Party effectively acknowledged last month it can't hit this year's official 5.5 per cent growth target after anti-virus curbs disrupted trade, manufacturing and consumer spending. A crackdown on corporate debt has caused activity in the vast real estate industry to plunge.In early European trading, Germany's DAX edged up 0.1 per cent to 13,813.54 and the CAC 40 in Paris added 0.3 per cent to 6,574.58. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 0.2 per cent to 7,513.09. The future for the S and P 500 lost 0.4 per cent and that for the Dow industrials was down 0.3 per cent.In Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index rose 1.1 per cent to 28,871.78 after the government reported the economy, the world's third largest, expanded at a 2.2 per cent rate in April-June from a year earlier.

Income tax e-filing, GSTN portals working pretty well: Infosys CEO

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The income tax e-filing and GST Network portals are working "pretty well" and the systems are running effectively, Infosys CEO Salil Parekh has said. Infosys has developed both the portals and is also the backend technology support provider.

In an interview to PTI, Parekh highlighted the high GST collections, and 5.8 crore I-T return filings within the set deadline of July 31 to assert that both of these are seeing a huge positive impact from the government's digital programme. The ITR (Income Tax Return) filings have been smooth, he said. "It is working pretty well at this stage," Parekh said when asked about I-T e-filing and GSTN portals.

The users of the e-filing portal had experienced difficulties when it was launched on June 7 last year and since then

it has seen glitches happening on and off. Asked if the glitches been resolved, Parekh affirmed all those had been sorted out.

"In fact, July 31 was the deadline and... on the last day, we had something like 70 lakh returns that were filed. And in some of the hours... more than 5 lakh (returns were getting filed) per hour," Parekh said. He also said that Infosys is in ongoing discussion with clients on what's happening on the GSTN and income tax return portal.

"On the income tax filings, we had something like 5.8 crore returns that were filed. It was all done on schedule. There was a very smooth experience for the taxpayers. Of those, almost 70 lakh have already been processed... So the systems are working very effectively for the citizens and also for the tax department," he said.

Suzlon feels financial woes over with REC-led refinance, to raise ₹1,200 cr

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Suzlon Group feels the financial difficulties that afflicted the wind turbine maker are behind it, with the over Rs 3,000-crore debt refinance led by REC.

The Pune-based company, which once struggled to pay its over Rs 6,500 crore debt, feels its order book, pipeline of potential business and government policies are other tailwinds that will offer support, a senior official has said.

It is looking to raise up to Rs 1,200 crore through a rights issue of shares by the fiscal-end to pare the refinanced debt of Rs 3,000 crore, its Chief Financial Officer Himanshu Mody told PTI.

He said the recent developments on debt side, which saw Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) and Ireda taking over Rs 3,000 crore of debt through a refinance and an SBI-led 16-bank consortium settling for a 5 per cent equity



in the company for the remaining Rs 3,500-crore exposure, will help strengthen its balance sheet.

"The financial woes are behind us. We have a healthy balance sheet, good order book and a strong pipeline," Mody said.

He said having two lenders who have better understanding of the sector it operates in will help it reduce the bureaucratic challenges posed while being in a consortium of lenders and take advantage of business growth opportunities timely.

Right now, the debt to operating profit ratio stands at

3:1, and the same may go up as it borrows more for working capital needs, but overall, the trajectory on the debt profile is towards improvement, he noted.

Mody said scheduled debt repayments will get the debt levels down to Rs 2,500 crore but the company wants to trim it further.

With this in mind, its board has approved raising up to Rs 1,200 crore through a rights issue of shares, which Mody said will happen in FY23, and also monetisation of non-core assets.

Mody declined to provide any further details on the non-core assets which it plans to sell, but exuded confidence that it will be able to realise sizeable amount through the divestment.

The debt owed to REC and Ireda is long term in nature, but the tenor is significantly lesser than the earlier 20 years for the term loans from the banks' consortium, he said.

