

OPINION 6

INDIA AS A MAJOR
WORLD PLAYER AT 75

WORLD 8

AFRICAN WILDLIFE PARKS FACE
CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE THREATS

MONEY 10

SENSEX RALLIES 515 PTS TO
RECLAIM 59K MARK

RAIPUR, FRIDAY AUGUST 12, 2022; PAGES 12-13

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

NZ GREAT ROSS
TAYLOR SAYS HE
FACED RACISM
12 SPORTPoll sops are a serious
issue: Supreme Court

Won't de-recognise political parties for this; balance has to be struck between economy and welfare of people, says court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday observed that promises by political parties to grant irrational freebies during the poll process is a "serious issue" but ruled out the possibility of considering a plea for de-recognising parties for making promises to give freebies.

Asking stakeholders to give suggestions on this aspect before August 17, a Bench comprising Chief Justice NV Ramana and Justice Krishna Murari said the idea to de-recognise political parties for making promises to give irrational freebies during the polls was "undemocratic".

"I do not want to enter the area of de-registering a political party etc. As it is an undemocratic idea. We are a democracy after all," the CJ said, adding the issue of promise to grant irrational freebies during the poll process is a "serious" one but he will not encroach into the legislative domain even if there was a statutory vacuum on the matter.

"You can call me reluctant



or conservative but I do not want to encroach upon the legislative domain...I am a strict orthodox. I do not want to encroach on the areas meant for the legislature. It is not an easy thing. Let us hear others also," the Bench said.

The CJ, who is demitting office on August 26, said some suggestions have been made by senior lawyers and asked the remaining parties to do the needful before his retirement and fixed the case for further hearing on August 17.

"Freebies and social welfare scheme are different...Economy losing the money and the welfare of people, both have to be balanced and that is why, this debate. Please submit something before my retirement," the CJ said.

The top court was hearing a PIL filed by lawyer and BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay, which opposes the practice of political parties promising freebies during elections and seeks the Election Commission to invoke its powers to freeze their election symbols and cancel their registration.

BJP, AAP spar
over poll-doles

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the BJP were engaged in a bitter war of words on Thursday over the ongoing debate on the issue of so-called freebies being promised by political parties to influence voters ahead of elections.

Kejriwal hit out at the Centre and said that taxpayers are betrayed when their tax money is used to waive off loans of "rich friends". Kejriwal claimed that the Centre waived Rs 10 lakh crore of loans and Rs 5 lakh crore of taxes of super rich people and their companies.

"There seems to be something wrong with the Centre's finances the way it is "strongly opposing" free facilities for people," Kejriwal added.

On the other hand, in a blistering attack on Kejriwal

the BJP claimed that while the Central Government's welfare policies empowered different deprived sections of society with targeted schemes, some parties like the AAP engage in 'revadi' culture by dishing out freebies to everyone for political gains.

"Revadi culture is about dishing out lollipops for political gains and it makes no transformation to people's lives. It misuses taxpayers' money with the rich benefiting at the cost of the poor," said the BJP.

At an online briefing, citing the Agnipath Defence recruitment scheme, reduction in States' share in central taxes from 42 per cent to 29 per cent, Goods and Services Tax (GST) imposed on food items and 25 per cent cut in MNREGA fund, Kejriwal asked where all the money was going?

Uri-type strike on
Army camp foiled

2 JeM terrorists neutralized, 4 soldiers martyred in early morning attack in Rajouri

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Alert troops of the Indian Army foiled a repeat of the 2016 Uri attack, gunning down two heavily-armed terrorists, as they attempted to storm a well-fortified Army post at Pargal in Darhal area of Rajouri in the early hours of Thursday. At least three soldiers of the Indian Army were killed while repulsing the terror attack during a three-hour-long firefight.

Three soldiers, including one senior Army officer, who received grievous injuries during the exchange of fire, were undergoing treatment, but one of them succumbed later, taking the Army's toll to four.

The slain militants are suspected to be the members of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) fidayeen squad.

The two-member suicide squad, sporting combat dresses, lobbed grenades and opened indiscriminate firing in a bid to storm the Army camp around 3:00 A.M. The terrorists wanted to recreate the Uri garrison attack of 2016 and inflict maximum fatalities. However, the alert sentries foiled the terror attack while suffering collateral damage.

The Pargal Army post,



Body of a militant who was killed after a suicide attack at an Army camp in Darhal area of Rajouri, in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday

located 25 kms away from the Line of Control, acted as an active base of an Army unit deployed in the forward area. The post accommodated a large number of soldiers in the remote area and was well-guarded by several sentry positions and barbed wire fencing.

This is the first major terror strike on an Army installation in Jammu region since October 2021.

A total number of nine soldiers including two JCOs were martyred in the thickly-forested area of Dera Ki Gali and Nar Khas in the Mendhar tehsil of Poonch between October 11-October 16. Another fidayeen attack was foiled in the Sunjwan area of Jammu ahead of the visit of Prime Minister on April 22 this year.

Preliminary reports suggested that the attack was car-

ried out by a well-entrenched module of the terror outfit as a few locals had spotted suspicious movement of non-locals in the area two days ago. Following general alert, ahead of the Independence Day celebrations, the cordon and search operations were launched to maintain a high degree of alertness.

According to a Jammu based Defence PRO Lt-Col Devender Anand, "In the early hours on Thursday, alert sentries of the Indian Army post at Pargal, in Rajouri district detected suspicious persons approaching their post taking advantage of the inclement weather and dense foliage".

He said the sentries challenged the two terrorists who lobbed grenades while attempting to gain entry inside the post.

CAPSULE

4 DROWN AFTER BOAT
CAPSIZES IN YAMUNA

Banda: At least four people drowned, eight people swam to safety and several others went missing on Thursday when a boat carrying 30-35 people capsized in the Yamuna River in Banda district's Marka area, police said.

INFLUENCER SMOKES ON
FLIGHT; PROBE ORDERED

New Delhi: Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday ordered an investigation after a video showing bodybuilder Bobby Kataria smoking on a SpiceJet surfaced on social media. The footage shows Kataria, who has 6.3 lakh Instagram followers, smoking a cigarette in one of the SpiceJet plane's middle rows. Passengers are not allowed to take lighter in the plane. P4

I-T PAYERS CAN'T ENROL
IN ATAL PENSION YOJANA

New Delhi: Income tax payers will not be allowed to enrol in the Government's social security scheme Atal Pension Yojana (APY) from October 1, according to a notification. P5

RAHUL SLAMS MODI ON
'BLACK MAGIC' QUIP

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his "black magic" remark, saying he must "stop lowering the dignity" of the PM's post by talking about such superstitious things.

MIZ-ASSAM BORDER ROW:
CM-LEVEL TALKS LIKELY

Aizawl: Mizoram and Assam are likely to hold chief ministerial-level talks in New Delhi later this month or early September to find an amicable solution to the inter-State border dispute, officials said.

After Partha, CBI arrests TMC strongman
Anubrata in cattle smuggling caseSAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

In a second major blow to the ruling Trinamool Congress in a matter of three weeks, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday arrested party strongman and its national executive member Anubrata Mondal in a cattle smuggling case.

Mondal, a senior leader and Birbhum district president, evaded 10 out of 11 CBI summons and was arrested by the central agency in an early morning swoop in his Bolpur residence in Birbhum district.

Mondal's residence is barely a mile away from the iconic Shantiniketan-Viswa Bharati of Rabindranath Tagore.

While his lawyers would not pray for bail, the TMC leader was remanded to 10 days CBI custody by a special



Trinamool Congress leader Anubrata Mondal after his arrest by the CBI in connection with a cattle smuggling case, at Bolpur in Birbhum district of West Bengal on Thursday

court at Asansol.

Mondal's arrest comes three weeks after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested senior Bengal Minister and party secretary general Partha Chatterjee and his close aide Arpita Mukherjee on money laundering charges connected to the school-level recruitment scam.

ED summons 8 Bengal IPS
men in coal scam case

Kolkata: In a sudden development the Enforcement Directorate investigating the multi-crore coal scam has summoned 8 senior IPS officers to Delhi between August 22 and 31.

Detailed story on P4

LG orders FIR against
11 retired DDA officials
in 2013 graft case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena on Thursday ordered registration of First Information Report (FIR) against eleven former Delhi Development Authority (DDA) officials, including then Member (Finance) and Member (Engineering), over alleged financial misappropriation and violation of norms in a 2013 case.

The LG, the DDA chairman, also ordered "permanent withdrawal of full pension" of nine retired officials. The nine retired officials include a chief engineer, a superintendent engineer and an executive engineer while the others were employed in the finance and accounts departments.

In a statement, the Raj Niwas said, "Lt Governor VK

Saxena in his capacity as DDA chairman has ordered that an FIR be registered against the then member (finance) and the then member (engineering) of DDA, apart from nine other officials in a 2013 case of blatant financial misappropriation and violation of codal formalities, Central Public Works Department Works Manual."

"I am of the considered view that the entire sequence of events amounts to criminal breach of trust and the angle of corruption cannot be ruled out. Hence, it is directed to register FIR in this case against all concerned, including incumbent Supervisory Officers, viz Abhai Kumar Sinha EM, DDA and Venkatesh Mohan, EM, DDA within 15 days," the LG said in his order.

China blocking blacklisting of
Pak ultra in UNSC exposes its
double standards, says IndiaPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

After China blocked a move at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to designate Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) deputy chief Abdul Rauf Azhar as a "global terrorist," India on Thursday hit back saying it exposed Beijing's "double speak" and "double standards" in the fight against terrorism. It was the second time in last few weeks, China blocked such a move.

The Indian condemnation came a day after a joint bid by India and the US to blacklist Abdul Rauf, the younger brother of JeM founder Masood Azhar, was blocked by China by placing a "technical hold" on the proposal. Beijing said more time was needed to study the issue. All other 14 members of the UNSC supported the Indian move. "It is unfortunate that the sanctions

committee has been prevented from playing its role due to political considerations. China's action exposes its double standards when it comes to the international community's shared battle against terrorism," said Government sources.

CHINA RESCUED
PAK SIX TIMES

China has come to the rescue of Pakistan at least six times in the last one decade on the issue of blacklisting terrorists based on its soil in the UNSC. Beijing thwarted the move four times to designate JeM chief Maulana Masood Azhar as a global terrorist using the technical hold way. In late June this year, China again blocked blacklisting of LeT deputy leader Abdul Rehman Makki. Similarly, the India-US move to designate Abdul Rauf Azhar on Wednesday met the same fate.

I-T Dept swoops
on Jalna bizmen,
seizes assets
worth ₹390 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department has seized "benami" property or "unaccounted" assets worth an estimated ₹390 crore during searches at multiple locations linked to some business groups in Jalna district of Maharashtra for tax evasion.

The seized assets included ₹56 crore in cash and 32 kilograms of gold, pearls and diamonds worth ₹14 crore, officials said. The searches were done between August 1 and 8 at the residential and official premises of functionaries of the two groups engaged in steel, clothing and real estate business.

The searches also yielded property documents and digital data to be scrutinised for further action, a reason why the agency has not identified the business groups covered in the search operation.

No trust against Speaker
delays floor test in Bihar;
to take place on Aug 24PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
PATNA

Against Bihar Assembly Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha (BJP), who has refused to quit despite a change of Government, has delayed the convening of the Assembly session for a vote.

A no confidence motion signed by several legislators of the Grand Alliance was submitted to the Assembly Secretariat on Wednesday.

In the first Cabinet meeting after taking oath on Wednesday, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his deputy, Tejashwi Yadav, decided to convene the Bihar Assembly session on August 24 to seek a vote.

WILL ALLOW ED, CBI TO
SET UP OFFICES AT MY
RESIDENCE: TEJASHWAI

Patna: Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Prasad Yadav on Thursday said far from being afraid of the ED and the CBI, he was ready to let the agencies set up offices at his residence if this brought "shanti" (peace).

IN A VEILED DIG AT
NITISH, GRIRAJ POSTS
DOG-LIONS VIDEO

New Delhi: A day after Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said the NDA Government needs to "worry" about the next Lok Sabha polls, Union Minister Giriraj Singh on Thursday tweeted a video showing a dog trying to fight two lions and captioned it "Challenge 2024", which he later deleted.



A youngster ties a 'rakhi' on the wrist of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during Raksha Bandhan celebrations, in New Delhi on Thursday

'Bhaijaan' thrills crew
at INS VisakhapatnamPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Known for his thrilling action scenes in commercial blockbusters, superstar Salman Khan, popularly known as "Bhaijaan," spent a day with the crew of the frontline warship INS Visakhapatnam. He danced and performed some physical fitness drills with the sailors and officers in a tribute to the valiant soldiers.

Taking time off from his hectic schedule recently, the superstar also engaged in group activities like a game of tug of war besides cooking food in the kitchen of the state-of-the-art destroyer in Mumbai.

The social media went abuzz with photographs of Salman Khan performing one hand pushups and carrying out



dumbbell curls with the officers and sailors. He also signed autographs and waved the Indian flag.

The Naval crew looked quite ecstatic to have him on board. They hoisted the Indian flag together with the actor.

It is the second time the superstar visited a warship. In 2014, Salman Khan spent Independence Day with the

naval officers in Goa. Talking about his love for the armed forces, he even played the role of a naval officer in his movie "Bharat" in which he starred opposite Katrina Kaif.

Amongst the largest destroyers built in India, INS Visakhapatnam has an overall length of 164 metre and displacement of over 7,500 tonne.

'Make J'suguda world-class station'

Naba Das urges Vaishnav
RAJ KUMR SHARMA
■ JHARSUGUDA

On Wednesday, Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Jharsuguda MLA Naba Das met Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav at New Delhi to discuss various issues of Jharsuguda district pertaining to railways. He was accompanied by Bargharh MP Suresh Pujari and Rajya Sabha MP Niranjan Bishi. During the discussion, Das submitted a memorandum to the Railway Minister outlining various pending demands including transforming Jharsuguda into a world-class railway station, construction of powerhouse level crossing



railway over bridge (ROB) and Ghanashyam Hemlata Balijhori Road level crossing at Chowkipara. The memorandum also requested for the transfer of town bus stand railway land to Jharsuguda municipality on a 99 years lease, installation of street lights for the facilities of railway passengers, arrangements for drinking water and sanitation,

deployment of new parking in front of Jharsuguda railway station, development of railway health centre, separate toilets for male and female on platform 2 and 4. In addition, the memorandum demanded a new ticket counter in Railway Colony, construction of a mini stadium on railway land near the bus stand, double road construction from Sarbahal to

the station, stoppage of Azad Hind Express, South Bihar Express and Hirkud Express at Belpahar station, stoppage of Duranto express in Jharsuguda station, development of Jharsuguda road station, and the opening of No. 225 level crossing for the extension of Dhutura railway station. The Railway Minister assured to look into their demands.

Jindal Swayam Sampanna Nari 508 girls get aid for skill dev, higher edu

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Shallu Jindal-headed JSPL Foundation supported scholarships of 508 meritorious girls from weaker sections of the society in Odisha and Chhattisgarh by way of vocational training and higher education under its Jindal Swayam Sampanna Nari programme. Under this programme, 508 girls were selected through a selection process started in March 2022. They will be supported with financial assistance towards the course fee and other associated fees for pursuing vocational training or academic courses in professional/general streams in the institutions/



colleges of their choice. The selected students will be supported for their education in various skill development programmes like retail trade, nursing and ANM, beauty therapist, tailoring, computer hardware as well as, academic courses and professional courses.

INBRIEF

FOC-IN-C (EAST) CALLS ON CHIEF MINISTER
Bhubaneswar: Vice-Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta, FOC-in-C, Eastern Naval Command, paid a courtesy call on Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik here on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, Vice-Admiral Dasgupta had co-chaired a State Apex Level Coastal Security Review Meeting along with Odisha Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra at the INS Chilka. The Vice-Admiral briefed the Chief Minister on the outcome of the meeting and on other issues of mutual interest between the Indian Navy and the State of Odisha. On Thursday, he met Governor Ganeshi Lal.

BRAHMAKUMARI GEETA TIES RAKHI ON GOVERNOR

Bhubaneswar: Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya main centre coordinator Brahmakumari Geeta on the occasion of the Raksha Bandhan tied Rakhi on Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal's wrist at the Raj Bhavan. Brahmakumaris Tripura and Smrutilina and Brahmakumaris Nirmal and Arun were present. Besides, Rakhis were tied on 500 brothers and sisters at the Vishwavidyalaya's main centre.

GANJAM BJP STARTS TRIRANGA CAMPAIGN

Brahmapur: The Ganjam unit of BJP began the Har Ghar Triranga Yatra here on Wednesday. Starting the procession from Ward-30 in Gosaninuaon Mandal, a politically sensitive area, BJP workers and functionaries made a door-to-door campaign appealing to the public to hoist the National Flag at their homes from August 13 to 15 to mark the 75th Independence Day. Former BJP district president KC Pati flagged off the yatra while Corporator candidate Barsha Bidyusmita and youth leader Subrat Pal led the campaign and distributed National Flags to people.

NDRF HOLDS CYCLE RALLY FOR HAR GHAR TRIRANGA

Athagarh: As a part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, the NDRF 03 Bn at Mundali on Wednesday organised a cycle rally under the campaign 'Har Ghar Triranga'. The rally, which was flagged off by Commandant Jacob Kispotta, started from the NDRF Battalion parade ground. It was led by Second-in-Command Arun Deogam, Second-in-Command Vardhaman Mishra and Deputy Commandant Dhananjay Kumar and had 50 participants.

K'JHAR TRIBALS HOLD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

Keonjhar: Members of various tribal organisations observed the International Day of World Indigenous Peoples at Bileipada village under Joda block in Keonjhar district. Tribals wearing traditional attires, carrying instruments, arms and flags and banner first worshipped their presiding deity. Leaders called upon the community members to be aware about their superstitions and promote education, employment and nutrition security among them. The meeting passed a resolution thanking Prime Minister Modi for Droupadi Murmu's election as the President. Another resolution was passed to write to the President on the various problems of tribals.

TRIRANGA YATRA HELD IN PHULBANI

Phulbani: Schoolchildren took out a Triranga procession here on Wednesday to mark the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. Members of the market committees also joined the Triranga Yatra, which started from Madikunda Square to the Coronation Field. The yatra was led by Sangha Sanchalak Ramesh Sahu, Phiringia College Principal Chittaranjan Mishra, ex-Chairman Siba Sankar Patra, senior advocate Bhagaban Mahanty, Birendra Subudhi and Phulbani Municipality Chairperson Smitarani Mohanty.