Looking at FY23 with cautious optimism, demand to recover as mobility picks up: Kumar Mangalam

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd (ABFRL) is looking at FY23 with cautious optimism and the company is on a growth trajectory with a digitally and structurally transformed business, its Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla has said.

The Indian economy is headed towards a steady recovery and as the vaccination drives progress, consumers are expected to get back to shopping with renewed confidence, Birla said in the company's annual report for 2021-22

"As mobility picks up, the demand for categories including formals, occasion wear, festive wear and accessories will recover," he said.

"The next fiscal is going to be a race to normalcy for the industry with re-invigorated market sentiments."

For the long-term, India remains on a strong value creation path considering the

underlying growth drivers like favourable demographics, increasing per capita and disposable income, and growing consumption.

Given the inherent strengths of ABFRL, "we are again at a moment where we are uniquely positioned to invest for long-term growth and explore new paradigms", he added.

ABFRL, which has substantially invested in digital platforms such as e-commerce, omnichannel and D2C business post-pandemic, will continue investing in building its digital capabilities further to make it intrinsic to its business model, the report said.

"With a digitally and structurally transformed business, your Company is on a growth trajectory to make the most of post-pandemic opportunities," he added. More than 1,000 stores of Madura brands and 300 stores of Pantaloon are now fully omnichannel enabled.

IN BRIEF

First meeting of MSP panel to be held on August 22

New Delhi: The committee on Minimum Support Price (MSP) is scheduled to hold its first meeting on August 22 to discuss future strategies, according to official sources. The meeting will be held at 10.30 am at the National Agriculture Science Complex in the national capital, the sources added.

14 students of SRMIST applauded on I-Day event

Chennai: Fourteen outstanding students from SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur were honoured by founder chancellor of SRMIST, Dr TR Paarivendhaar, as part of the annual Independence Day celebration.

BPCL to spend ₹1.4 lakh cr on petchem, gas business

New Delhi: State-owned Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) will invest Rs 1.4 lakh crore in petrochemicals, city gas and clean energy in the next five years as it looks to non-fuel businesses for growth.

SHARATH EYES OLYMPIC GLORY BEFORE CALLING IT A DAY

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ageing like fine wine, Sharath Kamal has set his sights on yet another shot at the Olympics, his confidence boosted by a grand showing at the recently-concluded Commonwealth Games.

At 40, Sharath returned from Birmingham as the most-decorated Indian athlete at the Games, with four medals.

Besides a yellow metal in the mixed doubles, Sharath also won the singles Gold after 16 years, the first coming at the 2006 Melbourne CWG.

Having played at the top level for over 20 years, Sharath is in no mood to retire just yet, and is determined to give himself two more years in search of an elusive Olympic medal.

"It feels great to get my personal best in CWG. My highest was three, this time I won a fourth. Fitness is key, it is something which I have been able to keep up, keep track of myself. I am working a lot to keep myself fit," Sharath said.

"I always try to keep my body and mind fit, especially because the reflexes of youngsters are fast, and I just try to be at par so that I can compete with them."

Having claimed a whopping 13 medals from the CWG and two Bronze at the 2018 Asian Games, the lanky paddler wants to achieve Olympic success before drawing the curtains on an illustrious career.

"Still that hunger to win medals is there, I am always looking to get better.

"I want to take two years at a time. So Paris could be a landmark year where we could qualify for the team event, and



"THE POPULARITY OF TABLE TENNIS HAS INCREASED IN THE COUNTRY AND I AM GLAD THAT WE COULD INSPIRE A GENERATION OF YOUNGSTERS"

hopefully, win a medal," Sharath said.

"It's a process, first we arrived at the CWG level, then we established ourselves at the Asian level also, and next is the Olympics."

Sharath doesn't want to compare his 2006 singles medal with the one in Birmingham, and feels both have their own significance.

"I had to wait for a long time to reclaim the Gold. I won a Gold for the first time in

2006. I won Bronze, Silver in between and in a few events, I won Gold, but comparison is difficult.

"That time (in 2006) I was young and there were no expectations from me. But this time, expectations were there, and I am happy I could repeat that feat," he said.

The country's most celebrated paddler believes the landscape of table tennis in India has changed a lot over the years.

"The popularity of table tennis has increased in the country and I am glad that we could inspire a generation of youngsters with our performances," said Sharath, who started his preparation for the Birmingham CWG in January.

"It changed a lot, back then my ranking was 130, and now, it's 38. I have a player ranked better than me in Sathiyam who is placed at 36th. We never had such highly ranked players."

Transparency in selection process is key to India's success in sporting arena: PM Modi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said India has come a long way on the front of transparency in national selection of athletes and that has been key to country's success at the multi-sporting events.

Modi said nepotism's negative influence was not just restricted to politics but the menace, at one time, also

affected the sporting arena.

"Just like Bhai-Bhatijawaad (nepotism) in politics, there was a lack of transparency in the selection of players for sports competitions. This was a huge factor due to which our players' talent was wasted," Modi said while addressing the nation on country's 76th Independence Day.

"They used to struggle all their lives against such diffi-

culties. But the situation has changed now and players are touching the sky. The shine of gold and silver medals is boosting the confidence of our youngsters.

"This is just the beginning because India will neither get tired nor stop here. Days are not far when we will win several gold medals," Modi added.

In last year's Tokyo Olympics, India signed off with a record of seven medals

(1 Gold, 2 Silver, 4 Bronze) and then followed that performance with 61 medals, including 22 Gold at the just-concluded Birmingham CWG. Modi has been consistent in meeting and interacting with sports persons before and after the big-ticket events.

He had hosted the Indian contingents after the Tokyo Olympics and the recently-concluded Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Not fair to give fewer Tests to South Africa: Nortje

FIANS ■ LONDON

South Africa pace spearhead Sanrich Nortje has criticised the International Cricket Council (ICC) for giving fewer Test matches to his country in the World Test Championship (WTC) cycle, saying getting just six games in a year when other are playing 15 is unfair.

Dean Elgar's side will begin its three-Test campaign against Ben Stokes' England at Lord's on August 17 hoping to garner maximum points in order to seal a spot in the WTC Final scheduled next year.

South Africa are marginally ahead of Australia at the top of the WTC rankings with 71.43 percentage points and, despite getting fewer games, are in pole position to secure a place in the 2023 final.

"If we play six (Tests) in a year and you guys (England) play 15 in a year, I don't see that being fair," Nortje, who will have a key role in the three-Test series against England, told Daily Mail.

"Our guys are not going to be as well-known as previous generations if we play 18 games in three years, or something like



that," he added.

The 28-year-old fast bowler also urged the cricket authorities to give his country the number of Tests befitting its current status. South Africa have got fewer opportunities than the big three comprising England, India and Australia.

"We want to be the No. 1 team in all formats. It's unfortunate the way it's gone but we are very keen to make a mark.

Maharaj, Khaka receive top honours

FIANS ■ JOHANNESBURG

Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj and pacer Ayabonga Khaka were named as the Men's and Women's Cricketer of the Year at the 2021-22 Cricket South Africa Awards ceremony held virtually on Sunday evening.

Maharaj and Ayabonga were also voted by their teammates to claim the Men's and Women's Players' Player of the Year awards, respectively.

In the men's awards, pacer Kagiso Rabada, was named the Test Player of the Year. All-rounder Aiden Markram was named the T20I Player of the Year, while top-order batter Janneman Malan was adjudged as the ODI Player of the Year.

Left-arm pace all-rounder Marco Jansen was named the International Newcomer of the Year.



WI win 3rd T20I to avoid whitewash

AP ■ JAMAICA

West Indies handed New Zealand their first limited-overs defeat of the year in cruising to a consolation eight-wicket win in the third and final T20I at Sabina Park on Sunday.