Man, wife electrocuted in Keonjhar



Close shave for daughter
PNS ■ KEONJHAR

A man and his wife were electrocuted on Tuesday night at Jamukundia village of Ansekala panchayat under the Joda police station in Keonjhar district. However, their five-year-old daughter had a narrow escape. The deceased were identified a Manduru Munda (42) and his wife Raimani (35). Manduru and Raimani

along with their daughter Arani had returned from the local village market at around 8.30 pm, when they came in contact with a live electrical wire hanging near the main door of their house, a police official said. The couple died on the spot. Getting information on Wednesday morning, a Joda police team reached the spot and initiated an investigation. Police have registered a case in this connection and sent the bodies for postmortem.

Guv attends host of events in K'pada

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

Governor Prof Dr Ganeshi Lal on Wednesday visited Kendrapada Township to attend the 138th Birth Anniversary of martyr Ananda Chandra Jena. He paid flower tribute to the statue of martyr-cum-revolutionary poet Ananda Chandra in Khadianga-Ranpada road. Later, the Governor attended a meeting at the Kendrapada Town Hall organised by the



Biplabi Ananda Chandra Jena Smruti Committee to mark the occasion. Later, Dr Lal released a book

"Agniputra Biplabi Ananda Chandra" written by Niranjan Mekap. Renowned journalist, Ambika Prasad Das, who is the president of the Smruti Committee, presided. The Governor later felicitated 10 meritorious students too. He went to Sibanand Ashram at Garapur to interact with Baladevjeev Mission Shakti Mahasanga and also visited a blind school at Kahala and interacted with the students.

Jumbo gets stuck in mud, dies in D'nal

PNS ■ DHENKANAL

A female elephant died after getting stuck in mud for quite long hours in a forest under the Kamakhyanager range of Dhenkanal district, a forest official said on Thursday. The pachyderm was around

three to four years of age, he speculated. The carcass of the jumbo was spotted by local residents early in the morning near Danara pond of Kankili village under the Kamakhyanager western range. Locals questioned as to how Forest Department staffs could

not know the animal getting stuck. It was only after detection of the carcass, forest personnel reached the spot. A herd of five elephants had been wandering in the nearby areas on Tuesday afternoon. The herd went to the pond to drink water and got stuck. However, four of the animals

came out of the mud and went into the Kankili reserve forest, a local villager informed. On being contacted, Kamakhyanager Forest Ranger Banabihari Sardar said, "The actual reason behind death of the elephant can be ascertained only after a thorough probe."

PNB Manager missing in Subarnapur

Bike found abandoned; cops begin probe
PNS ■ SONEPUR

Punjab National Bank (PNB) Agriculture Manager Dibyaranjan Mishra went missing under mysterious circumstances in Subarnapur district on Wednesday. Mishra, posted at the PNB's Barpali branch in Bargharh district, had been to Binika in Subarnapur district for some work. Sources said he had spoken to his wife over phone that he would return home by 6 pm. However, he did not return and his phone was found switched off after 7 pm.

His family frantically searched for him at Binika, but failed to trace him. Later, they got information that a motorcycle was found abandoned near the Anga river bridge at Cherupali on the Balangir-Sambalpur NH-26. They rushed to the spot and identified the motorcycle and a helmet. Then they approached the police and lodged a complaint. Following the complaint, the Loisingha and Dunguripali police initiated a probe into the case. Suspecting any untoward incident, his family members ruled out the suicide angle and said that neither Mishra had enemy nor had he any disturbed family relations.

Pallahara MLA reviews dev works

PNS ■ PALLAHARA

Under the chairmanship of Pallahara MLA Mukesh Pal, a review meet on development activities in Pallahara Assembly Constituency was held on Wednesday here. Line department officials of the district and Pallahara block were present.



The focus was on the programme implementations and development since 2019 general election. The MLA expressed dissatisfaction over performance of the Agriculture, RWSS, Electricity, Forest, Education and Labour departments. The

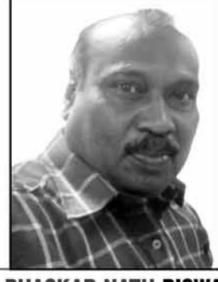
senior officers were not present in spite of receiving prior notices. The CDMO Angul said that doctors and staff

vacancies in both Kaniha and Pallahara hospitals would be filled soon. Tenders have been invited for 58 sub-centres for both blocks, said the CDMO.

MLA Pal asked the authorities to operationalise the existing blood bank in Pallahara sub divisional hospital which is lying defunct.

How to check the ragging menace in the campus

Recently, the members of Ragging Free Campus Abhiyan (RFCA) met the Governor to appraise him the state of affairs of the ragging menace in Odisha and sought his intervention to check it. The incident of ragging at the BJB College in Bhubaneswar and the Balangir medico ragging case where both victims committed suicide once again brought the problem into limelight. Odisha has always remained in the list of five top States when it comes to ragging as per the anti-ragging helpline (1800-180-5522) of the University Grants Commission (UGC). The national helpline was set up as per the directions of the Supreme Court after the death of Aman Kachroo in 2009. Ragging entered the academic institutions as a fun game intended to mix with the newcomers but gradually turned into a notorious life-threatening mental game. As per the Supreme Court's order and subsequent UGC notification, ragging constitutes one or more of any intention by any student or group of students on (a) any act of



BHASKAR NATH BISWAL

indiscipline, Teasing or Handling with Rudeness, (b) any activity which is likely to cause Annoyance, hardship, Psychological Harm or creates Fear or Apprehension, (c) any Act of Financial Extortion or Forceful Expenditure, (d) any Act of Physical Abuse causing Assault, Harm or danger to Health, (e) any Act of abuse by spoken words, emails, SMS or public insult, etc. (f) any act of wrongful confinement, kidnapping, molesting or committing unnatural offences, use of criminal forces, trespass or intimidation and (g) any unlawful assembly or

conspiracy to ragging. The UGC has instructed all universities and colleges to take adequate steps to stop ragging in their campuses. It has made mandatory to the students and parents to submit undertakings every year that they will not indulge in ragging activities and stringent action can be taken against them in case they indulge in such activities. Institutions were instructed to form anti-ragging committees, cells and squads in their campuses to curb the ragging menace. It shall be the duty of the Anti-Ragging Committee to ensure compliance with the provisions of these regulations as well as the provisions of any law for the time being in force concerning ragging and also to monitor and oversee the performance of the Anti-Ragging Squad in prevention of ragging. The punishment for the students who indulge in ragging may include suspension from attending classes and academic privileges; withholding/ withdrawing scholarship/ fellowship and other

benefits; barring from appearing in any test/ examination or other evaluation process; withholding results; debarring from representing the institution in any regional, national or international meet, tournament, youth festival, etc.; suspension/ expulsion from the hostel; cancellation of admission; rustication from the institution for period ranging from one to four semesters; expulsion from the institution and consequent debarring from admission to any other institution for a specified period. Many institutions think that in case of ragging, stringent punishment will be given to the students, they are not aware that they are also liable to be prosecuted for negligence. As per the Supreme Court order, regulations shall have to be enforced strictly and penal consequences for the heads of the institutions/ administration of the institution for not taking timely steps in the prevention of ragging and punishing those who rag. In addition to penal consequences, departmental enquiries must be

initiated against such heads institutions/ members of the administration/ faculty members/ nonteaching staff, who display an apathetic or insensitive attitude towards complaints of ragging. Similarly, a ragging incident in an institution will adversely impact its accreditation, ranking and grading by the NAAC or similar accreditation institutions. The freshers will step into the campuses now as Plus Three and Plus Two admissions are to begin. Adequate measures are to be taken by the Department of Higher Education to check the menace. In its letter dated 3rd August, 2022, the department directed all universities and colleges to take preventive measures as per the UGC-notified Regulations for Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions-2009. The institutions are instructed to distribute pamphlets, organise workshops, form anti-ragging squads, install CCTV cameras and filing FIRs in case of established cases of ragging. A student can register a ragging complaint with the anti-ragging cell

of his/ her college or with the UGC helpline or by mailing the complaint to helpline@antiragging.in odishaantiraggingcell@gmail.com. But before this, the institution has to make all arrangements for the popularisation of the anti-ragging cell members and their phone numbers. Sensitisation programmes are to be conducted from time to time for all students so that the victims will come forward for complaining when an incident takes place. CCTVs are to be installed at vital points of the campus. The website of the institution is to be updated with the details of the nodal officers dealing with the ragging problem. All these efforts can change the mindset of the students who are planning for ragging and discourage them to do so. Posters approved by the UGC are to be displayed at prominent places in the campus. Pamphlets are to be printed and circulated so that every student can know about the consequences of ragging. A ragging-free atmosphere is to be created with dedicated efforts of the

institution's management. A District Level Meeting is to be convened by the District Committee for the selected administrators and academicians every year before the beginning of the academic session to make all educational institutions aware. One or two district-level workshops should be conducted where all the Principals will discuss the preventive measures. The Supreme Court directions and the UGC instructions are to be thoroughly understood by the institution heads so that they can remain vigilant and take adequate steps for checking the menace in their respective institutions. The District Committee should watch and monitor the situation in the colleges and take appropriate steps for curbing the menace. Prevention is better than cure. If proper care is taken for spreading awareness in the campus among the students on the problem of ragging and its consequences, the menace can be checked to a great extent. (Dr Biswal is Principal, Nabarangpur College)

Minimata dedicated her life for human welfare: Baghel

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday said Minimata, known for her simplicity and values, had an incomparable persona. She dedicated her entire life to the welfare of humankind.

He was addressing the event 'Minimata Smriti Diwas and Pratibha Samman Samaroh' (Minimata Memory Day and Meritorious Felicitation event) held at Shaheed Smarak Bhawan, here.

Baghel said she played an important role in getting the Prevention of Untouchability Act passed in the Parliament, to protect



the civil rights of Dalits. She not only advocated eradication of social evils such as child marriage and dowry system in the society, but also continued to raise the

issue in the Parliament.

The Chief Minister released a special cover issued by the India Post Department on the occasion of Minimata's 50th death

anniversary.

Baghel further said that Minimata was the epitome of women's power and dignity. Her strong leadership skills gave her a

distinct identity among the national leaders. As the first female Member of Parliament (MP) of Chhattisgarh, her contribution towards uplift of Dalits and women will always be remembered.

She had good knowledge of Assamese, English, Bengali, Hindi and Chhattisgarhi languages. After marrying Guru Agam Dass, the fourth descendant of Guru Baba Ghasidas of Chhattisgarh, she devoted her whole life for development, both in terms of humans and their basic needs.

The Chief Minister also felicitated the meritorious students and people of Satnami Samaj, for their excellent works and achievements.



Bhojali, the nine-day traditional festival of Chhattisgarh, concluded here on full moon day of Shrawan month of the Hindu calendar on Thursday. The festival is observed to please the Rain God. **Pioneer Photo**

C'garh employees-officers to go on indefinite strike

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Over 450,000 employees and gazetted officers in Chhattisgarh will resort to an indefinite strike from August 22 in support of their demands. They held a five day strike from July 25 to 29.

The state government employees want 34 percent dearness allowance (DA), house rent allowance (HRA) and pay scale at par with the Central government employees.

At present they are getting 22 percent DA, said Vijay Jha, Patron, Chhattisgarh Class III Grade Employees Union.

He said all other unions



and associations will join hands to participate in the strike. Chhattisgarh Pradesh

Clerical Grade Employees Union state President Rohit Tiwari said the union has also decided to support the strike scheduled on August 22. The union is also fighting for resolving the wage disparities.

He said Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel had on February 17 announced plans to remove the wage disparities of the clerical staff. But till date no steps have been taken to resolve the issue.

Earlier, the Secretariat staff was reluctant to join the five-day strike but the associations have announced their intention to join the strike from August 22.

Four wagons, engine of freight train derail

STAFF REPORTER ■ BILASPUR

Four wagons and the engine of a stationary freight train got derailed after it was hit by a locomotive near Raigarh railway station in Chhattisgarh on Thursday.

The incident took place at 11:40 am at a railway siding on the outskirts of Raigarh railway station on the Mumbai-Howrah route, said Saket Ranjan, Chief Public Relations Officer of the South East Central Railway.

The twin-engine locomotive collided with the stationary empty goods train



from the rear, the official said. The locomotive was also damaged. No one was injured.

Prima facie it seems negligence resulted in the incident. But an enquiry is on, Ranjan added.

As the mishap took place on what is called a "third line", the movement of other trains was not affected.

Special camps for revision of electoral rolls

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chief Electoral Officer of Chhattisgarh on Wednesday announced that special camps will be organized for revision of electoral rolls in November.

The Election Commission has revised the earlier dates. Earlier, the camps were to be held on November 5 and 6. Now they will be held on November 12, 13, 19 and 20.

The electoral rolls in these camps will be revised as on January 1, 2023.



The officer stated that all designated officers have been appointed for the revision work.



Brahma Kumari sisters on Thursday reached the official residence of Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and tied a Rakshabandhan on him. **Pioneer Photo**

Suspected Maoists kill villager in Bijapur

STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR

Suspected Maoists abducted and killed a villager in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, police said on Thursday.

Security personnel on Thursday recovered the body of Gopiram Madkam near his village Kahurgaon, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Anjaneya Vaishnav said.

According to preliminary information, Madkam was abducted from his village on August 8, he said.

Though no complaint was lodged with the police, the matter came to light on Thursday morning when some villagers informed the

Security personnel on Thursday recovered the body of Gopiram Madkam near his village Kahurgaon

authorities that he had been murdered by Maoists.

Security forces then went to the area and found the body from a forest, the official said. The reason behind the murder was yet to be ascertained.

Chhattisgarh receives satisfactory rainfall

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Average rainfall of 743.00 mm has been recorded in Chhattisgarh from June 1 to till date, which is said to be satisfactory.

Based on rainfall recorded in different districts, Bijapur district got the highest average rainfall of 1,774.4 mm while Surguja received the least -- 279.9 mm.

According to information from the Revenue and Disaster Management, the



average rainfall in the other districts was: Dantewada 1,125.4 mm, Bastar 1,089.1 mm, Kanker 970.5 mm, Dhamtari 912.8 mm, Balod 898.4 mm, Narayanpur 860.6

mm, Kondagaon 855.0 mm, Gariaband 842.6 mm, Janjgir-Champa 821.7 mm, Rajnandgaon 799.8 mm, Mungeli 786 mm, Sukma 782.5 mm, Bilaspur 778.3 mm, Mahasamund 726.6 mm, Balodabazar 721.1 mm, Durg 717.3 mm, Kabeerdham 711.3 mm, Raigarh 644.3 mm, aurela-Pendra-Marwahi 627.4 mm, Raipur 573.0 mm, Korba 525.2 mm, Bemetara 502.3 mm, Koriya 396.7 mm, Jashpur 381.9 mm, Surajpur 380.1 mm and Balrampur 318.7 mm.

Collector slaps notices on 9 RAEOs

STAFF REPORTER ■ BALODABAZAR

Expressing concern over slow progress of work in the agriculture department, the Collector of Chhattisgarh's Balodabazar district, Rajat Bansal, on Thursday slapped notices on nine Rural Agriculture Expansion Officers for their absence at a review meeting.

Official sources said the Collector issued notices to Sanjay Minj, Kishor Markam, Shashikant Dhruv, Lileshwar Patel, Sunil Dhritlahre, Nilesh Dadsena, Bhagwat Satnami, Arvind Urmalia and Hemant Choubey for dereliction of duty and for absence.

Two held with cannabis



STAFF REPORTER ■ MAHASAMUND

Chhattisgarh Police on Thursday seized 5 kg of cannabis valued at Rs 1 lakh and arrested two persons here when they transporting it from

Odisha to Haryana. Mahasamund Superintendent of Police Bhojram Patel said Rajesh Kumar (28) and Ankur (24), both from Haryana, were taken into custody. Acting on a tip, the police nabbed them near

an eatery in Balsi village while they were on a motorcycle. The accused told the police that they brought the contraband from Odisha and it was to be supplied in Haryana, the officer said.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers: of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

CBI files fresh case in Bengal SSC scam case



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a fresh case in connection with the corruption in the West Bengal Central School Service Commission against Headmistress of Birpara Girls High School, Alipurduar and unknown officials of the West Bengal Central School Service Commission (WBCSSC). The case has been registered under Indian Penal Code sections relating to criminal conspiracy, cheating, offences relating to public servants being bribed and Prevention of Corruption Act relating to criminal misconduct by public servants. The FIR names Santa Mondal, Headmistress of Birpara Girls High School and unknown officials of the West

Bengal Central School Service Commission and unknown officials of West Bengal School Education Department and unknown private persons.

The case follows a directive from the Calcutta High Court to the CBI to register a regular case in connection with the alleged offences committed by some officials of the WBCSSC and Education Department regarding transfer of Mondal from Birpara to Vidyamandir High School, Siliguri.

"It is alleged that the transfer of the said Santa Mondal was wholly illegal to any school before completion five years and it is not known whether she applied through proper channels for transfer which cannot be done because of the Rule of five years service in a school

ED summons 8 senior police officers in coal smuggling case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned eight senior police officers of West Bengal to appear for questioning next week before the agency's office in the national Capital in connection with the coal smuggling case.

The Indian Police Service (IPS) officers summoned by ED are Gyanwant Singh (ADG, CID), Koteswara Rao, S Selvamurugan, Shyam Singh, Rajeev Mishra, Sukesh Kumar

Jain and Tathagata Basu, officials said. The IPS officers have been given specific dates to appear before the ED at its New Delhi office, they added. "These IPS officers played crucial roles in the coal smuggling case.

There is evidence that these officers benefited from the scam. All of them were posted in areas where the smuggling happened," the ED official said. Last year, seven of these eight officers were summoned by the ED for questioning in the case.

before transfer. Therefore, it is alleged that she wrote directly to some officials of West Bengal Education Department for her transfer and transfer order was passed in her favour," reads FIR. The transfer order was illegally passed by then Secretary

WBCSSC in connivance with Commission officials for "extraneous consideration in favour of Santa Mondal by extending undue advantage to her through dishonest performance of their public duty in matter of transfer," it added.