Odean Smith improved on his career-best T20I bowling figures for the third time in four matches as the fast bowling all-rounder claimed three for 29.

That helped limit the Black Caps to 145 for seven after captain Kane Williamson chose to

bat first.

New Zealand had already wrapped up the series by margins of 13 and 90 runs in the first two matches.

West Indies' platform for the comfortable win was established by openers Shamarr Brooks (56 not out) and Brandon King (53) in a 102-run opening stand.

"This was special, being able to give this performance at home," said King on receiving the man of the match award for his 35-ball innings.



India is still the ultimate challenge for Oz: McGrath

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Legendary Australia pacer Glenn McGrath feels that playing a Test series in India, scheduled to be held next year, is going to be the ultimate challenge for Pat Cummins & Co. McGrath was also appreciative of Australia's recent performances in Test trips to Pakistan and Sri Lanka, saying that the side has started to understand sub-continental conditions.

Australia will tour India as part of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy tentatively in February-March 2023, with an aim to win the series in a country where they have never won after the 2-1 triumph in October-November 2004. The side won the three-match Test series in Pakistan 1-0 in March and were held to a 1-1 draw in a two-match Test series in Sri Lanka in July.

"Obviously the single biggest challenge for Australia is coming to India, performing well and winning the series. We were lucky enough to do it in 2004. You've got to come up with good plans, the batsmen have to learn to adapt on turning pitches and the bowlers have to learn to bowl in those conditions." "I think with IPL, a lot of players have been over

Pujara smashes Sussex's highest-ever List A score

AP ■ LONDON

India's top-order Test batter Cheteshwar Pujara's scintillating run in the Royal London One-Day Cup extended when he smashed a fantastic 174 off 131 balls for his side Sussex against Surrey at the County Ground in Hove.

With his astonishing knock laced with 20 fours and five sixes, Pujara now holds the record for the highest-ever score made by a Sussex batter in List A cricket, going past the 171 made by all-rounder David Wiese against Hampshire in 2019. Pujara also brought up his highest ever score in List A cricket, going past the unbeaten 158 he made while representing India B in Rajkot in 2012. It also means that Pujara notched up back-



to-back hundreds in the competition, after scoring a 79-ball 107 against Warwickshire on Friday.

Against Sussex, he showed no signs of slowing down, picking up from right where he left against Warwickshire.

As Sussex's skipper, Pujara came out to bat when the side were 9/2.

here (in India) regularly and have hence experienced the conditions. The current Australian team, evident from their showings in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, are starting to get a better under-

standing of how to play on subcontinent wickets. That being said, India is still the ultimate challenge. I think they're up for it," McGrath was quoted as saying by cricket.com.

Shaheen fitness & WC key as Pak tackle Netherlands

AP ■ ROTTERDAM

Pakistan will look to collect crucial World Cup qualifying points when they tackle the Netherlands in a three-match ODI series from Tuesday but will have a wary eye on the fitness of star bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi.

The 22-year-old paceman suffered a knee injury on the recent tour of Sri Lanka, a worrying setback with the Asia Cup -- and a meeting with old rivals India -- coming up at the end of the month.

Pakistan team bosses do not want to overload a fast bowler who has already played 97 times across all three formats since his international debut just four years ago.

"We're taking a couple of doctors with us to take care of Shaheen and want him to play a game against Netherlands to see if he's fit and ready for the Asia Cup," said Pakistan skipper Babar Azam.

"But we have 11 trump cards. Each of them can be match winners on their day. I have faith in every one of them, whether batters or bowlers."

The series in Rotterdam was postponed due to Covid in 2020.

It forms part of the 13-nation Super League from where the top seven teams plus hosts India will qualify for the 2023 World Cup.

Pakistan are currently third with 90 points, having beaten a formidable Australia 2-1 in their last ODI series at home.

Failure to make the top seven would mean having to negotiate a perilous route through a qualifying competition.