Will intervene if attempt made to sabotage hosting of FIFA-U-17 World Cup, says SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday warned the State football associations of "exercising its authority" if ousted AIFF chief and NCP leader Praful Patel attends their meetings and interferes with the administration of justice. The apex court said it will intervene if any attempt is made to sabotage the hosting of the 2022 FIFA-U-17 Women's World Cup in India.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, Surya Kant and AS Bopanna refused to hear the modification applications filed by the Centre and State Football Associations, and the contempt petition of the Committee of Administrators (COA) against Patel for allegedly "interfering with the proceedings" of the top court after it was informed that a meeting is scheduled for Thursday evening with FIFA authorities.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has been at the centre of a controversy after it failed to hold timely elections due to a delay in finalising its constitution, a key

requirement for the prestigious tournament to be held in the country.

As the delay persisted, the apex court appointed a three-member Committee of Administrators (CoA) comprising former chief election commissioner S Y Quraishi, ex-Supreme Court judge Anil Dave and former India football captain Bhaskar Ganguly to run the day-to-day affairs of the AIFF.

Patel, despite being ousted by the SC, allegedly held a meeting with 35 Intervening Member Associations on August 6, amid the continued threat of a ban on AIFF by the world football body AIFA and the Asian Football Confederation on account of non-holding of the election. Patel is an executive council member of the AIFA and vice president of AFC.

Additional Solicitor General Balbir Singh, appearing for the Ministry for Youth Affairs and Sports, said he has instructions to inform the court that on Wednesday a meeting with officials of the FIFA was held and another round is scheduled for Thursday

evening, and efforts are being made to iron out the differences and salvage the 2022 FIFA-U-17 Women's World Cup.

"Then we will hold back our hands and we should not open up the case," the bench said and refused to hear the matters listed for hearing.

Singh said the court may record in its order that the secretary of COA and secretary of the AIFF be allowed to be present in the meeting with the FIFA officials. Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for the COA, said it would be appropriate if only the two representatives already decided by the COA participate in the meeting with FIFA. Singh assured the bench that the ousted entities (Patel) will not be involved.

On Wednesday, the top court had warned State football Associations that it does not appreciate their "back door methods" to defeat the orders of the court and it is up to them to hold the 2022 FIFA-U-17 Women's World Cup in India. India is due to host the FIFA Under-17 Women world cup from October 11, 2022.

PM celebrates Raksha Bandhan with children at his official residence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday celebrated Raksha Bandhan and the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign with children at his official residence to usher in the 75th anniversary of India's Independence.

It was "special" occasion since the young girls were the daughters of sweepers, peons, gardeners, drivers, and other helpers who work at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The little girls tied "rakhis" on his wrist.

Later, the PM gave a tri-colour to each of the girls and waved the flag along with them. Slogans of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram' were also raised by the children. The Prime Minister was also seen interacting with the children and discussing how the country was celebrating the 75th anniversary of Independence this year. He discussed the colours of the national flag and urged all the children to put up the Tiranga at their residence on August 15.

India, Bangladesh review Defence, strategic ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh on Thursday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral defence and strategic ties here during the talks between Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar and his Bangladesh counterpart Bangladesh Lt General Waker-Uz-Zaman.

The talks were held under the aegis of the fourth India-Bangladesh Annual Defence Dialogue between Ajay Kumar and Zaman who is Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division of Bangladesh, defence ministry officials said here.

During their interaction, they reviewed ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries and expressed satisfaction that collaboration is growing despite difficulties imposed by COVID-19 pan-

demia. The talks covered the existing bilateral exercises and training and agreed to increase the complexity of these exercises. Both the sides reviewed the progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives and expressed commitment to further elevate engagements between the Armed Forces. Various aspects of defence industrial and capability building cooperation came up for detailed discussions. Both sides emphasised need to work closely to implement USD 500 million line of credit extended from India for defence items.

The Defence Secretary commended the Bangladeshi side for their efforts in UN peace keeping. The Armed Forces of both countries continue to seek bilateral cooperation in multiple fields and increased engagements are a positive sign for future of relations of both countries.

Dhankhar sworn in as 14th V-P of India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Jagdeep Dhankhar was on Thursday sworn in as the 14th Vice President of India. President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath to Dhankhar (71) during a brief ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Dhankhar took the oath in Hindi in the name of god. "Bahut-bahut badhai (many congratulations)," Murmu said after Dhankhar signed the register of oath.

Before the swearing-in, the Election Commission's certification of election issued to Dhankhar was read out. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Dhankhar's predecessor M Venkaiah Naidu, former president Ram Nath Kovind, former vice president M Hamid Ansari, and Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman and Nitin Gadkari were among the dignitaries present on the occasion. In the morning,



President Droupadi Murmu administers oath to Jagdeep Dhankhar as the 14th Vice President of India, at a ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Thursday

Dhankhar paid tributes at Raj Ghat, the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi. "Felt blessed, inspired and motivated to be ever in service of Bharat in serene sublimity of Raj Ghat while paying respects to puja Babu," he tweeted then. Dhankhar's reemergence in the political scene in 2019 as

West Bengal governor surprised many, so has his rise to the office of the Vice President of India. Dhankhar was declared elected as the Vice President on Saturday after he bagged 528 votes against his rival candidate Margaret Alva's 182. A man of many interests, his long legal career at the

Rajasthan High Court and the Supreme Court and a brief stint as the junior parliamentary affairs minister at the Centre will come in handy as he presides over Rajya Sabha as its chairman. Dhankhar, who had been associated with the Janata Dal and the Congress, joined the BJP only in 2008 after a hiatus of nearly a decade.

BJP has described Dhankhar as a "kisan putra" while announcing his candidature for the vice presidential election, a move seen in political circles as aimed at reaching out to the politically significant Jat community which had participated in huge numbers in the year-long farmers' protests on the borders of the national capital against agriculture reform measures unveiled in June 2020.

In his initial journey as a politician, Dhankhar was influenced by Devi Lal and later, shifted to the Congress during the tenure of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao.



Happy Rakshabandhan



Rahul, Priyanka post montage of pictures on Raksha Bandhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Siblings Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi posted a montage of pictures on Raksha Bandhan on Thursday, the images revealing their close bond right from their growing up years to their political present as Congress leaders.

The former Congress president and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra wished people on the festival. "Me and my sister @priyankagandhi have been together since childhood, have seen many

ups and downs in life together and always gave courage and strength to each other. Today, on day of Rakhi, I wish that the love between every brother and sister remains forever," Rahul said on Instagram, sharing pictures from their childhood and recent times.

In a warm display of brother-sister love, he also posted pictures of Priyanka and him on Twitter. The pictures also featured their grandmother Indira Gandhi and their father Rajiv Gandhi, both former PMS, with them as children.

Ministry flags irregularities in functioning of PMAY (Gramin) scheme in Odisha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After Chhattisgarh, the Central team of Rural Development Ministry, has flagged several irregularities in the functioning of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) scheme in Odisha too.

These range from anomalies in the list of beneficiaries, as many as 37 per cent, discrepancies in uploading data on Awas-soft website, fudging in beneficiaries bank account numbers, transfer of funds to non-eligible persons and denying benefits to legitimate individuals.

This was pointed out by Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Giriraj Singh during his meeting with Odisha Minister of Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Pradip Kumar Amat recently to discuss progress in the implementation of the central flagship.

The (PMAY-G) has been implemented from April 1, 2016, with an objective of providing "Housing for All" by March 2024. Union Minister of Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Dharmendra Pradhan was also

present in the meeting. Giriraj Singh also raised serious objections to the change of logo of the PMAY-G which is against the scheme guidelines, said an official from the Ministry.

The Union Rural Development Minister called for effective monitoring of the PMAY-G scheme in the state saying that social audit of the Panchayats needs to be undertaken.

He also emphasized on effective convergence of the scheme with Swachh Bharat Mission for construction of toilets, Saubhagya scheme for power connection to every household, Har Ghar Jal for tapped water and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for LPG/Gas connection.

"The convergence is still a paltry 20-25 per cent, he said," according to the official. Giriraj Singh said his Ministry, together with the State Government, has a target to provide houses to the more than 8 lakh beneficiaries in Odisha. The tribal and backward districts should be accorded priority, he said.

The official shared that it was agreed in the meeting that anomalies pointed out by the Central team will be resolved and punitive action will be initiated against fraudulent ben-

eficiaries and complicit officials. Last week, the Union Rural Development Ministry had also cautioned the Congress-led Chhattisgarh government that it "shall be compelled to reconsider its support to its other core schemes" if it fails to duly implement the rural housing scheme.

In a letter to Chhattisgarh Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain, Rural Development Secretary Nagendra Nath Sinha had mentioned that the state government has not shown satisfactory progress despite several letters and meetings in this connection.

"If the state is unable to implement PMAY-G..., the ministry shall be compelled to reconsider its support to other core Rural Development (Ministry) schemes/programmes," Sinha said in the letter.

He had said despite several rounds of communication from "various levels of the Union Ministry to the Chhattisgarh government, it has neither shown satisfactory progress nor released the due state share of Rs 562 crore, as a result of which the work of PMAY-G has come to a standstill in state, a situation, which you are well aware of."

Central Vigilance Commissioner Suresh N Patel and vigilance commissioners Arvind Kumar and Praveen Kumar Srivastava when they called on Union Minister for Personnel Jitendra Singh on Thursday.

Citing figures, Patel informed Singh that the pendency of 2,099 disciplinary matters for the period prior to December 2018 had been

reduced to 227 by June 30, 2022 due to a special campaign initiated by the commission in 2020, an official release said. Similarly, overall outstanding disciplinary matters which on an average as on December 2019 used to be around 5,000 at a given point of time has come down drastically in the range of 1,700 now due to cooperation of the authorities at different levels, it said.

Your energy is infectious: Modi tells Venkaiah Naidu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, which drove him to join a political party that had little presence in his State of Andhra Pradesh, saying his "energy is infectious".

In a three-page farewell letter to Naidu, whose term as the Vice President ended on Wednesday, the Prime Minister said, "Your energy is infectious. It can be seen in your wit and wisdom. Your one-liners are widely admired. Articulation has always been among your greatest strengths." Recalling Naidu's strengths, Modi said from the small lanes of Nellore to the vice-presidency, yours



has been an outstanding and inspiring journey. Referring to his chairmanship of Rajya Sabha, Modi said Naidu has always been a "stickler for parliamentary discipline and traditions". "I know of your personal anguish and discomfort whenever there were unseemly disruptions or the dignity of the Parliament was lowered in

French air force on a mission in Indo-Pacific

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Signifying close Defence ties between two countries, three French Rafale jets along with support aircraft stopped for a day at an IAF airbase and flew out after refuelling on Thursday. The French contingent is carrying out a major long range mission in Indo-Pacific codenamed Pegase 22.

The stop over and refuelling operation at IAF airbase in Sullur near Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu demonstrated a high level of mutual trust and interoperability between French and Indian Air Forces, which has been further boosted by fact that both Air Forces now fly Rafale jets.

It also illustrated concrete implementation of the reciprocal logistics support agreement signed by France and India in 2018, the French Embassy said here. Lauding IAF's role in this successful operation, the Ambassador of

France to India Emmanuel Lenain, said: "France is a resident power of Indo-Pacific, and this ambitious long-distance air power projection demonstrates our commitment to the region and our partners.

It is only natural that to carry out this mission, we rely on India, our foremost strategic partner in Asia. My heartfelt thanks to Indian Air Force for welcoming the French contingent."

Giving details of the operation, French officials said from August ten to September 18, the French Air and Space Force is carrying out a major long-range mission in Indo-Pacific, code-named Pegase 22. The first stage of this mission aims to demonstrate France's capacity for long-distance air power projection by deploying an Air Force contingent from metropolitan France to the French territory of New Caledonia in the Pacific Ocean in less than 72 hours (10th-12th August).

any manner. Whenever you spoke about it, there was deep pain in your voice, conveying your worry for the long-term future of our nation and the vibrancy of the Parliament," Modi wrote in the letter addressed to Naidu as Venkaiah garu'.

The prime minister said as the chairman of Rajya Sabha, Naidu presided over the House with brilliance. The success of your approach is evident in the record rise in the Rajya Sabha's productivity during your years as the Chairman, Modi pointed out. "In the five years gone by, several historic bills have been passed and you will certainly look back at them with satisfaction.

I am sure the legislations on Articles 370 and 35(A) (relating to abrogation of certain sections of Article 370), which were first tabled in the Rajya Sabha, would have made you very proud," he said.

Recalling Naidu's tenure in the BJP organisation, the prime minister said it has also been memorable. "Needless to say, the interest you took in organisational matters energised every karyakarta (worker).

Smoking-on-plane video: Probe ordered against Bobby

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday ordered a probe into an incident of body-builder Bobby Kataria smoking on a SpiceJet flight.

A viral video clip on social media showed Kataria, who has 6.3 lakh Instagram followers, smoking a cigarette in one of the SpiceJet plane's middle rows.

Passengers are not allowed to take lighter in the plane. Passengers are also not allowed to smoke in the plane. SpiceJet confirmed that the video is old and was brought to their atten-

tion in January 2022, noting that proper action was taken against Bobby at the time. After investigation, the airline had put the passenger on "no flying list" for 15 days in February, it said. The incident occurred aboard a SpiceJet SG706 aircraft coming from Dubai to Delhi.

As per the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) norms, an airline has the power to ban an "unruly" passenger for a certain period of time if he or she violates any rules. When the video of this incident was posted on Twitter on Thursday, Scindia responded: "Investigating it. There will

be no tolerance towards such hazardous behaviour." In a statement, SpiceJet said: "This is with reference to a video on social media of a passenger smoking onboard a SpiceJet aircraft.

The matter had been investigated thoroughly in January 2022 when the video was brought to our notice and a complaint had been filed by the airline with the Udyog Vihar Police Station in Gurugram."

The video, the investigation had revealed, was shot on January 20, 2022 while passengers were boarding flight SG 706 scheduled to fly from Dubai to Delhi, it said.

CVC brings down pendency of disciplinary matters against Central Govt employees

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has drastically brought down the pendency of disciplinary matters against Central Government employees and carried out an exercise to review pending cases so as to ensure that all cases reach a logical end within a reasonable time.

This was conveyed by

Tax payers barred from enrolling in Atal Pension Yojana from Oct 1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Income tax payers will not be allowed to enrol in the Government's social security scheme Atal Pension Yojana (APY) from October 1, according to a notification. The Government introduced APY on June 1, 2015, to provide social security to workers mainly in the unorganised sector. Subscribers of the scheme get a minimum guaranteed pension of Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 per month after attaining 60 years of age depending on their contributions. "... From 1st October, 2022, any citizen who is or has been an income tax payer, shall not be eligible to join APY," the Finance Ministry said in the notification. The Ministry has modified

its earlier notification on APY.

The new notification, issued on Wednesday, will not apply to subscribers who have joined or joins the scheme before October 1, 2022.

In case a subscriber, who joined on or after October 1, 2022, is subsequently found to have been an income tax payer on or before the date of application, the APY account shall be closed and the accumulated pension wealth till date would be given to the subscriber, the notification said.

Under the income tax law, people having taxable income of up to Rs 2.5 lakh are not required to pay income tax.

Currently, all Indian citizens between the age group of 18-40 years can join APY through bank or post office branches where one has the



savings bank account.

The government had contributed 50 per cent of the total contribution or Rs 1,000 per annum, whichever is lower, to each eligible subscriber, who joined the scheme during the period from June 2015 to March 2016. It was also subject to the condition that the subscriber was not a beneficiary of any social security scheme and

also not an income tax payer.

Those APY subscribers received the government's contribution for a five-year period from 2015-16 to 2019-20.

More than 99 lakh APY accounts were opened during the last fiscal, taking the total number of subscribers to 4.01 crore at the end of March 2022.

Top Cong leadership yet to publicly extend congratulatory message to Nitish Kumar



DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

While almost all the Opposition parties rallied behind the Mahagathbandhan, led by Nitish Kumar, there has been a stoic silence on part of the top Congress leadership which has neither publicly extended a congratulatory message to Nitish nor called a meeting in this regard in its headquarters in the national Capital.

However, sources in the party told *The Pioneer*, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi had been sounded out about the winds of change during the first week of June when she was detected with Covid and was hospitalised.

Nitish had made the first call, which was apparently a courtesy phone call, enquiring over her health even as she was under pressure to appear before the Enforcement Directorate in the National Herald money laundering case.

A query seeking AICC Media and Publicity Department chairman Pawan Khera's response on Congress' silence yielded no response.

Sonia is said to have confided to a close confidant her conversation with Nitish. "Bihar is looking for a change and we need to get in touch with Lalu Prasad (BJP patriarch) as soon as possible to bridge the gap between Nitish and Lalu," sources quoted her.

Sources also confirmed that Nitish sought help from the Congress high command so that he does not succumb to the pressures of BJP.

Thereafter, Sonia suggested Nitish to get in touch with Rahul Gandhi and the task was given to Tejashwi Yadav. Rahul and Tejashwi then took forward the conversation for the political change in Bihar initiated by Kumar.

"Following the foundation reared by top leaders and probable principal alliance partners, Congress deputed its Bihar incharge Bhakta Charan Das to craft the job. The main focus was to gather such a large number that it would be impossible for the BJP to effect a split and topple the new regime. Hence the figure of 164 legislators comprising even from the Left was worked upon. Kumar established five phone call contacts directly to Sonia including the recent two within 24 hours which is public now," a top Congress leader privy to all the developments told *The Pioneer*.

Kumar, who had been a long-time associate of BJP and a strong partner in NDA since Atal Bihari Vajpayee years, was quick to assess the frequent developments which included successive visits of top BJP leaders Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president JP Nadda, BJP's State incharge and Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and the turmoil within his party led by his once close confidant, bureaucrat-turned-politician RCP Singh. Political leaders of Bihar feel that Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) led by Chirag Paswan who has been foul mouthing Nitish too will have no option other than coming into the fold of Mahagathbandhan.

'Jammu records 189.6 mm rain in 24 hours, highest in 26 yrs'

PTI ■ JAMMU

Jammu city recorded 189.6 mm rain in 24 hours, the highest downpour in a day in almost 26 years, causing landslides and flash floods, meteorological department officials said on Thursday.

There were flash floods in most of the rivers, including Tawi and Chenab, which inundated low-lying areas and damaged infrastructure.

Two landslides were reported — in Panjirthi and Circular Road — causing damage to road, a building and some vehicles, the officials said.

The flash floods damaged small bridges in Kalika Colony, washed out a wall of Satsang Garh, a spiritual centre, and a vehicle in Buntalab, they said.

Hundreds of houses in several colonies in low-lying areas were inundated and traffic came to a halt due to water-logging, prompting the district administration to sound a flood alert, they said.

According to the MeT department, this is the highest 24-hour rainfall in August for Jammu city since 1996. The city had recorded 218.4 mm of rainfall on August 23, 1996. The all-time highest rainfall, 228.6 mm, in Jammu city was recorded on August 5, 1926, it said.

The Jammu-Srinagar national highway was closed for traffic due to landslides and mudslides, triggered by heavy rains in Ramban.

Reasi received 152.5 mm in 24 hours, followed by Udhampur (121.6 mm) and Samba (105 mm), the officials said.

Bihar Deputy CM Tejashwi promises to provide 10L jobs

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

A day after assuming the post of Deputy-Chief Minister of Bihar Tejashwi Prasad Yadav on Thursday asserted that the "job creation" in the State will be the "top priority" of the new Government headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and that he would fulfill his promise of providing 10 lakh jobs.

Yadav, son of former Chief Minister Lalu Prasad and the RJD patriarch, said the 'Mahagathbandhan' government will "deliver" on the promise of providing 10 lakh jobs that he had made while spearheading the RJD's campaign during the assembly elections in 2020.

Yadav said that Nitish Kumar, with whom he took oath the day before, has issued instructions to the officials concerned to accord "top priority" to job creation.

JD(U) leader Kumar took oath as Bihar Chief Minister for the eighth time on Wednesday after snapping ties with the BJP-led NDA and joined hands with the RJD and other Opposition parties, including the Congress, to form a 'Mahagathbandhan' government.

"There are so many vacant posts in government departments. We will begin by filling these up. Just for the time till we become fully functional after proving a majority on the floor of the assembly", Yadav told a news channel.

It was not just a promise but an acknowledgement of the crying need for employment generation in Bihar, the deputy chief minister said.

"We cannot think of going back on it since people had showered their blessings in the



elections in which the RJD-led alliance polled only about 12,000 votes less, across all 243 assembly seats than the NDA", he recalled.

The RJD leader also blamed the BJP for the "negative perception" about his party which is often accused of the use of muscle power, resulting in bad law and order.

"The problem is we do not know how to do publicity for ourselves. The BJP, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is adept at publicity.

But the people will see through their allegations once they get to see the performance of our government", said Yadav.

Backing the JD(U) allegations that the BJP was trying to split it despite being an alliance partner, Yadav said "Nitish Kumar ji was under so much pressure....They (BJP) were trying to do in Bihar what they have done in all states. Intimidate or lure with money".

"While sharing power, the BJP did not accommodate even small requests like central status for Patna University which Nitish Kumar ji had urged the PM to confer in public view. Forget about special status, special economic package, and a package for flood-hit areas", he alleged.

I-T Dept detects over ₹150 cr black income after raids



PNB ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department has detected unaccounted income of over Rs 150 crore after it recently searched a Jaipur-based group engaged in the business of gems and jewellery, hospitality and real estate. The searches were launched on August 3 and more than three dozen premises of the business group, which has not been named by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) in its Press statement, in Jaipur and Kota districts in Rajasthan were covered.

The IT-Department has seized "unaccounted assets" of over Rs 11 crore so far, the CBDT said Thursday.

The CBDT is the regulatory body that frames policy for the tax department.

In the real estate business vertical, the tax officials found that the group has been "indulging in large-scale tax evasion by accepting cash on the sale of residential dwellings and land which has not been recorded in the regular books of account," reads the statement.

Himachal rain havoc: Two dead, shops, vehicles washed away, roads blocked

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Heavy rains wreaked havoc in parts of Himachal Pradesh on Thursday with two people being buried alive under debris following a landslide in Kullu district, while shops and vehicles were washed away and highways blocked by flash floods in other places.

In Kullu, Chavelu Devi (55) and Kritika (17) died when their house at Khadel village in Sheel gram panchayat of Anni tehsil was hit by debris following the landslide around 9 am, Director of state disaster management department Magesh Mokhta said.

In another incident in the district, 10 shops and three vehicles were washed away after a cloudburst hit the Deuthi gram panchayat in Anni tehsil around 7.30 am, he added.



An old bus stand and a panchayat building at Deuthi are also facing the risk of being washed away, and revenue department officials have reached the spot to assess the situation, he added.

In Shimla district, three small cars and a pickup vehicle were washed away during torrential rains at Diyandali Nallah in Chopal tehsil, the official said.

In Mandi district, the Mandi-Kullu national high-

way has been blocked due to a landslide in the morning, he said.

The Mandi District Emergency Operation Centre (DEOC) said the incident occurred at 7 Mile near Pandoh due to which National Highway-21 has been completely blocked. Vehicular traffic has been diverted through Kataula.

In Chamba district, a crasher, two compressors machines and a store of a construction company were washed away in a cloudburst incident near Ala Nallah in Bharmour tehsil, Mokhta said.

In Lahaul-Spiti district, National Highway-3 has been blocked. There is a flood-like situation and stones are continuously falling near Kuthbhal after flash floods at Telling nallah in Lahaul subdivision, he added.

However, no loss of life was reported in the accident.

Road restoration work is under process, the official said. Besides, state highway number 26 was blocked following a flash flood at Sindhwari nallah in Udaipur subdivision of Lahaul-Spiti district, he said.

Flash floods were also reported at Lote and Tozing Nallahs in Lahaul subdivision and the assessment of losses is being done, Mokhta said.

A car was hit by flash floods at Tozing Nallah, and the road has been closed for vehicular movement to avoid any untoward incident, he said.

Two cars were damaged as a major portion of the road in Mauza Shamlecha caved in due to heavy rains in Solan district on Thursday, the state disaster management department said.

However, no loss of life was reported in the accident.

Border dispute with Arunachal: Assam suggests panels end visit by Aug 31

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam on Thursday proposed that the regional committees formed by Governments of the State and Arunachal Pradesh to resolve differences along the inter-State boundary should complete their joint inspection of the disputed areas by August end.

The committees will thereafter submit reports to their respective governments by September 15, the Assam regional committee decided at

a meeting here.

Assam cabinet minister Ashok Singhal, who was present at the meeting, said the decisions will be communicated to the panel concerned in Arunachal Pradesh.

"We want to complete the joint inspections by the end of this month and then submit our findings to the respective governments by September 15. We will discuss this further with our counterparts of the neighbouring state and finalise the schedule," he said.

The committees were

formed following a discussion between Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart Pema Khandu on July 15, which resulted in the signing of the 'Namsai Declaration'.

The two North-eastern neighbours have also decided to restrict the number of 'disputed villages' to 86 instead of the previous 123, and try to resolve the rest of the issues by September 15.

Thursday's meeting of the regional committee was



chaired by state Border Protection and Development department minister Atul Bora. Several other ministers and senior officials were also present.

The two states share an 804.1 km-long border. The

grievance of Arunachal Pradesh which was made a union territory in 1972 is that several forested tracts in the plains that had traditionally belonged to hill tribal chiefs and communities were unilaterally transferred to Assam. After Arunachal Pradesh achieved statehood in 1987, a tripartite committee was appointed which recommended that certain territories be transferred from Assam to Arunachal. Assam contested this and the matter is in the Supreme Court.

Uddhav-led Sena asks Speaker to include its representatives in Business Advisory Committee

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A delegation of the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction of the Shiv Sena on Thursday met Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar and asked him to include its MLAs in the House Business Advisory Committee (BAC).

Sunil Prabhu, the chief whip appointed by Thackeray, said as the Thackeray-led party

remains the original Sena, its representatives should be part of the BAC which decides the business of the House during a session.

The party recommended that he (Prabhu) and Ajay Choudhary be included in the BAC, Prabhu added.

Choudhary was appointed the leader of the Shiv Sena legislature party replacing Eknath Shinde after the latter rebelled and brought down the Uddhav

Thackeray-led Maharashtra Government in June.

The appointments of both Prabhu and Choudhary were contested by the rebel camp led by Shinde who is now Maharashtra chief minister.

The Shinde faction appointed Bharatshet Gogawale as the chief whip.

Currently, the Shiv Sena is represented by rebel MLAs Uday Samant and Dada Bhuse in the BAC.

ED probe into KIIFB, summons to Thomas Isaac set stage for political, legal battle in Kerala

PTI ■ KOCHI/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The summons issued to senior CPI(M) leader Thomas Isaac by the ED over KIIFB transactions has set the stage for a political slugfest in Kerala with the Left and Congress on Thursday questioning the central agency's action, while the BJP termed the two rival fronts as "birds of a feather".

Isaac and the ruling LDF have also initiated a legal battle by challenging in the Kerala High Court the Enforcement Directorate's "fishing and roving" exercise, alleging that it

was aimed at discrediting the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB).

Amidst the brewing political tension, the High Court today posted Isaac's plea challenging the ED summons for further consideration to next week and reserved orders in the PIL moved by five LDF MLAs against the probe into KIIFB financial dealings.

It all started after Isaac, apparently armed with the support of his party CPI(M), decided not to appear before the ED till the court decides his petition.

Launching a scathing

attack on the BJP-led central government, Isaac, earlier in the day, said they were using the Enforcement Directorate (ED) as a "political tool" to "isolate, arrest or detain their opponents or topple state governments ruled by opposition without any hesitation".

Throwing his weight behind Isaac, Congress leader and Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the state assembly, V D Satheesan, said the agency cannot probe foreign financial dealings and its notices to the CPI(M) leader were of no relevance.

BJP state president K Surendran criticised both the

CPI(M) and the Congress over the issue, questioning why Satheesan was trying to rescue the CPI(M) leader. He alleged that "they are all birds of a feather" as they all are afraid of an ED probe into the various financial irregularities committed by them.

Surendran, speaking to reporters in Thrissur, further said that just because ED was questioning Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, was the party of the view that the agency should not probe anything across the country.

He also asked whether other Congress leaders,

including Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president K Sudhakaran, shared the same view or stand as Satheesan.

Earlier, CPI(M) MLAs K K Shailaja, I B Sathish and actor M Mukesh, CPI MLA E Chandrasekharan and Congress (Secular) MLA Kadannappalli Ramachandran had moved the joint plea in the high court against the ED probe alleging that the same was a "fishing and roving" exercise aimed at discrediting the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB).

They had also claimed

that the actions of ED will adversely affect or bring to a halt over 900 development projects, worth around Rs 73,000 crore, in the state.

During hearing of Isaac's plea, the high court asked why ED cannot question someone if it has any doubts and at the same time it told the probe agency that privacy of an individual cannot be violated. Isaac, in his plea, has contended that the agency has no power to question him or ask for his personal information or details just because he was the former head of KIIFB and was its ex-officio member presently. Taking note of his

contentions, the court said that the privacy of an individual cannot be violated.

The lawyer appearing for the agency said that the investigating officer asked for documents that he felt were required for the inquiry and it was the prerogative of the ED.

He also said that presently the ED has only issued summons and Isaac should cooperate with the investigation. The ED had served a notice to the senior Marxist leader last month, seeking his appearance before it on July 19. He, however, did not appear before the probe agency, saying he had to attend

classes at a party-run institute in the state capital.

Then, Isaac had termed the ED notice to him as a 'political move' by the BJP government at the Centre, alleging it was misusing all investigation agencies for its political gains.

The second notice seeking his appearance was sent by ED in the first week of August.

In his reply to the second notice, Isaac has contended that the summons issued to him should be withdrawn or recalled by the ED and it should refrain from initiating further proceedings against him in the matter.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Confusion over freebies

The Election Commission seems to be steering clear of the mess of freebies our politicians have created

The Election Commission of India's (ECI's) views over freebies are not very helpful in evolving any consensus over the issue. In its affidavit in the Supreme Court, the poll panel said, "Freebies can have a different impact on society, economy, providing life-saving medicine, food, funds, etc., may be a life and economic saviour but in normal times, they could be termed 'freebies'." Perhaps the constitutional body doesn't want to wade into the mess politicians have created in the political arena and is, thus, deliberately evasive; it is, however, indubitable that its remarks don't add anything towards the resolution of the issue. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, on the other hand, believes in a disingenuous strategy: If you don't want to solve a problem, philosophise it; and if you still want to be seen as serious, politicise it as well. Soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi berated against what he called the "revdi culture" on July 16, Kejriwal began defending by offering the strangest of arguments. For instance, he asked whether free education and healthcare be called as freebies. The Prime Minister had rightly said freebies are "very dangerous" for economic development. But nobody seems to be interested in addressing the issue in a proper manner—not even the Bharatiya Janata Party. Nothing else explains BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay's petition in the Supreme Court in which he sought restrictions on parties on distributing "irrational freebies" before elections.



But shouldn't people move court only after they have failed to resolve some issue among themselves? There is nothing in the public domain to suggest that Upadhyay or any other BJP leader discussed the matter on a party platform, let alone try

to evolve a consensus among all parties. After all, the problem of freebies is a political one, so the solution too has to be political in nature. For the truth is that the freebie culture, which is unbridled populism, is something all political parties, including the BJP, promote. In fact, all of them vie with each other in the game of competitive populism. But just because everyone does something improper doesn't mean that it has become proper. But Kejriwal, who is also the Aam Aadmi Party boss, doesn't want any restrictions on or distinctions between various freebies. He is of the opinion that free electricity or free public transport for women in the national capital is not a freebie; this is just a state government discharging its "constitutional responsibilities" to create an equitable society. This is incorrect, for no reading of the Constitution or its preamble suggests that the founding fathers of our republic wanted the government to distribute free goods and services. Nor was our freedom struggle about freebies; it was about free India and free Indians. We hope that the Supreme Court drills these simple facts into the heads of our political masters.

PICTALK



Hindu boys perform rituals for 'Janeu' or 'Yajnopavit' samskar inside a temple on Raksha Bandhan festival

India as a major world player at 75



SIMRAN SODHI

India has emerged as one of the key players in the international arena without compromising its basic premise

This year marks 75 years of India's independence and a moment that is being cherished and celebrated. But then, like with all celebrations, we must look back and take stock of the journey traveled so far and also chart our future course of action. Foreign policy is one of those areas that usually see continuity over long periods of time, the political changes notwithstanding. The Indian story is similar in the sense that one sees continuity for a long period since 1947, for instance, India's commitment to a non-aligned status, among others. But with the political scenario changing in the last decade or so, the contours of foreign policy have also seen some major changes. A few have been bold while others have been more of a subtle nature.



The biggest change is probably a change in attitude where one sees a more confident India engaging with the world. We have also seen the emergence of late of a number of regional and other informal groupings where India occupies a place of global significance. The Indo Pacific Quad and the West Asia Quad or the I2U2, are recent instances where India is a member along with the United States, of groupings that influence the Indo Pacific and the Middle East. It would also be significant to note here that this would not have been possible without India having done the groundwork in the first place by building strong bilateral ties with member states as diverse as Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the one hand, and with countries like Japan and Australia on the other hand.

At the same time, we have to acknowledge the challenges ahead and accept that there are a few headaches that are not going to be easy to resolve. The biggest one of course remains China. While India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has pushed more aggressively for a solution to the Chinese problem, an outcome remains elusive. 2020 saw the worst fighting between India and China since 1962, and while

India stood its ground, the Chinese have also dug in their heels. To the world, it is evident that China is a power that intends to increase its hold over territory by military and nonmilitary means. Tibet is one example and the tensions we see in Taiwan today post the visit of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is another. China looks at itself as the next hegemony on the global stage and with an economy and a military rapidly gaining strength, it remains a headache not just for India but for the world. For India, the additional worry is that China sits on its borders, always threatening and provoking.

Another major shift one sees in recent years has been that of India and its ties with Pakistan. Since 1947, despite the wars and the terrorist attacks from across the border, the general consensus stayed that India must stay engaged with Pakistan. After all, geography is not a matter of choice and the fact that Pakistan is a neighbour will never change, so talk we must. That has undergone a dramatic and bold change. In recent years, India has not shied away from pointing the finger at Pakistan



THE BIGGEST CHANGE IS PROBABLY A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE WHERE ONE SEES A MORE CONFIDENT INDIA ENGAGING WITH THE WORLD

for many of the terrorist attacks in India, bilaterally and globally. India has also gone a step further and now refuses to indulge in talks where the trust deficit is so huge that Indo-Pak talks have been reduced to photo-ops with near zero movements on crucial issues. Since 2019 when terrorist groups based in Pakistan launched attacks in the former Jammu and Kashmir state, India retaliated decisively and since then it is also worth noting that there have been no major terrorist attacks against India from Pakistani soil.

There has of course been a great change in dynamics when it comes to balancing the great old powers, namely Russia and the US. India has traditionally been always closer to Russia but recent years point to a shift. The Indo-US bilateral relationship has grown in strength, which has also attracted criticism that India might be investing just too heavily in this relationship. The Russia ties remain strong but the growing Russia -China axis, post-Ukraine crisis, poses a major policy challenge for India. Wheels within wheels

and China and Pakistan already share a cozy relationship with some today even referring to Pakistan as nothing more than a satellite state of China. For India the challenge remains to maintain a delicate balance, keeping old friends happy while new friendships are formed.

In the last 75 years, the world has changed and so has India. The world has seen the end of the Cold War and a world shifting from bipolar to unipolar and also stages of a multipolar one. India has shed its old skin too and is ready to embrace the world in a more confident fashion, cognisant of its position on the world stage. But challenges remain some very tough ones like China. How well India navigates these challenges will shape its foreign policy and the country in the decades to follow.

(The author, a Delhi-based journalist and foreign affairs analyst, holds a Masters in International Relations from the American University in Washington DC. In 2009, her book 'Piercing the Heart: Untold Stories of 26/11', was published. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FREEBIES AS LIFESAVERS!

Sir — The Election Commission has rightly opined that freebies can be lifesavers during crisis periods. The supreme court has also said that there is a difference between freebies and welfare schemes like the difference between chalk and cheese. One cannot differentiate both from one another without much thought. So it takes a deep understanding and brainstorming among all stakeholders to formulate proper guidelines to curb the inducement culture pre and post polls period without hurting the welfare agenda. When ambiguity prevails in defining such culture itself, it's not possible to stop the parties from making unrealistic promises. As the apex court has aptly said it's also undemocratic to punish the political parties on that grounds.