"There are important Super League points at stake which we can't lose," said Azam who may be stunned to find Europe baking in a heatwave.

"I think the conditions will be similar to England. The weather will be cooler so we have practiced with the air conditioning on indoors, perhaps that helps simulate the conditions," he said on the team's departure for Europe.



"There are important Super League points at stake which we can't lose," said Azam who may be stunned to find Europe baking in a heatwave.

'Mind-blowing' England impress Procter ahead of SA series

AP ■ LONDON

South Africa great Mike Procter hopes England's 'mind-blowing' approach to Test cricket under captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum is a sign of things to come as they prepare to face his native Proteas in a three-match series.

England had won just one of their 17 previous Tests before their new red-ball leadership duo took charge this season.

But they have since become a transformed team, with a perfect record of four wins in as many matches heading into Wednesday's first Test against South Africa at Lord's.

That record includes a 3-0 series win over world champions New Zealand, where England chased down targets of 277, 299 and 296.

England then made light of a seemingly stiff pursuit of

378 in the Covid-delayed fifth Test against India at Edgbaston.

"Mind-blowing, to be honest," Procter said. "Watching on television, the way England have played has been mind-blowing, it really is."

An outstanding all-rounder, renowned for both his dynamic fast bowling and aggressive batting, the 75-year-old Procter played in just seven Tests before his international career was cut short by South Africa's apartheid-enforced exile from the world game.

But having spent a large part of his career playing for Gloucestershire in the hard-nosed environment of 1970s English county cricket, Procter has been struck by England's efforts to 'dilute' the fear of defeat.

"Looking back over all the years of Test cricket the initial attitude has always been, 'Let's make sure we don't lose'. Then



it's, 'If we can win, we win,' he said.

"This England team have changed all that. Of course, losing still matters but it's about going for the victory. It's been a breath of fresh air and I hope it rubs off on other teams."

He added: "That fear of losing hasn't been dispersed, but when you dilute it the way England hierarchy have, you are going to get some absorbing Test matches.

"Sure, they are going to come unstuck. There's no doubt it's going to happen, but I think they've got the character to pull through. If they continue playing the way they are, they can only get to the top."

Procter, however, believes South Africa could prove a match for England.

Since opener Dean Elgar became captain of the Test side in March 2021, the Proteas

have won seven out of nine matches.

They boast an impressive pace attack, although doubts remain over whether Kagiso Rabada will be fit to play at Lord's following an ankle injury, with Duanne Olivier already ruled out of the entire series by a hip problem.

But the likes of Anrich Nortje and towering left-armers Marco Jansen could still pose problems for England.

"South Africa have beaten India (at home in January), they've beaten New Zealand when they batted first on a green-top (in Christchurch in March)," said Procter. "The batters are really starting to apply themselves."

"South Africa are punching above their weight, but so are England. We've got two sides who are playing above themselves, it's going to be a fascinating series."

HALEP COMPLETES HAT-TRICK

Simona holds off Haddad Maia to win third WTA Canadian crown

AP ■ TORONTO

Simona Halep kept control against unpredictable Beatriz Haddad Maia on Sunday, beating the Brazilian 6-3, 2-6, 6-3 to win a third WTA Masters 1000 title in Canada.

The former world number one from Romania added the trophy in Toronto to those she captured in Montreal in 2016 and 2018.

She needed two and a quarter hours to deny the South American left-hander the upset victory.

"Here there are many Romanians and they always come to support me. I'm really happy that I could win also here," said Halep, who was backed by chants of "Si-mo-na!" from her vocal fans throughout the match.

She shrugged of nine double-faults and broke Haddad Maia five times from 10 chances as she became the third player with at least nine WTA 1000 titles, after Serena Williams (13) and Victoria Azarenka (10).

Halep, who was playing in her ninth final at the elite level as Haddad Maia tackled her first, won her 38th match of the season and claimed her biggest success since the Rome trophy in May, 2020.