DVG Sankararao | Vizianagaram

NITISH CM, TEJASHWI SUPER CM

Sir — Once again a grand coalition government has formed in Bihar. Nitish Kumar took oath as Chief Minister for the record eighth time and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav took oath as Deputy Chief Minister for the second time. At the moment it is not clear which ministry Tejashwi Yadav will handle as Deputy Chief Minister, but if the Home Ministry comes to him, then it will be clear that this time he will be a more powerful Deputy Chief Minister than last time.

This may increase the challenge of Nitish Kumar because no one can know better than him how questions have been raised about law and order during RJD's time. It also cannot be overlooked that when Nitish Kumar came out of the Grand Alliance, he highlighted the corruption of RJD leaders as well as their interference in law and order. It may be difficult for Nitish Kumar to pursue his agenda of good governance and accommodate the election promises of RJD.

Divyansha Sharma | Ujjain

THE COLONIAL BAGGAGE

The colonial baggage of things that have managed to take root in Indian society is numerous. One such legacy is the tie that seems to have been ingrained in our society, especially in Schools, and offices even though it is not conducive to the climate prevalent in India. If earlier it was a mark of elitism, today, it has acquired a more complex existence. But the innocuous-looking tie could turn out to be a health hazard according to a recent study.

The world has also undergone a massive transformation, as the codes of clothing are coming to terms with new social realities.

Necktie in India a tortured soul dangling awkwardly on a school children's neck. Research has shown that wearing a tie results in a 7.5% reduction in blood flows to the brain. Research published in the British Journal of Ophthalmology reveals that a tie can restrict the blood flow through the jugular vein as well



as through the carotid arteries. It could also trigger glaucoma and cataracts, and other ailments according to a study.

So, this colonial legacy must be worn with prudence and taking scientific studies into consideration. Clothing must be determined based on comfort, suitability to a particular region, and climatic conditions rather than forced on school children based on the false sense of superiority, notions, and beliefs.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

FESTIVALS MUST BE FOR ALL

Sir — Rakshabandhan is a major festival in India celebrated widely all over the country. As one of the fastest growing economies in the world, India possesses a rich cultural heritage too. A hugely diverse group of people celebrating different festivals throughout the year. As we see the markets and sweet shops overcrowded in festival seasons. Still, we can see a huge divide between the incomes of people across India. As one section enjoys overwhelming options of food rich in taste and energy, contradictory to that other section is hardly able to survive and enjoy the festival. Surprisingly, One section of Indians (around 40%) are struggling with obesity. On the other hand, one section faces a lack of proper nutrition-rich diet and malnutrition throughout the year. Instead of overconsuming food and materials this festival season, let's try to fill the gap and make sure every section of society enjoys it with the same joy!

Soumydeep Saxena | Ujjain

USE OF CRYPTOCURRENCY RISING

Sir — More than 7 per cent of India's population owns digital currency ranking seventh in the world. According to the UN, the use of cryptocurrency rose globally at an unprecedented rate during the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN trade and development body UNCTAD said that in 2021, developing countries accounted for 15 of the top 20 economies when it comes to the share of the population that owns cryptocurrencies. The cryptocurrencies remain unregulated and that is the reason for the rapid uptake of cryptocurrencies in developing countries, including the facilitation of remittances and as a hedge against currency and inflation risks. If cryptocurrencies become a widespread means of payment and even replace domestic currencies unofficially (a process called crypto-nation), this could jeopardize the monetary sovereignty of countries.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

SOUNDBITE

I will begin the day by visiting Raj Ghat and paying my respects to PujyaBapu at 8.30 AM at Rajghat.



Vice-President of India — Jagdeep Dhankhar

I will always fight for the care and benefits veterans have more than earned and deserve.



US President — Joe Biden

What a wonderful day spent with the 'Golden Boy of Indian Cinema' srrajamouli? ...discussing Filmmaking, Philosophy, Storytelling and Technology. Such a learning process.



Filmmaker — Shekhar Kapur

I first met Rudi in 1992 & we became good friends over the years. He was a warm-hearted person who always greeted players with a big smile. My heartfelt condolences to his loved ones.



Cricketer — Sachin Tendulkar

BJP never betrays the people of a State. Encouraging defections from other parties is a welfare measure to uplift the defectors. Breaking other political parties is to purify those parties. Destabilising state governments is to bring stability to governance in those states.



Congress leader — P Chidambaram

Market to decide airfares

The decision to do away with the airfare band is timely and would give relief to the struggling airlines

The government's decision to blow away the fare cap would be music to the aviation industry. It has been decided that the cap on airfares for airlines would be done away with from August 31. It was introduced to airlines more than two years ago in 2020 at the peak of Covid when limited flights were operating. The government feared that the airline operators could jack up the prices to make good the Covid losses. Now after more than two years when this pricing was introduced it did not make sense as now the flights have resumed their routine operations and Covid seat restrictions are also gone. Besides, the number of flyers has also increased pushing up the demand. In fact, it could have come to a couple of months earlier and would have meant a big relief for the aviation industry. In the wake of a complete lockdown to stall the spread of corona, all flights were suspended for more than two months. Even after their resumption in May they were not allowed to function at full capacity. To ensure and protect the flyers and airlines a price band was introduced which didn't allow prices to go beyond it in either direction.



The fare band was a good idea but now it had outlived its rationale. Since both, the factors which determine the price of airfares - fuel prices and the demand and supply interplay are now in the normal range so it is a timely and reasonable decision that perhaps could have been taken a few months back as it would have given more stability to the aviation industry. The downside is that a few airlines could be in a hurry to make good their losses and push their prices up in certain sectors where demand is rather high leading to cartelization of prices. This is what the ministry would have to keep an eye on. Though it is very unlikely chances of higher airfare are there especially in the festive season when demand is high. The airline industry was badly hit by the pandemic and many of the airlines in India and abroad are struggling to remain afloat. The industry has welcomed this decision and aviation experts believe that it would be good for the aviation industry even if prices remain volatile for a while but would eventually settle. The decision to remove the fare cap must be followed by a number of other measures which could give a fillip to the aviation industry and provide momentum in terms of growth and scalability.

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA MUST REJIG TIES IN ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

India emerges as the kind, wise no-frills ally to its neighbours



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India has been an outlier in its neighbourhood for some time. The size of the country, home to a rich diversity of religions and regional identities, apart, the Indian economy has been a shining story. This story gets a sharper edge when almost every nation on its borders is going through a financial crisis.

Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and to an extent Bangladesh are looking for international aid (read an IMF bailout). The frequency of such international bailouts has been highest for Pakistan, followed by Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. As India and perhaps the entire neighbourhood celebrates 75 years of being an independent sovereign in their own rights, the growth has been fractured for the region.

Domestic economic policies, institutional wisdom in key sectors, domestic politics and upheavals, faith in Constitution and Constitutionally approved governance framework have all contributed to creating this study in contrast in Southeast Asia. India has clearly emerged as a leader not just in the neighbourhood but also on the global stage. However, the move towards the next level of influence in the chaotic chess board of international relations must be careful and measured, with a firm vision for the next 25 years.

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka stand as success stories of India's stated position of neighbourhood first. India was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with Bangladesh in 1971 and both countries have been moving towards steady bilateral relations by building on shared culture, history, and geography.



India and Bangladesh form an inseparable part of critical landmass in South-east Asia, with complementary resources and geography. The two countries share 54 rivers, besides one of the largest mangrove forests in the world. The Sundarbans, located in one of the most fragile bioclimatic zones around the globe, provides exclusive breeding ground for many endangered species, besides offering an almost live glimpse into the impact of climate change. India and Bangladesh have in the past four decades worked closely in preserving these unique natural sites from decay and destruction, much of which is manmade. India needs to closely follow its neighbour's economic trajectory if New Delhi wants to stand tall in the international order.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in Bangladesh this week, where one of the promises made was to increase duty free access for Bangladeshi garments, woven products into the Chinese market by one per cent. Already, China is one of the largest trade partners with Bangladesh. China has also invested billions of dollars in building major infrastructure projects, ranging from bridges, seaports, access roads in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, Bangladesh has turned to China to push back the millions of Rohingya refugees, as the country is staring at an economic crisis. China had brokered a reparation of nearly 0.7 million refugees in 2017. This aid from China comes at a cost, which puts Bangladesh in a tricky situation when it comes to balancing bilateral relations with the US and India.

Bangladesh had to issue a support statement for "One China policy" amid the visit of senior US leader from the legislative wing, Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan.

Sri Lanka, going through a financial crisis of its own, is economically dependent on China. Colombo would find it difficult to stop a Chinese spy ship docking at its port. India and some of its western allies have so far managed to delay the ship, but it is a matter of time before China takes an aggressive stance.

India has to start reshaping its narrative during the ongoing financial crisis in the two countries and emerge as the kind, wise no frills ally.

(The author is a foreign policy commentator.)

When obedience is virtue, questioning evil

The past few years have put democratic institutions of the country in a spot amid cult dominance



MOHIT KUMAR

India has been a democratic country for 75 years, but in the last five to six years, the debate about democracy and authoritarianism has suddenly hit the conscience of Indian academics, media channels, and public space. The question is, why is this the case in the last few years even while the country celebrates the 75 years of Independence and democratic life?

Why are we so perplexed and doubtful of our democratic system's success after 75 years of its accomplishment? Is it because of rising trends or apprehension of authoritarian tendencies? If we carefully observe the debate, we can conclude that this indeed is the case in the minds of the people.

The first apprehension of this trend comes from the politics of labelling the people into electorally wanted or unwanted categories. Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar (June 6, 2022) in an article said that after July 7, 2022, the current Bharatiya Janata Party will not have a single MP or MLA from the Muslim community, which according to the 2011 Census comprises 14.2 or approximately 172.2 million people in the country. It isolates and reduces the Muslims to politically insignificant constituency, which is similar to authoritarian policy of anti-Semitism. Besides, the nature of politics is divisive and creates a binary geography of friends and foes, which is nourished by rewarding the dissemination of mindless separatist or demonized statements of party leaders, short quotes, videos or messages.

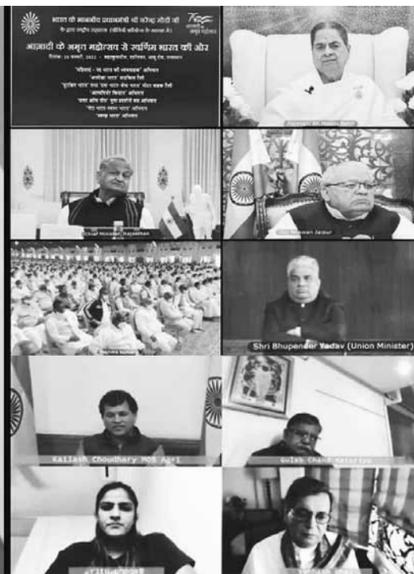
The idea of an internal enemy or outsider living inside is constantly invented or reinvented to create a politics of anxiety among the majority and to polarize them in a fashion that reduces their politically diverse or heterogeneity interests into homogeneous interests. A scientific justification for this aversion of the minority is given through pathologizing or presenting them as conspirator, traitor, unfit so that they can be locked up in the minds of the majority in the line of social Darwinist thinking of survival of the fittest. This trend is so obvious that it draws popular attention towards the challenges of democracy.

Another factor explaining the challenges of democracy and rise of authoritarianism in India can be located into new trends which set up a new moral conscience that gives priority to duties over rights. In a programme titled "Azadi Ke Amrit Mahotsav Se Swarnim Bharat Ke Ore," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that "for the last 75 years, we have only kept talking about rights, fighting for rights, and wasting our time" that kept the country weak. He suggested that for the next 25 years, India must adopt a new vision that prioritizes duties over rights. However, it is noteworthy that he emphasized the duties of the people to the nation rather than duties of the government to the people. The emphasis on duty is situa-



THE ATTEMPT TO PROCLAIM DEMOCRATIC RIGHT TO DISSENT INEVITABLY MORPHS INTO AN ATTEMPT TO OBSTRUCT NATIONAL GLORY AND IS CONSPIRED BY MALIGN INTENTION OF THE OPPOSITION, AND THUS MUST BE DEALT WITH IMMEDIATELY, WITH OR WITHOUT DUE PROCESS OF LAW.

(The author is an Assistant Professor at Bhagini Nivedita College, University of Delhi.)



ted in an intriguing analogy between the time of colonial rule, when people suffered, struggled, and sacrificed for national freedom, and the present situation, in which an independent nation, though free, still requires sacrifice and suffering for an imagined or utopian future vision of a nation devoid of any socio-political and economic crisis.

Any appeal to suffering is an aesthetic duty that deserves people's praise, because it is a means to achieve national glory. It can be better dissected by examining the government's justification for the 2016 demonetization policy, the Goods and Services Tax policy 2017, the Farm Bills of 2020, and the recent Aganiveer scheme, in which the government makes an emotional appeal for the approval of these schemes founded on the imagined cheerful future that can be achieved by prioritizing the people's duties over their rights and the government's rights over its duties.

These challenges are exacerbated by views that regard obedience to authority as a virtue and resistance or questioning as evil. It is based on the idea that the leader is infallible or an emperor endowed with superhuman qualities, and the popular media invests in portraying him in such a way that people become curious about what he eats, how many hours he works, and his childhood adventures, which elevates him above criticism. Its goal is to distance him

from infallible people, bureaucrats, opposition leaders, and his own ministers, so that failure can be blamed on them rather than on him.

It tactfully moved his acts and choices out of the realm of scientific justification or criticism and into that of religion and faith. Any effort to contest the supreme leader's choice or action is viewed as a plot or an act of heresy, not just against him but also against the nation.

It fosters an irrationalism based on what Umberto Eco refers to in The New York Review article (June 22, 1995) as "the cult of action for action's sake. Action being beautiful in itself, it must be taken before, or without, any previous reflection. Thinking is a form of emasculation". In Indian politics, this pattern is fairly obvious; if we look at the last ten years of parliament's legislative business in terms of passing the bills, we will find that approximately 41 per cent of the bills were passed without adequate debate and discussion, and without involving the standing and consultative committees and stakeholders.

This trend is also evident in the state legislature, where, according to the Annual Review of State Law 2020, 59 per cent of bills were passed in a single day without adequate time for scrutiny. Any attempt by the Opposition to call legislation, bills, or laws into question is undermined by eliciting an emotional response and reaction

from supreme leaders through a new rhetoric of action just for the sake of action. The primacy of action over thinking and deliberation is a concerning sign of the rising trend of authoritarianism.

The most important of these are the centralising discursive practices pushed and disseminated through the media by the business tycoon in order to free the welfare state from its democratic commitment to social welfare and allow for rapid privatisation and liberalisation of the economy without delay or dissent. The attempt to proclaim democratic right to dissent inevitably morphs into an attempt to obstruct national glory and is conspired by malign intention of the Opposition, and thus must be dealt with immediately, with or without due process of law.

Here, what is interesting about the discourse is that the Opposition is a powerful evil that, though not able to harness its power in electoral success, is so effective at misleading people for large protests and movements. Therefore, it must be dealt with by deploying democratic tactics that justify and necessitate authoritarian actions, revealing how mechanistically authoritarianism uses democracy and democracy uses authoritarianism.

In conclusion, the current discussion about democratic challenges is quite pertinent and clear, and it requires a critical examination of its pervasive and silent discourse.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE STRENGTH OF THE RECOVERY PROVIDES A COMFORTING BACKDROP...IT IS THE BREADTH OF THE RECOVERY...WE ARE SEEING GROWTH FIRING ON ALMOST ALL CYLINDERS. —FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN



NO QUESTION OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY GETTING INTO RECESSION, SAYS FINANCE MINISTER. SHE IS RIGHT!! BECAUSE OUR ECONOMY HAS ALREADY GOT INTO IT. —BJP LEADER SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY

Goal of social democracy isn't fulfilled for lack of fraternity

While liberty and equality are enforced with constitutional means, fraternity is getting the short shrift

Fraternity, as opposed to liberty and equality, fails to get traction in public discourse or political programmes. Political leaders and Constitution makers laid as much importance to fraternity as to liberty and equality.

Indian unity and solidarity, it was realised, was not to be taken for granted. It had to be strengthened by recognising and accepting India's immense regional, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity.

Dr BR Ambedkar held that political democracy cannot last unless there lies at its base social democracy. By social democracy, he meant a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as principles of life.

They form a union of trinity in a sense that to divorce one



RAM KRISHNA SINHA

(The author is a former bank executive.)

from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Elaborating on the importance of fraternity, he said, "Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life."

The beginning was filled with hope for fraternity. There was a broad social consensus on the values of nationalism, secularism and democracy, as well as on the practice of non-violence across all major political entities, which together contributed to the creation of a temper of democracy in the country. Discussion, debate and persuasion, backed by public opinion, was stressed upon for advancing social and political change as opposed to glorification of mistrust, animosity and violence.

However, soon the tradition of consensus and reconciliation that was expected to guide and steer the spirit of fraternity, was found eroding.

The linguistic, caste and communal riots generated a lot of negative energy and, in the process, depleted much of our social capital. The initial optimism for unity and a sense of nationhood, born out of the rich legacy of the freedom movement, mature political leadership, and Constitutional spirit, started to taper off.

Amid the social and political churning, one serious casualty was the erosion of credibility of the political parties, with its negative multiplier effects pervading our social and economic life. Inter and intra-party instability, intense mudslinging, infighting and fac-

tionalism within parties, absence of long-term political programmes have been the common maladies.

Dharnas, bandhs, blockade of roads, rioting, wanton violence, mob lynching, attacks on private and public property are now order of the day. Not only educational and military institutions, even Constitutional bodies are witnessing encroachments of dirty politics. All these developments are grossly vitiating social fabric and public life.

The amplifying power of social media coupled with an absence of its accountability have also provided a fertile ground to create divisions and fissures in society. Misinformation, disinformation, outrage, hate speech, fake news — all are in full play through the

medium, pervading toxicity in social relations.

The question is, why an ideal so enshrined in the preamble in our Constitution has got a short shrift or getting marginalised in public discourse and imagination, in contrast to liberty and equality? Why has fraternity failed to gain a privileged expression and attention in political manifestos, programmes and activities?

Some reasons are obvious. The principle of fraternity requires from us a sense of duty and responsibility as opposed to rights, privileges and entitlements. This may appear an onerous task for most of the people.

Further, the idea of reciprocity, solidarity and social bond do not sit well with individual goals in a predominantly

materialistic, market-driven modern life. Further, unlike equality and liberty, which seem attainable through political, legal and Constitutional means, fraternity doesn't seem to have any clear and well-defined institutional frameworks for it to get traction and realised.

Clearly, for making fellow-feeling as a way of life, we have to recognize the major sources, platforms or trigger points of discord and enmity. First, all the political parties must sit together and have a broad consensus on the key issues with a national perspective. Secondly, accountability of social media needs to be fixed urgently. Thirdly, we must focus more on issues and activities which demonstrate commonality and collectivism. Sports, music, space science, yoga, valour of

Indian Armed Forces, Indian constitution, national anthem/song/tricolour, inspirational personalities, etc., could be some arenas surrounding which we can build bridges and deepen cohesion.

Fourthly, the Government and the ruling party as key stakeholders in the project must do virtue signaling through right actions and legal frameworks to promote our diversity and plurality. Lastly, a sense of fraternity must be internalised and displayed by us all, in private and public life alike, and also at all times, good or bad.

The challenges in the path of fraternity projects are many. But we must overcome them, as it is on the pillar of fraternal relations that a well-functioning and healthy democracy rests.

Russia struggles to replenish its forces in Ukraine war

AP ■ MOSCOW

The prisoners at the penal colony in St Petersburg were expecting a visit by officials, thinking it would be some sort of inspection. Instead, men in uniform arrived and offered them amnesty - if they agreed to fight alongside the Russian army in Ukraine.

Over the following days, about a dozen or so left the prison, according to a woman whose boyfriend is serving a sentence there. Speaking on condition of anonymity because she feared reprisals, she said her boyfriend wasn't among the volunteers, although with years left on his sentence, he "couldn't not think about it".

As Russia continues to suffer losses in its invasion of Ukraine, now nearing its sixth month, the Kremlin has refused to announce a full-blown mobilisation - a move that could be very unpopular for President Vladimir Putin. That has led instead to a covert recruitment effort that includes using prisoners to make up the manpower shortage.

This also is happening amid reports that hundreds of Russian soldiers are refusing to fight and trying to quit the military.

"We're seeing a huge outflow of people who want to leave the war zone - those who have been serving for a long time and those who have signed a contract just recently," said Alexei Tabalov, a lawyer who runs the Conscript's School legal aid group.

The group has seen an influx of requests from men who want to terminate their contracts, "and I personally get the impression that everyone who can is ready to run away," Tabalov said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And the Defence Ministry is digging deep to find those it can persuade to



serve."

Although the Defence Ministry denies that any "mobilisation activities" are taking place, authorities seem to be pulling out all the stops to bolster enlistment. Billboards and public transit ads in various regions proclaim, "This is The Job," urging men to join the professional army. Authorities have set up mobile recruiting centers in some cities, including one at the site of a half marathon in Siberia in May.

Regional administrations are forming "volunteer battalions" that are promoted on state television. The business daily Kommersant counted at least 40 such entities in 20 regions, with officials promising volunteers monthly salaries ranging from the equivalent of \$2,150 to

nearly \$5,500, plus bonuses.

The AP saw thousands of openings on job search websites for various military specialists.

The British military said this week that Russia had formed a major new ground force called the 3rd Army Corps from "volunteer battalions," seeking men up to age 50 and requiring only a middle-school education, while offering "lucrative cash bonuses" once they are deployed to Ukraine.

But complaints also are surfacing in the media that some aren't getting their promised payments, although those reports can't be independently verified.

In early August, Tabalov said he began receiving multiple requests for legal help from reservists who have been

ordered to take part in a two-month training in areas near the border with Ukraine.

The recruitment of prisoners has been going on in recent weeks in as many as seven regions, said Vladimir Osechkin, founder of the Gulagu.Net prisoner rights group, citing inmates and their relatives that his group had contacted.

It's not the first time that authorities have used such a tactic, with the Soviet Union employing "prisoner battalions" during World War II.

Nor is Russia alone. Early in the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy promised amnesty to military veterans behind bars if they volunteered to fight, although it remains unclear if anything came out of it.

Britain says sanctions also hit Russia's Defence sector

AP ■ KYIV

The European Union's full ban on Russian coal imports kicked in on Thursday at a time when British defence intelligence said that Western sanctions were increasingly having an impact, even on Russia's defence exports.

Britain said that Moscow was already strained by the need to produce armoured fighting vehicles for its troops in Ukraine and hence "is highly unlikely to be capable of fulfilling some export orders", in a sector it has long taken pride in.

The British defence intelligence update, highlighting "the increasing effect of Western sanctions", dovetails with Western belief that the series of measures they imposed on the Kremlin since the February 24 invasion of Ukraine are increasingly having an impact on the Russian economy.

The update said that because of the war and sanctions, "its military industrial capacity is now under significant strain, and the credibility of many of its weapon systems has been undermined by their association with Russian forces' poor performance".

Russia military credibility came under more pressure on Wednesday when Ukraine said nine Russian warplanes were destroyed in a string of explosions at an air base in Russian-controlled Crimea that appeared to be the result of a Ukrainian attack.

Russia denied any aircraft were damaged in the blasts - or that any attack took place. But satellite photos clearly showed at



least seven fighter planes at the base had been blown up and others probably damaged.

British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace dismissed Russian explanations of the blasts, including a wayward cigarette butt, as "excuses".

"When you just look at the footage of two simultaneous explosions not quite next to each other, and some of the reported damage even by the Russian authorities, I think it's clear that that's not something that happens by someone dropping a cigarette," Wallace said.

And to put more pressure on Russia, Wallace said on Thursday that Britain will send more multiple launch rocket systems and guided missiles to Ukraine to help it resist Russia's invasion.

The new weapons, whose number wasn't specified, come on top of several rocket-launch systems given by Britain to Ukraine earlier this year.

Britain said the new missiles can hit targets up to 80 kilometres away with pinpoint accuracy.

Wallace said the bolstered military support shows the West "will stand shoulder-to-shoulder, providing defensive military aid to Ukraine to help them defend against Putin's invasion", Wallace said at a meeting of mostly northern European allies of Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleaded for more aid by videoconference.

"We need armament, munition for our defence," he said. "The sooner we stop Russia, the sooner we can feel safe."

Thursday also marked the day when an EU ban on coal imports from Russia was taking effect in following a long phase-in going back to April.

The 27-nation EU said it will affect about 25 per cent of Russian coal exports and create a loss of about USD 8 billion a year.

The EU is also trying to wean itself off Russian gas imports, but is too dependent to impose a full ban.

As the war is now nearing the half-year point, Russia is facing other challenges too.

Kim Jong Un suffered from fever during pandemic, says his sister



AP ■ SEOUL

In a striking speech before thousands of North Koreans, leader Kim Jong Un's sister said he suffered a fever while guiding the country to victory over the coronavirus. She blamed rival South Korea for the outbreak and vowed "deadly" retaliation.

Kim Yo Jong, a powerful official in charge of inter-Korean relations, glorified her brother's leadership during the outbreak in her speech Wednesday at a national meeting where he jubilantly described the country's widely disputed success over the virus as an "amazing miracle" in global public health.

North Korea's statements about its outbreak are widely believed to be manipulated to help Kim Jong Un maintain absolute authority. But experts believe the victory announcement signals his intention to move to other priorities and are concerned his sister's remarks portend a provocation, which might include nuclear or missile tests or even border skirmishes.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Thursday that Kim Jong Un declared victory over COVID-19 and ordered an easing of preventive measures just three months after the country first acknowledged an outbreak.



Ukraine wants donors to give more money to 'stop Russia'

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on Western nations Thursday to provide more money to help Ukraine's military keep fighting nearly 5 1/2 months after Russia invaded its neighbour.

"The sooner we stop Russia, the sooner we can feel safe," Zelenskyy said while addressing defence leaders at a Denmark conference aimed at strengthening financing for weapons, training and demining work in his country.

"We need armaments,

munitions for our defence," he added, speaking via a live link from Ukraine.

The conference in Copenhagen is a follow-up to an April meeting at a US air base in Germany that established the US-led Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which coordinates international military support for Ukraine.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov, who attended the conference in Denmark's capital, told journalists that acquiring more fighter planes is the country's priority right now.

Gotabaya leaves Singapore for Thailand after short-term visit pass expires: Report

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Sri Lanka's ousted president Gotabaya Rajapaksa left Singapore for Thailand after his short-term visit pass expired on Thursday, according to a media report.

Rajapaksa boarded a flight from Singapore to Bangkok, after Thailand confirmed a day before that it had received a request from the current Sri Lankan government for him to visit the country.

Responding to media queries, Singapore's Immigration & Checkpoints Authority said that Rajapaksa left Singapore on Thursday, The Straits Times newspaper reported.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on Wednesday confirmed a temporary visit to Thailand by the 73-year-old embattled Sri Lankan leader for humanitarian reasons, and said he promised not to conduct



political activities in the kingdom during his search for permanent asylum in another country.

Rajapaksa, who is currently in Singapore after fleeing Sri Lanka in July amid mass anti-government protests, is seeking refuge in Thailand as his Singapore visa runs out on Thursday.

After flying to the Maldives on July 13, Rajapaksa then fled to Singapore, where he announced his resignation a day later after months of protests

over the country's economic crisis.

"This is a humanitarian issue. We have made a promise that it's a temporary stay. No (political) activities are allowed, and this will help him find a country to take refuge in," Prayut was quoted as saying by the Bangkok Post newspaper on Wednesday.

Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai said the ousted president can stay in Thailand for 90 days as he is still a diplomatic passport holder, the report said.

Don said the Sri Lankan government did not oppose the visit and the Thai government would not make accommodation arrangements for him. The visit would not pose conflicts with Colombo as acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe had worked for him when he was in power, he added.

2nd Australian State bans public displays of Nazi symbols

AP ■ SYDNEY

A second Australian state on Thursday banned public displays of Nazi symbols.

New South Wales, the nation's most populous state, followed Victoria, the second most populous, which banned the public display of Nazi symbols in June.

The law was passed with the unanimous support of the state parliament's upper chamber. The lower chamber passed the bill on Tuesday.

Queensland and Tasmania states have foreshadowed similar laws, which would mean half of Australia's eight states and territories and most of the Australian population were banned from displaying Nazi



symbols.

New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies chief executive Darren Bark described the passing of the law as a historic day for the state.

"Nazi symbols are a gateway to violence and are used as a recruitment tool by extremists," Bark said.

"Banning their display is a long-overdue and much-needed law in our state. The perpetrators will finally be held to account," he added.

Spain evacuates 294 more Afghan workers, families

AP ■ MADRID

A plane provided by the Spanish government has brought 294 Afghan refugees via Pakistan to Spain, authorities said Thursday, bringing to 3,900 the number of people evacuated by Madrid since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan last year.

A government statement said the latest group of Afghan workers and their families flew into an air base near Madrid late Wednesday and were met by government officials, including Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister José Albares. "This flight is further evidence that we are keeping our commitment to not leave anyone behind," Albares said.

McDonald's to reopen in Ukraine

AP ■ CHICAGO

McDonald's will start reopening restaurants in Ukraine in the coming months, a symbol of the war-torn country's return to some sense of normalcy and a show of support after the American fast-food chain pulled out of Russia.

The burger giant closed its Ukrainian restaurants after Russia's invasion nearly six months ago but has continued to pay more than 10,000 McDonald's employees in the country.

McDonald's said on Thursday that it will begin gradually reopening some restaurants in the capital, Kyiv, and western Ukraine, where other companies are doing business away from the fighting. Western businesses like Spanish clothing retailers Zara



and Mango are open in Kyiv.

"We've spoken extensively to our employees who have expressed a strong desire to return to work and see our restaurants in Ukraine reopen," Paul Pomroy, corporate senior vice president of international operated markets, said in a message to employees.

"In recent months, the belief that this would support a small but important sense of normalcy has grown stronger." The Ukrainian economy has been severely damaged by the war and restarting businesses, even in a limited capacity would help.

New provisions added to curb Prez powers in Lanka's draft Constitutional amendment: Min

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Several features, including curbing the Sri Lankan President's power to sack the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, have been included in the draft of a constitutional amendment bill that seeks to reduce the concentration of power in one person, justice minister Wijeyedasa Rajapaksa has said.

He said the text of the draft of the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution was changed after the ouster of former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

"The former president wanted to retain the power to sack the prime minister and the cabinet as he wished. Since his departure we have changed that so the president can't remove the Prime Minister and the Cabinet," Rajapaksa said on Wednesday.

His comments came as he submitted to Parliament the constitutional amendment bill to clip the powers of the president, a key demand of protesters calling for political reforms and solutions to the country's worst economic crisis. Rajapaksa fled the country to the Maldives after an uprising against him on July 9 and four days later he resigned after reaching Singapore.

The minister said the reforming of presidential powers was in line with the demand of the protesters who carried on a relentless campaign for over four months demanding the resignation of Rajapaksa for his bungling of the ongoing economic crisis. He said for a long time since Sri Lanka adopted the Constitution in 1978, the need to reduce too much power in one person was a major demand.

"The demand was to either abolish the presidential system or prune powers to make parliament empowered," he said.

The 22nd Amendment was formulated amid the ongoing economic turmoil in the country which also caused a political



crisis. It is meant to replace the 20A that had given unfettered powers to President Rajapaksa after abolishing the 19th Amendment.

Describing the salient features of the 22A, Rajapaksa said the best features of the 19A reversed by Rajapaksa through 20A have been restored.

"All top positions including the post of the governor of the central bank can be made by the president only under the Constitutional Council approval," Rajapaksa said.

The Constitutional Council is a representative supreme body consisting of government and opposition parties.

Under the 20A, the Constitutional Council was converted to a parliamentary council just to rubber stamp presidential powers. "The president will continue to be the defence minister under 22A which is the only ministry the president can hold," Rajapaksa said.

"Of course, he will be allowed to hold any ministry for 14 days until suitable appointments can be made," he said.

The 22A would also have anti-corruption features, a key demand of the protesters.

He said under the 20A Rajapaksa increased the number of judges for the Supreme Court and Appeals Court.

African wildlife parks face climate, infrastructure threats

AP ■ MOMBASA, KENYA

Africa's national parks, home to thousands of wildlife species such as lions, elephants and buffaloes, are increasingly threatened by below-average rainfall and new infrastructure projects, stressing habitats and the species that rely on them.

A prolonged drought in much of the continent's east, exacerbated by climate change, and large-scale developments, including oil drilling and livestock grazing, are hampering conservation efforts in protected areas, several environmental experts say.

The at-risk parks stretch all the way from Kenya in the east - home to Tsavo and Nairobi national parks - south to the Mkomazi and Serengeti parks in Tanzania, the Quirimbas and Gorongosa parks in Mozambique and the famous Kruger National Park in South Africa, and west to the Kahuzi Biega, Salonga and Virunga reserves in Congo.

The parks not only protect flora and fauna but also act as natural carbon sinks - storing carbon dioxide emitted into the air and reducing the effects of global warming.

An estimated 38% of Africa's biodiversity areas are under severe

threat from climate change and infrastructure development, said Ken Mwathe of BirdLife International. "Key biodiversity areas over the years, especially in Africa, have been regarded by investors as idle and ready for development," said Mwathe. "Governments allocate land in these areas for infrastructural development." He added that the "powerlines and other energy infrastructure cause collisions with birds, due to low visibility. The numbers killed this way are not few."

In their quest to bolster living standards and achieve sustainable development goals, such as access to



clean water and food, boosting jobs and economic growth and improving the quality of education, African governments have set their sights on large building projects, many of them funded by foreign investments, especially by China.

The proposed East African Oil Pipeline, for example, which the Ugandan government says can help lift millions out of poverty, runs through Uganda's Kidepo valley, Murchison Falls and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, threatening species and drawing criticism from climate campaigners.

The growth of urban populations and the building that goes with

it, like new roads, electricity grids, gas pipes, ports and railways, have also added to the pressure on parks, conservationists said.

But they add that replacing wildlife with infrastructure is the wrong approach for economic growth. "We have to have a future where wildlife is not separated from people," said Sam Shaba, the program manager at the Honeyguide Foundation in Tanzania, an environmental non-profit organization.

When "people start to see that living with wildlife provides the answer to sustainable development ... that's the game-changer," said Shaba.

China renews Taiwan threats, island cites 'wishful thinking'



AP ■ BEIJING

China on Thursday renewed its threat to attack Taiwan following almost a week of war games near the island. Taiwan has called Beijing's claims to the self-governing democracy 'wishful thinking' and launched its own military exercises.

Taiwan says Beijing used Pelosi's visit as a pretext to raise the stakes in its feud with Taipei, firing missiles into the Taiwan Strait and over the island into the Pacific Ocean.

political opposition in Hong Kong was also seen as a factor behind Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen winning a second term in 2020. China says it plans to annex Taiwan under the now widely discredited 'one country, two systems' format applied in Hong Kong.



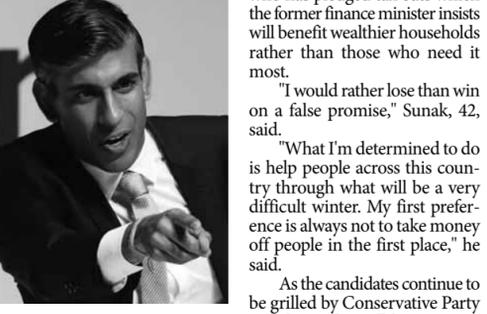
US cannot allow China's 'new normal' to pressure Taiwan with military drills: Pelosi

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said the US just cannot allow China to establish a 'new normal' to put pressure on Taiwan through the kind of military drills and warplane incursions that Beijing launched after she visited the self-governing island.

official media here that such war games in the busy Taiwan Strait will be a new normal. Pelosi's trip to Taipei angered Beijing, which views Taiwan as a breakaway province that must be reunited with the mainland, by force if necessary.

I would rather lose than win on a false promise: Rishi Sunak



PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's prime ministerial candidate Rishi Sunak has insisted that he would rather lose the Conservative Party leadership race to replace Boris Johnson than win on a false promise on how he plans to tackle the economic crisis.

who has pledged tax cuts which the former finance minister insists will benefit wealthier households rather than those who need it most. 'I would rather lose than win on a false promise,' Sunak, 42, said.