After a year outside of the world's top-10 she is projected to rise to sixth this week with the start of the US Open approaching on August 29.

"I was there for many years but now I feel like it's a big deal to be back in top 10," she said. "I'm really happy with this performance."

"When I started the year I was not very confident and I set the goal to be top-10 at the end of the year -- and here I am."



"It's a very special moment. I will enjoy it. I will give myself credit. I'm just dreaming for more."

Haddad Maia, enjoying a breakout season that included grasscourt titles at Birmingham and Nottingham in June, had toppled world number one Iga Swiatek on her way to the final.

She struck first with a break on the way to a quick 3-0 lead. But Halep, a two-time Grand Slam champion, quickly responded, winning the opening set as she spun off six straight games to claim the opener 6-3, in 50 minutes.

Haddad Maia answered in the opening game of the second set with a break, consolidating through a double break for 4-0 before Halep stopped the rot to hold for 1-4.

The Brazilian delivered a huge serve on set point three games later to square the contest at a set each.

But Halep came out ahead after they traded three breaks of serve in the final set, wrapping it up on her second match point as Haddad Maia fired a service return into the net.

Haddad Maia said she was at times overwhelmed by the occasion.

"It was an emotional beginning, even when I was 3-Love up I couldn't hold the emotions. I couldn't control myself," she said.

"Simona started to play better, to improve. I was trying to be more aggressive."

"Today Simona deserved it, she played better than me," added Haddad Maia, the first Brazilian to reach the final of a WTA 1000 event. "She was more brave."

"Sometimes we learn — today, it's a day to learn."

Busta halts Hurkacz streak

AP ■ MONTREAL

Pablo Carreno Busta seized his first ATP Masters title on Sunday, spoiling Hubert Hurkacz's perfect record in ATP finals with a Montreal Masters triumph.

The 23rd-ranked Spaniard beat eighth-seeded Hurkacz 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 to become the first unseeded winner in Canada in two decades.

Carreno Busta notched his seventh ATP title, but his first in an elite Masters 1000 event in his first opportunity.

"It's an amazing feeling to be a Masters 1000 winner," Carreno Busta said. "It's the best title of my career for sure."

"I know that during all the week we worked very hard, also the weeks before. It's very important to be very positive all the time. It's not my best season this year. I lost some matches that probably other seasons I didn't lose, but I just tried to continue believing in my team, in myself and in my game."

Carreno Busta became the first unseeded winner in Canada in two decades.

Poland's Hurkacz had been unbeaten in five finals, Carreno Busta putting the first blemish on that record in just over an hour and three quarters.

He survived 18 aces from Hurkacz to become the first Canadian champion ranked outside the Top 20 since number 43 Andrei Pavel in 2001 at Montreal.

Carreno Busta is the third Spanish winner after five-time champion Rafael Nadal and Manuel Orantes in 1975.



Medvedev says mocking spectator demanded response

AP ■ MONTREAL

World number one Daniil Medvedev said on Sunday that he had no choice but to respond to a tennis spectator who jeered him after his loss last week to Nick Kyrgios in Montreal. Video of the incident was posted on social media.

Medvedev, speaking Sunday as he prepared to start as top seed at the ATP Cincinnati Masters, declined to elaborate on what he told the young spectator who called him a "loser."

But he said he felt compelled to act when the insult came from the person standing with a group of fans at an entrance to the locker room. "I was disappointed after

losing the match (in three sets to Kyrgios)," Medvedev said. "But when someone mocks me, I'll respond."

"It would be bad to let people shout bad things at me and just keep walking."

Medvedev also questioned the parenting of the young man's father, who was standing next to him in the scrum and who also joined in the verbal slanging.

"The father of the guy said something to me also -- I say educate your kid. I won't let people mock me."

Medvedev said such harsh treatment is far from common "in real life." This is one of the first times it's happened to me, it doesn't really happen a lot. On social media are a bit out of control."

Real start title defence with win

AP ■ MADRID

David Alaba scored with a stunning free-kick immediately after coming on as a substitute as reigning champions Real Madrid came from behind to beat Almeria 2-1 in their opening game of the season in La Liga on Sunday.

Carlo Ancelotti's side trailed to an early goal by Largie Ramazani away against their promoted opponents, but Lucas Vazquez equalised just after the hour mark.

The winner arrived with 15 minutes remaining at Almeria's Power Horse Stadium, as Alaba strode onto the pitch and curled a free-kick in off the upright after Luka Modric had been fouled just outside the box.

Real were made to work hard for the points against an Almeria side who won last season's second-tier title to return to La Liga after a seven-year absence.

"We had lots of shots on goal but once we got the first goal it made things much easier for us," said Ancelotti.

"I am happy with the way the game went. We were not spectacular but there were lots of things to take into account, like the game on Wednesday and the heat."

At one point it looked like Madrid might suffer a defeat in their opening league game of the season for the first time since 2008, with Ancelotti's decision to rotate his squad not initially paying off.



SANCHEZ DEBUT

Alexis Sanchez came off the bench to make his debut for Marseille as his new club drew 1-1 with Brest in Ligue 1 on Sunday.

The Chilean forward was named among the substitutes by coach Igor Tudor for the game in Brittany, four days after signing a one-year contract.

He was introduced at the start of the second half but did not have a major influence on the game as Marseille failed to hold onto the lead given to them in the first half at the Stade Francis-Le Ble by Nuno Tavares.



Villa confirm serious injury to Diego Carlos

AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

Aston Villa defender Diego Carlos is set for a long spell out after rupturing his Achilles tendon.

The Brazilian center back will require surgery, the Premier League club said on Monday, and then will begin a rehab program.

Villa did not say how long it expects Carlos to be sidelined. The 29-year-old Carlos joined Villa from Sevilla during the offseason and started the team's first two games in the Premier League, a loss to Bournemouth and the 2-1 win over Everton on Saturday.

He sustained the injury in second-half stoppage time against Everton.

LO CELSO RETURNS

Madrid: Giovanni Lo Celso is returning to Villarreal on another loan from Tottenham, the Spanish club said.

The Argentina midfielder arrived at Villarreal in the beginning of the year but his initial loan expired at the end of the season.

Rome clubs earn full 3 points

AP ■ ROME

Roma began their Serie A campaign with a hard-fought 1-0 win at Salernitana on Sunday, while Lazio to a comeback 2-1 win over Bologna.

Paulo Dybala and Georginio Wijnaldum both made their league debuts for Jose Mourinho's Roma but it was an older hand in Bryan Cristante who decided the match in the 33rd minute.

Italy international Cristante claimed the points with a drive from the edge of the area which took at least one deflection before nestling in the bottom corner.

Roma's margin of victory would have been larger had they capitalised on a series of chances, in particular in the first half.

"I would have been happy if we'd won 3-0 or 4-0 but what I liked was that even though we didn't score as many as we should have we had enough maturity to control the game" Mourinho told reporters.

Dybala was unlucky not to be on target on an impressive Roma debut in which he immediately struck up an understanding with Nicolò Zaniolo and Tammy Abraham.

The Argentina forward struck the post in the dying seconds of the opening half after a winding run from Zaniolo, who could have easily had two of his own before the break in an exciting display from the 23-year-old.

Zaniolo, long considered one of Italy's brightest young talents, has had to battle back



from two serious knee injuries and despite reported interest from Juventus and Tottenham looks committed to Roma.

It was far from one-way traffic at the Stadio Arechi as Salernitana, who completed a miracle escape from the drop to stay in Serie A, squeezed Roma back towards their own goal.

But they struggled to create chances and despite visibly tiring in the latter stages Roma would have sealed the win through Wijnaldum with five minutes left had Dybala not strayed offside in the build-up.