Death toll from weekend Israel-Gaza fighting rises to 47

AP ■ GAZA CITY (PALESTINE)

The death toll from last weekend's fighting between Israel and Gaza militants has risen to 47, after a man died from wounds sustained during the violence, the Health Ministry in Gaza said on Thursday.



Ministry, 47 people were killed, among them were 16 children and four women.

Israel said it targeted in order to foil an imminent attack. As many as 16 people might have been killed by rockets misfired by Palestinian militants.

Greece: Dozens still missing after migrant boat sinks

AP ■ ATHENS

Greek authorities say a search and rescue operation is ongoing for a second day for dozens of migrants missing after the boat they were on sank in rough seas off a southeastern Greek island.

Trump's bond with GOP deepens after primary wins, FBI search

AP ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump's pick for governor in the swing state of Wisconsin easily defeated a favourite of the Republican establishment. In Connecticut, the state that launched the Bush family and its brand of compassionate conservatism, a fiery Senate contender who promoted Trump's election lies upset the state GOP's endorsed candidate.



party he has spent the past seven years breaking down and rebuilding in his image. Facing mounting legal vulnerabilities and considering another presidential run, he needs support from the party to maintain his political career.

London home of Dadabhai Naoroji gets Blue Plaque honour

PTI ■ LONDON

The south London home where Dadabhai Naoroji, a prominent member of the Indian freedom struggle and Britain's first Indian parliamentarian, lived for around eight years at the end of the 19th century has been honoured with a commemorative Blue Plaque.



ings across London. Naoroji's plaque was unveiled on Wednesday to coincide with the 75th anniversary celebrations of Indian Independence.

is reported to have moved to Washington House, 72 Anerley Park, Penge, Bromley, at a time when his thoughts were turning increasingly towards full independence for India in 1897. That red-brick home now has a plaque which reads: 'Dadabhai Naoroji 1825-1917 Indian Nationalist and MP lived here'.

UPSIDA advertisement for LED High Mast Lighting system and electrical services.

NORTHERN RAILWAY advertisement for tendering of supply of goods.

UJVN LIMITED advertisement for Corrigendum 01 regarding valve and pump supply.

MY MONEY SECURITIES LIMITED advertisement for financial services.

Table showing financial results for My Money Securities Limited for the quarter ended 30th June, 2022.

BSES Yamuna Power Limited advertisement for tendering of sealed tenders.

SHARIKA ENTERPRISES LIMITED advertisement showing financial results for the quarter ended June 30, 2022.

PUBLIC NOTICE advertisement regarding Ramana Vihar Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd.

Sensex rallies 515 pts to reclaim 59K mark

IT, finance stocks sparkle

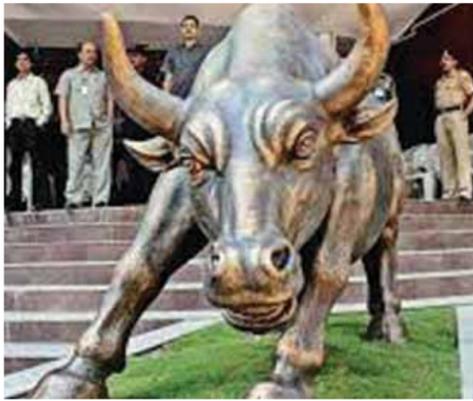
Mumbai: Equity benchmark Sensex rallied 515 points on Thursday to reclaim the 59,000-mark after a gap of four months, propelled by heavy buying in IT, banking and financial stocks amid sustained foreign fund inflows and positive Asian equities.

The 30-share BSE index ended 515.31 points or 0.88 per cent higher at 59,332.60 -- its highest closing since April 8, 2022. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty gained 124.25 points or 1.24 per cent to close at 17,659.

Axis Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, climbing 2.75 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, HDFC, Tech Mahindra, TCS, SBI and Wipro. On the other hand, ITC, NTPC, HUL, Bharti Airtel, Maruti and Nestle India were among the major laggards, sliding as much as 1.56 per cent. Market breadth was in favour of the bulls, with 19 of the 30 Sensex counters logging gains.

"Investors cheered the US inflation data for July, which came in below the estimate and raised hopes that the Federal Reserve may not be that aggressive in hiking interest rates in its next meeting.

Hence, the optimism spread across Asian markets, including India where investors



lapped up banking, IT and realty stocks.

"Traders have also been drawing comfort from the falling crude oil prices and FII inflows into the local shares in the last few sessions," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said commodity costs have corrected over the last few weeks, offering some respite from the record high inflation.

"India's inflation data is due on tomorrow (Friday) which would be eyed eagerly amidst better US inflation data.

The benefit of the recent moderation in commodity costs is likely to start accruing

in H2 FY23E, which would boost corporate profitability.

"Thus the positive momentum in the market is likely to sustain going ahead, though bouts of volatility can't be ruled out given mixed global cues and increasing geopolitical tensions," he added.

Sectorally, BSE bankex, finance, IT and realty climbed up to 1.64 per cent, while FMCG, metal, auto, telecom and basic materials nursed losses.

Broader markets were up, with the BSE midcap index advancing 0.83 per cent and the smallcap gauge rising 0.52 per cent.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Seoul ended with significant gains, while Tokyo closed in the red. **PTI**

Oil Ministry to divert gas from industries after CNG, piped gas prices jump 70% in a year

New Delhi: The oil ministry has ordered the diversion of natural gas from industries to the city gas distribution sector to cool CNG and piped cooking gas prices that have shot up by 70 per cent on the use of imported fuel.

Less than three months after it ordered the use of costlier imported LNG to meet incremental demand for automobile fuel CNG and household kitchen gas PNG, the ministry on August 10 reverted to an old policy of primarily supplying domestically produced gas for city gas operations.

The allocation for city gas operators like Indraprastha Gas Ltd in Delhi and Mahanagar Gas Ltd of Mumbai has been increased from 17.5 million standard cubic meters per day to 20.78 mmscmd, officials said.

The increased allocation will meet 94 per cent of the demand for CNG to automobiles and piped cooking gas to household kitchens in the country. Previously, about 83-84 per cent of the demand was met and the remaining was met through the import of LNG by GAIL, they said.

Use of domestic gas instead of imported fuel will bring down the cost of raw material and ease CNG and PNG rates, officials said.

The move follows a mas-



sive jump in CNG and PNG prices in the country in the last one year as operators used costlier imported LNG. CNG prices in Delhi went up by a massive 74 per cent (from Rs 43.40 per kg in July 2021 to Rs 75.61 per kg now) while PNG prices rose by 70 per cent (from Rs 29.66 per standard cubic meter to Rs 50.59 per scm).

Natural gas is the raw material that is used for CNG and PNG. This gas comes from fields such as Mumbai High and Bassein in the Arabian Sea. As the domestic production of gas is insufficient to meet all the requirements, the fuel is imported in the form of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in ships.

To promote the use of cleaner fuel, the government in 2014 included the City Gas Distribution (CGD) sector on the top priority list for receiving gas from older or regulated fields of state-owned ONGC and Oil India.

The CGD was put on a 'no cut' priority sector and allocation was made twice a year -- in April and October -- based on consumption data of the previous six months.

The ministry made such full allocation in March 2021 and thereafter, in May 2022, issued an amendment to the 2014 supply guideline to state that incremental demand over and above the last year's level would be met through imported LNG. **PTI**

Aviation stocks fly high as Govt lifts domestic airfare caps

New Delhi: Aviation stocks were in heavy demand on Thursday, a day after the Civil Aviation Ministry said that domestic airfare caps will be removed. The Union Aviation Ministry on Wednesday said that limits imposed on domestic airfares will be removed from August 31, after a span of approximately 27 months.

Shares of InterGlobe Aviation opened at Rs 2,070.05, then gained further to touch 2,080.80, registering a jump of 2.09 per cent over its last close.

SpiceJet Ltd opened at Rs 46.05, then jumped as much as 6.80 per cent to Rs 47.90 a share. "The decision to remove air fare caps has been taken after careful analysis of daily demand and prices of air turbine fuel (ATF). Stabilisation has set in and we are certain that the sector is poised for growth in domestic traffic in the near future," Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia

said on Twitter. ATF prices have been coming down during the last few weeks after jumping to record levels, primarily due to the Russia-Ukraine war that began on February 24.

On August 1, the price of ATF in Delhi was Rs 1.21 lakh per kilo-litre, which was around 14 per cent lower than last month.

The ministry had imposed lower and upper limits on domestic airfares based on flight durations when services were resumed on May 25, 2020, after a two-month lockdown due to Covid pandemic.

On Wednesday, the Civil Aviation Ministry stated in an order: "After review of the current status of scheduled domestic operations viz-a-viz passenger demand for air travel...It has been decided to remove the fare bands notified from time to time regarding the airfares with effect from August 31, 2022." **PTI**

BUSINESS BRIEF

3D SPINAL ORTHOSIS FOR DIVYANGJAN IN PDUNIPDD

New Delhi: Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities (Divyangjan) (PDUNIPDD), took a new initiative towards better services to Divyangjan using 3D printing technology. As a first step towards this initiative, a 3D printed spinal orthosis has been designed in the PDUNIPDD for Divyangjans owing to cancer. This orthosis was fitted to the Payal Solanki today in the presence of Minister, Virendra Kumar, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment along with the experts/officials from PDUNIPDD.



DELHI GOVT SCHOOLBOY BAGS BRONZE IN WTT

New Delhi: Delhi Government schoolboy does wonders at the WTT Youth Contender Table Tennis Tournament in Helsingborg in Sweden. Sarthak Arya represented India in the recently concluded WTT Youth Contender Table Tennis Tournament in Helsingborg in Sweden held from 8th to 11th August, 2022. Sarthak won the bronze medal for India in U-13 (Boys) category. He managed to beat top players from Sweden, Poland, Denmark in straight sets.



AUDI COMMENCES ONLINE BOOKINGS OF NEW Q3

New Delhi: Luxury car maker Audi on Thursday said it has commenced online bookings of its new version of Q3 in India. The model comes in two variants -- Premium Plus and Technology -- and can be booked with an initial amount of ₹2 lakh. Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon said the model has been the company's best-seller in the country. The new Audi Q3 comes with all-wheel drive as standard and is powered by a 2 litre petrol powertrain. Deliveries of the model are expected to start towards the end of 2022, the German automaker stated.

BMW INDIA LAUNCHES '50 JAHRE M EDITION' AT ₹1.52 CR

New Delhi: BMW India on Thursday said it has launched a '50 Jahre M Edition' of the BMW M4 Competition Coup priced at Rs 1.52 crore (ex-showroom). Available as a completely built-up unit, only a limited number of BMW M4 Competition Coupe '50 Jahre M Edition' are being offered by BMW M GmbH, the company said in a statement. The model has been introduced to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the company's M brand which offers high-performance cars.

TATA PUNCH FASTEST SUV TO CROSS 1 L SALES MARK

New Delhi: Tata Motors on Thursday said its model Punch has become the fastest SUV to reach 1 lakh sales mark. The auto major said it has crossed the sales mark in 10 months after launching the entry level SUV in October 2021. "The Punch is our second product based on the ALFA architecture and has successfully established its popularity by creating a new segment," Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Managing Director Shalish Chandra said in a statement. Tata Motors said Punch sales were highest-ever last month at 11,007 units.

Gold falls ₹347; silver drops ₹455



New Delhi: Gold in the national capital on Thursday declined ₹347 to ₹52,709 per 10 grams amid decline in international yellow metal prices, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹53,056 per 10 grams.

Silver also fell sharply by ₹455 to ₹59,103 per kg from ₹59,558 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was quoting lower at USD 1,787 per ounce while silver was flat at USD 20.45 per ounce.

"Gold prices retreated after soft US inflation data and eased recession worries," said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities) at HDFC Securities. **PTI**

India-UK trade set to double by 2030: Report

New Delhi: Trade between India and the UK is expected to double by 2030 driven by the proposed free trade pact, investment in technology, diversification of global supply chains and ease of doing business, a report said on Thursday.

India's trade in goods and services with the UK increased to USD 31.34 billion in 2022 from USD 19.51 billion in 2015, said the report.

The second edition of the Britain Meets India Report 2022, launched by Grant Thornton Bharat in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), supported by the UK's Department of International Trade, also revealed that 618 UK companies have been identified in India that together employ approximately 4.66 lakh people and have a combined turnover of Rs 3,634.9 billion.

"The UK remained the sixth-largest investor in India, with a cumulative investment of approximately USD 31.92 billion in 2000-22. This constituted around 5.4 per cent of the total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India,"

according to the report.

In June, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal expressed hope that the free trade agreement between India and the United Kingdom will be concluded by Diwali.

"The FTA is also expected to result in significant benefits for both countries through tariff concessions on alcoholic beverages and the movement of professionals," the report said, adding that the proposed pact is expected to boost Indian exports in labour-intensive sectors such as leather, textile, jewellery, processed agri-products and marine products, IT/ITES, education, pharma and health-care (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy).

According to the report, the UK is likely to look at reducing tariffs on products such as apples, UK-manufactured medical devices and machinery. British High Commissioner to India Alexander Ellis CMG said: "India has been one of the UK's most important partners in the journey of 75 years. The 'living bridge' between our

countries is set to transform into a stronger bond as we continue to fight the pandemic together and address the challenges to our security in both the physical and digital worlds. Our shared focus will be on strengthening the economic relationship between the two nations for a more secure and prosperous decade ahead."

"The report has highlighted several new emerging sectors and I hope we will derive qualitative outcomes that nurture opportunities for companies in India and the UK. We continue to work closely with the governments and businesses on both sides and leverage the strengths of UK companies to deepen our trade relationship," CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said.

"Trade between India and the UK is expected to double by 2030 from current levels - based on dynamic connections between people of both countries, investment in technology, diversification of global supply chains and overall ease of doing business," said Vishesh C Chandio, CEO, Grant Thornton Bharat. **PTI**

Rupee falls 36 paise to close at 79.61 against US dollar

Mumbai: The rupee depreciated by 36 paise to close at 79.61 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday amid rising crude oil prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 79.22 and saw an intra-day high of 79.22 and a low of 79.69 against the American currency.

It finally ended at 79.61, down 36 paise over its previous close of 79.25.

Forex traders said the rupee is likely to trade on a mixed note in the near term. Recovery in domestic markets from lower levels and FII inflows may support the local unit.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.23 per cent to 104.95, after official data showed that US inflation slowed down from a 40-year high in June to 8.5 per cent in July on lower gasoline prices.

Traders said investors now will focus on key domestic



macroeconomic data points like index of industrial production (IIP), consumer price index (CPI) and trade balance numbers due on Friday for further cues.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.84 per cent to USD 98.22 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 515.31 points or 0.88 per cent higher at 59,332.60 points, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 124.25 points or 0.71 per cent to 17,659.00 points.

Foreign institutional investors remained net buyers in the capital market on Wednesday as they purchased shares worth ₹1,061.88 crore, as per exchange data. **PTI**

JMC Projects bags new orders worth ₹1,524 cr in construction, water segments

New Delhi: JMC Projects Limited (JMC) on Thursday said it has secured new orders worth ₹1,524 crore in construction and water segments.

The orders include an engineering, procurement and construction project for integrated airport development in Asia for ₹1,012 crore, JMC, a subsidiary of Kalpataru Power Transmission Limited, said in a statement.

It has also bagged water projects worth Rs 370 crore and B&F (Buildings & Factories)

projects of 142 crore in India. "We are delighted with the new order wins, especially the prestigious order for Integrated Airport Development.

The new orders in the water and B&F business help us to widen our clientele and further strengthen our order book," JMC CEO and Managing Director SK Tripathi said.

JMC Projects (India) Limited (JMC) is one of the leading civil construction and infrastructure EPC companies in India. **PTI**

Coal India shares gain 3% to touch 52-week high on strong Q1 numbers

New Delhi: Shares of Coal India gained over 3 per cent to hit a 52-week high in morning trade on Thursday after the company reported robust June quarter numbers.

On BSE, the stock opened strong at Rs 226.00, then gained further to hit a 52-week high of Rs 226.10, registering a rise of 2.84 per cent over its previous closing price after its June quarter profit almost tripled to Rs 8,832.86 crore.

On the NSE, the stock climbed 3.16 per cent to a 52-week high of Rs 226.80.

Coal India Ltd on



Wednesday reported an almost three-fold rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 8,832.86 crore for the June 2022 quarter on the back of higher sales.

The company had posted a

net profit of Rs 3,169.86 crore in the year-ago period, Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a BSE filing.

Its revenue from operations during the April-June period increased to Rs 35,092.17 crore from Rs 25,282.75 crore a year ago.

The company's net sales in the first quarter rose to Rs 32,497.9 crore from Rs 23,293.65 crore earlier.

Its output in the April-June period rose to 159.75 million tonnes (MT) from 123.98 MT in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. **PTI**

Rise in power demand leads to 17% hike in coal supply to electricity generating plants in July

New Delhi: The supply of coal to electricity generating plants increased by 17.09 per cent to 58.45 million tonnes in July due to rise in power demand, the government data said.

The government in the last few months has taken various measures to ensure adequate availability of coal for power stations.

The total coal dispatch to power utilities stood at 49.92 million tonnes (MT) in July last fiscal, according to provisional data of the coal ministry.

Overall dispatch of coal in the country went up by 8.51 per cent to 67.81 MT last month compared to 62.49 MT in the corresponding month of previous fiscal. **PTI**

The overall coal production also went up by 11.37 per cent to 60.42 MT in July as against 54.25 MT in the year-ago period.

Earlier, the government had mandated Coal India (CIL) to import coal as an emergency measure to avoid the fuel shortage at power utilities and build up buffer stock.

The state-owned firm accounts for over 80 per cent of India's coal output.

Subsequently, CIL awarded the contract for supply of 7.91 lakh tonnes of imported coal to PT Bara Daya Energy Ltd (consortium) to power generation companies (gencos) during August and September. **PTI**

NHIDCL, NSDC to collaborate on skill development initiatives



New Delhi: The National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation and the National Skill Development Corporation have signed an agreement to facilitate collaboration in skill development initiatives.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) provides a formal basis of interaction between NHIDCL and NSDC, and will play a significant role in realising the aims and objectives of the Prime Minister's skill development programme, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship said.