Earlier, Italy striker Immobile coolly slotted home the winner with 11 minutes remaining at the Stadio Olimpico to complete a comeback which looked unlikely when the hosts went a man down in the fourth minute.



Goalkeeper Luis Maximiano was sent off for handling outside his own area, and Maurizio Sarri's side were a goal down in the 38th minute following another couple of blunders from Alessio

Romagnoli and Mattia Zaccagni led to a silly foul on Nicola Sansone and a penalty which Marko Arnautovic happily tucked away.

Lazio were level in terms of on-pitch personnel going in at the break after Adama Soumaoro picked up two bookings in the space of five minutes at the end of the first half.

And they were level on the scoreboard in the 68th minute thanks to Lorenzo De Silvestri's own goal, the Italian watching on in horror as Manuel Lazzari's cross was patted onto him by goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski and then rolled into his own net. Lazio were in the ascendancy and it was no surprise when the club's all-time top scorer netted the winner after being put through by Sergej Milinkovic-Savic.

Famous clubs battle for CL group slots

AP ■ LONDON

The last stage of the Champions League qualifying marathon kicks off on Tuesday with three clubs who have already got their hands on the trophy eager to grab one of the last six group slots and the cheque that goes with it.

Benfica, who won the European Cup in 1961 and 1962 and have reached the final five times since then, face Dynamo Kyiv.

While Benfica coach Roger Schmidt worries whether Alex Grimaldo will recover from the dizzy spell that forced him off in Saturday's 1-0 league win at Casa Pia, the Ukrainians made clear they have weightier concerns.

The game will be in Lodz, where Dynamo are in exile following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The two clubs met in the group stage last season.

They drew 0-0 in Kyiv in the opening round, Dynamo's



only point. The Portuguese side won 2-0 at home in the last round to edge Barcelona for second in the group.

Returning to the group stage this year offers a hefty

reward.

Each club is guaranteed 15.64 million euros (\$16.04 million) for taking part. They can also collect 2.8m euros for every group stage victory and

930,000 euros for a draw. Teams that miss out, drop to the Europa League group stage where they are guaranteed 3.63m euros.

PSV Eindhoven, who

needed an extra-time goal to eliminate Monaco in the previous round, face Rangers.

Ruud van Nistelrooy, who replaced Schmidt as coach at the 1988 European champions, faces old international teammate and club adversary Giovanni van Bronckhorst, in Glasgow on Tuesday.

The two coaches were long-time Netherlands teammates.

They played on opposite sides the last time the clubs met in the Champions League.

Rangers, with Van Bronckhorst in midfield, won home and away in the 1999 group stage. Van Nistelrooy scored PSV's goal at Ibrox as Rangers won 4-1.

The third former champions in action are 1991 winners Red Star Belgrade, who visit Macabbi Haifa on Wednesday.

The Israelis surged through the last round by scoring three times in the last 30 minutes for an eye-catching 4-0 second-leg victory at Olympiakos.

Tuchel insists no hard feelings after Conte clash

AP ■ LONDON

Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel said he was happy to take a "fair tackle" from Tottenham boss Antonio Conte after both were shown red cards for clashing twice during a heated 2-2 on Sunday.

Conte's overexuberant celebrations of Spurs' first equaliser resulted in the two coaches being booked for squaring up. Tuchel then responded by running down the touchline in celebration when Chelsea retook the lead through Reece James 13 minutes from time.

But Harry Kane's 96th minute equaliser meant Conte had the last laugh.

Tuchel was not happy at the Italian for not making eye contact during a handshake at full-time, which sparked another melee between both sets of coaches and players.

"It was hot from the temperature and hot between the



benches and hot on the field and hot between the spectators," said Tuchel with temperatures soaring above 30 degrees Celsius in the English capital.

"There's no hard feelings. I feel like it was a fair tackle from

him and a fair tackle from me.

"We did not insult each other, we did not hit each other, we were fighting for our teams and from my side there's absolutely no hard feelings. I'm surprised that we both got a red card for that."