"The purpose of this MoU is to establish the basis of collaboration between NHIDCL and NSDC, to take up multiple initiatives contributing towards making India the Skill Capital of the World," it said in a statement on Thursday. **PTI**

MSME exporters facing demand squeeze in global markets

New Delhi: MSME exporters are facing slowdown in demand in the global markets due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and they have sought immediate intervention of the government to deal with the situation, according to industry players.

They added that the dip in demand may impact the country's exports in the coming months. Ludhiana Hand Tools Association President S C Ralhan said the industry is

passing through "acute recession" in both domestic and international markets.

"Most of the sectors including hand tools auto parts and spinning mills are working at 25-60 per cent capacity only. At the moment, we are getting very small orders," he said in a statement. Most of the exporters said they have orders for only one or two months.

"This scenario would impact exports growth," Ralhan added.

Sharing similar views, Dalpat Forge (India) Manager Ashwani Aggarwal said the demand situation is "bad" in both domestic as well as global markets like the US and Europe. "The government should support us to deal with the situation," he said.

Leading leather sector exporter and Chairman of Farida Group Rafeeq Ahmed said though the factories currently are running at full capacity, the order book position is

gradually "dwindling" for the season.

"There are demand issues mainly in the US due to high inflation there. We as exporters are planning how to deal with this slowdown," Ahmed said.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Vice Chairman Khalid Khan added that "order book position is bad". Exports dipped, though marginally, for the first time in 17 months in July, while trade deficit tripled to a record

USD 31 billion fuelled by over 70 per cent rise in crude oil imports. The outbound shipments during April-July 2022-23, however, stood at USD 156.41 billion, an increase of 19.35 per cent over USD 131.06 billion in the corresponding period last fiscal. While the US is top market for domestic exporters, European nations including the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy and France are among the top 20 destinations. **PTI**



No. 1 Medvedev knocked out

2022 Wimbledon losing finalists Nick Kyrgios defeats top-ranked Daniil at Montreal Masters

AP ■ MONTREAL

Nick Kyrgios broke twice in the final set as he rallied to topple world number one Daniil Medvedev in the second round of the ATP Montreal Masters on Wednesday.

Australia's Wimbledon finalist beat Medvedev 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 6-2 to produce his second career upset of a reigning number one after ambushing Rafael Nadal at Wimbledon in 2014.

Kyrgios produced his usual on-court antics, complaining about a high bounce, hitting a ball into the stands to draw a warning and bickering with his player box in moments of tension.

But after gathering his formidable resources, the 27-year-old ranked 37th finished off the match in exactly two hours.

"This is our fourth meeting and we know each other well," Kyrgios said. "I don't go in looking at the rankings, just the guy in front of me."

"I had a clean objective today — play a lot of serve and volley and execute better."

"Hopefully I can keep this rolling and keep on winning. Medvedev is a machine — he's number one for a reason."

Both players were coming off weekend title wins. Kyrgios at the Washington 500 on Sunday and Medvedev at Los Cabos, Mexico, on Saturday.

Kyrgios has won 14 of his last 15 matches to improve to 29-7 for 2022.

Medvedev lost for the 11th time in 2022, but by reaching the final at Los Cabos — where he lifted his first trophy of the season — he is assured of taking the number one ranking into his US Open title defense later this month.

Second-seeded Carlos Alcaraz, who like Medvedev enjoyed a first-round bye, fared no better in his opening match.



BOTH PLAYERS WERE COMING OFF WEEKEND TITLE WINS, KYRGIOS AT THE WASHINGTON 500 AND MEDVEDEV AT LOS CABOS, MEXICO

American Tommy Paul spoiled the Spaniard's Canadian debut with a 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (9/7), 6-3 victory.

The unseeded American converted his fifth match point to seal the second-round victory in three hours and 20 minutes.

Alcaraz came into the event with two prestige Masters 1000 titles from Miami and Madrid and holding a 42-7 record this season.

Fourth seed Casper Ruud backed up his defeat earlier this season of Alex Molcan, beating the Slovakian 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 in just under two hours.

Elsewhere, Italian Jannik Sinner needed three sets to get past Adrian Mannarino 2-6, 6-4, 6-2 while Alex de Minaur lined up an all-Aussie Thursday match against Kyrgios by defeating Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (7/4), 7-5.

Swiatek sails through as Gauff survives

AP ■ TORONTO

Coco Gauff overcame 13 double-faults on Wednesday as she battled past Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina and into the third round of the WTA Toronto Masters, where top-ranked Iga Swiatek sailed through.

Gauff, the US teenager who fell to Swiatek in the French Open final this year, held on to beat Rybakina 6-4, 6-7 (8/10), 7-6 (7/3).

Gauff lost out on four chances to close out a straight-sets victory as a quartet of match points came and went.

Kazakhstan's Rybakina, aided by Gauff's service struggles, had looked as if she might pull off another



second-round match, defeating Australian Ajla Tomljanovic 6-1, 6-2 in 55 minutes.

The top-seeded Pole with six titles this season faced nine break points, saving six. Swiatek was playing her second tournament since losing to Alize Cornet in the third round at Wimbledon last month, a defeat which ended her 37-match win streak.

Defending champion Camila Giorgi made it to the third round with a 6-3, 7-5 defeat of Belgian Elise Mertens.

Spanish fourth seed Paula Badosa lasted for just 13 games before retiring as she trailed 7-5, 1-0 against Kazakh Yulia Putintseva.

Simona Halep beat Zhang Shuai of China 6-4, 6-2.

marathon victory. She had needed three hours to get past Marie Bouzkova in the first round.

But Gauff finally prevailed, 70 minutes after her first opportunities, claiming victory on her fifth match point.

Both players were appear-

ing for the first time in Francophone Montreal after making Canadian debuts a year ago in Toronto.

World number 11 Gauff lost serve three times against Rybakina but broke on four occasions.

Meanwhile, Swiatek glided through untroubled in her

Zverev in fight to be fit for US Open

AP ■ MUNICH

Germany's world number two Alexander Zverev says he is facing a battle to be fit for the US Open following surgery on torn ankle ligaments at the French Open.

Zverev only returned to the practice court last Sunday after the injury he suffered during his semi-final against Rafael Nadal at Roland Garros in June.

Speaking in Hamburg at a press conference on Thursday the Tokyo Olympic champion Zverev said: "Obviously I am

going to try to make it to the US Open even if it's in a very short time."

The last Grand Slam of the season starts in New York in a little over a fortnight on August 29.

If Flushing Meadows comes too soon Zverev is aiming to return for the September 13-18 Davis Cup group phase against France, Belgium and Australia in his native Hamburg.

NADAL AT CINCINNATI
Rafael Nadal boosted his hopes of competing at the US

Open on Wednesday by announcing he will play in next week's Cincinnati Masters.

"Very happy to play again in Cincy. Flying there tomorrow," the 36-year-old wrote on Instagram.

World number three Nadal has not played since suffering an abdominal tear at Wimbledon last month which forced him to withdraw from his semi-final against Nick Kyrgios.

The Spaniard hasn't played in Cincinnati, where he was champion in 2013, for five years.

Serena beaten by Bencic at WTA Toronto Masters

AP ■ TORONTO

Serena Williams, who indicated this week she is in the home stretch of her storied tennis career, fell 6-2, 6-4 to Belinda Bencic in the second round of the WTA Toronto Masters on Wednesday.

Switzerland's Bencic, the Olympic gold medalist in Tokyo last year, broke the 23-time Grand Slam champion twice in the first set and once in the second to repeat a 2015 semi-final victory over Williams in Toronto.

She needed five set points to pocket the opener, but the second set went more smoothly and she wrapped up the victory in front of a vocal pro-Williams crowd in just over an hour and a quarter.

Williams, who turns 41 next month, had beaten Spain's Nuria Parrizas Diaz on Monday for her first singles victory since the 2021 French Open, 14 months ago.

She revealed in an essay in Vogue magazine and an



Instagram post on Tuesday that "the countdown has begun" to her retirement from the sport.

Williams hasn't specified an actual retirement date but is expected to compete next week in Cincinnati before travelling to the US Open, which starts on August 29.



Real defeat Frankfurt to win 5th UEFA Super Cup

AP ■ HELSINKI

Goals from David Alaba and Karim Benzema gave Real Madrid a 2-0 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt and a fifth UEFA Super Cup on Wednesday.

While Frankfurt were dangerous, particularly in the first half, Madrid's experience and individual quality saw them through, as it did so often in their victorious 2021-22 Champions League campaign.

"It wasn't an easy game, they were entrenched in their own half, but we managed to score and we controlled it well afterwards," Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti told Movistar TV.

"At the start of the season, you can't expect the team to be already at 100 percent, but we won and we have started the season well. I believe it can help us achieve better results and winning helps motivate the players."

Frankfurt had the best of the early stages, with Madrid keeper Thibaut Courtois forced into a stunning anticipation save when one-on-one with Daichi Kamada in the 14th minute.

Madrid almost got their first, when Benzema released Vinicius to curl past Kevin

Trapp in the penalty box, only for Tuta to clear the ball off the line.

With Madrid dominating possession, Frankfurt mounted several counter-attacks until Madrid launched a counter of their own in the 37th minute.

A diving Trapp got his fingertips to a goal-bound shot by Vinicius, pushing the ball out for a corner.

From the ensuing play, Benzema linked with Casemiro just next to the right post.

The Brazilian sucked in several Frankfurt defenders and a diving Trapp, before heading back to an unmarked Alaba who scored from close range.

After the goal, Madrid stepped it up a gear and should have gone 2-0 up, with Benzema uncharacteristically dragging the ball wide with the goal begging in the 41st minute.

Madrid's quality became more obvious in the second half, with Trapp saving a deflected Vinicius shot in the 54th minute and Casemiro hitting the crossbar with 61 minutes gone.

Borussia Dortmund loanee Ansgar Knauff had a chance saved just minutes later, before Vinicius and Benzema combined to put Madrid 2-0 up.

Vinicius skated down the left before slicing the ball back

seemingly unsighted for the Frenchman to hammer home from the edge of the box.

Frankfurt fought hard in the closing stages but Madrid were able to dominate the game to win their fifth Super Cup from eight attempts.

Alaba praised his team's determination to continue their stellar form from last season.

"We were here to win and to collect the next title... We want to pick up where we left off last season," Alaba told RTL.

"It's always nice to score goals - it doesn't happen so often for me."

The match also highlighted the growing gap between the Champions League and Europa League competitions, with Madrid being the ninth Champions League team to win the competition in the past 10 years.

Only city rivals Atletico Madrid have won the Super Cup when qualifying via a Europa League win in the past decade, having done so by beating Real in the 2018 edition.

Frankfurt joined Hamburg (1977 and 1983), Dortmund (1997) and Bremen (1992) as losing Super Cup finalists from Germany, with only Bayern Munich (2013 and 2020) having won the showpiece event.

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Bernardo Silva revealed on Wednesday he has been open with Manchester City over where he sees his future amid speculation he could be Barcelona's next big money signing.

The Portuguese midfielder has been a vital part of the City side that has won four Premier League titles in the past five seasons. City boss Pep Guardiola said on Friday he would not stand in Silva's way should he wish to leave Manchester.

However, the English champions are reportedly set to demand a fee in excess of £80 million that Barcelona will struggle to match unless there are a number of significant departures from the Camp Nou.

"My relationship with the club is very honest. I've been open with them and they know what I want," Silva told ESPN.

"If I stay, I'm very happy, and I will always respect this club and give all my best. If not, it's football and we'll just see what happens."

Bernardo says Man City know what he wants



"It's a big club and they don't want players who are not happy at the club. They always say to all of us that if you're not happy, you can go."

"Of course, they are in business and they want the right amount of money for letting us go, but personally it's a relation-

ship with the club that is very respectful."

Barcelona have already spent around 150 million euros this summer on Robert Lewandowski, Raphinha and Jules Kounde, as well as adding Andreas Christensen and Franck Kessie on free transfers.

Elliott signs new long term Liverpool deal

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool tied down Harvey Elliott to a new "long-term" deal on Thursday with the 19-year-old expected to feature more prominently in Jurgen Klopp's first-team plans this season.

Elliott started three of Liverpool's first four Premier League matches of last season before sustaining a fracture-dislocation of his ankle at Leeds which sidelined him for five months.

However, he has bounced back to full fitness and come off the bench in both of Liverpool's two games so far this season against Manchester City in the Community Shield and his old club Fulham on the opening weekend of the Premier League season.

The midfielder's new deal will reportedly run until 2027. "It's always nice to know that I'm going to be here for many more years, which is always a great thing with it



being my boyhood club," Elliott told the Liverpool website.

"There is nothing in this world that makes me more happy and more excited than this."

In total, Elliott has made 22 senior appearances since arriving at Anfield in the summer of 2019.

"There is so much to like about this," said Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp.

"For us, as a club, we get to continue our journey with a special young player who has already made a big impact on Liverpool FC."

Indian football team to play against Vietnam & Singapore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian men's football team will play two international friendly matches against Singapore and hosts Vietnam in September, the national federation said on Thursday. The Indian team will face Singapore on September 24 before taking on Vietnam on Sept 27.

Vietnam is hosting the friendly matches in the FIFA window (Sept 19 to 27) as part of their preparation for the 2022 AFF Mitsubishi Electric Cup.

The Blue Tigers will travel to Vietnam on September 22 and return back home on September 28.

The matches are expected to take place at Thong Nhat Stadium in Ho Chi Minh city, according to Vietnam Football Federation (VFF) website.

According to VFF, the three teams will play in a tournament from September 21 to 27 and the team which gets the highest points after a round-robin for-

Brazil against replaying Argentina WC qualifier

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said on Wednesday it did not want to replay an unfinished World Cup qualifying match with Argentina.

"After receiving the request from coach Tite and coordinator Juninho Paulista, the President of CBF, Edinaldo Rodrigues, will seek to suspend the match," said a statement on the federation web site.

The original fixture, in September last year, was halted when Brazilian health officials stormed on the pitch after seven minutes in Sao Paulo, alleging Covid-19 quarantine breaches by the visitors.

World football's governing body FIFA ruled in February that the game must be replayed in September.

Since February, both



nations have made sure of qualifying for the World Cup in Qatar.

The CBF statement suggested that FIFA had already agreed with the Argentine Football Association (AFA) to call the game off.



mat will be declared the champion.

India are currently placed 104th on the FIFA world rankings, while their two opponents are placed at 97th (Vietnam) and 159th (Singapore) respectively.

Having qualified for the 2023 AFC Asian Cup two months back, India will be looking to prepare for the showpiece continental tournament next year.

"We are happy about the upcoming challenges, and we're looking forward to maintaining the quality of performances that we have recently dished out," India head coach Igor Stimac said.

The coach said efforts are being made to organise a preparatory camp and he is hopeful to have a practice match against Kerala Blasters ahead of their departure to Vietnam.

LONG JUMPER SREESHANKAR FINISHES 6TH IN DIAMOND LEAGUE DEBUT



SIX DAYS AFTER WINNING A HISTORIC SILVER AT THE BIRMINGHAM CWG, SREESHANKAR COMPETED IN HIS MUCH-ANTICIPATED MAIDEN DIAMOND LEAGUE BUT WAS FAR FROM HIS BEST IN A STRONG FIELD UNDER CONDITIONS NOT VERY IDEAL FOR JUMPING

PTI ■ MONACO

Commonwealth Games Silver medallist long jumper Murali Sreeshankar finished sixth in his debut Diamond League meeting here with a below-par 7.94m effort.

Six days after winning a historic Silver at the Birmingham CWG, Sreeshankar competed in his much-anticipated maiden Diamond League but was far from his best in a strong field under conditions not very ideal for jumping on Wednesday night.

Most of the 10 jumpers faced headwind of above 1m/s in the first round but it got better as the competition progressed.

Sreeshankar had won Silver in the CWG six days ago with a best jump of 8.08m. He has a season's and personal best of 8.36m.

He had finished seventh in the World Championships in Eugene, USA, last month with a best jump of 7.96m.

The 23-year-old opened with a 7.61m under a 1.5m/s

headwind. He bettered it to 7.84m and then followed it by 7.83m.

From sixth in the first round, he slipped to eight after the third and just about squeezed into the top eight to save himself from elimination.

Sreeshankar had 7.69m in his fourth attempt and 7.94m in his fifth to leave him at the sixth spot.

Under the revised 'Final Three' rule of the Diamond League, only the top three get the sixth and last attempt.

Tokyo Olympics Bronze medallist Maykel Masso of Cuba won the event with a best effort of 8.35m.

World Championships Silver medallist and reigning Olympic champion Miltiadis Tentoglou of Greece (8.31m) finished second ahead of Marquis Dendy (8.31m) of USA though both had identical best jumps.

Tentoglou had two 8.30m jumps as his second best while Dendy had 8.30m and 8.17m as second and third best jumps.

The 2019 World Championships Gold medallist Tajay Gayle of Jamaica was

Fraser-Pryce, Lyles shine, Kipyegon just misses WR

AP ■ MONACO

Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Noah Lyles underlined their dominant sprint seasons with victories at the Monaco Diamond League on Wednesday, as Faith Kipyegon narrowly missed a sensational world record in the 1500m.

Jamaica's Fraser-Pryce, fresh from a fifth world 100m title in Eugene last month, clocked a world leading 10.62 seconds for the win.

The Jamaican's victory in Monaco was her third sub-10.70 run within a week and saw her become the first woman in history to break 10.70 six times in the same season.

Her time also smashed the previous meet best of 10.72sec set by disgraced American Marion Jones in 1998.

"I did what I needed to do and we had fun and let the clock do the talking," said Fraser-Pryce.

Lyles, who won the world 200m title last month, also set a meet record, clocking 19.46sec to improve on his previous mark of 19.65 set back in 2018.

The American ran a powerful bend in a US clean-sweep, getting the better of teenager Erriyon Knighton and world 400m champion Michael Norman.

World and Olympic 1500m champion Kipyegon arguably produced the stand-out performance of an amazing night of track and field.

The Kenyan ran the second fastest ever time over the distance as she won in 3:50.37, falling just half a second short of Ethiopian Genzebe Dibaba's world record set in 2015, also in Monaco.

fourth with a best of 8.06m while world indoor Silver medallist Tobias Montler of Sweden was fifth with a best effort of 7.96m.

Sreeshankar's next event could be in Lausanne, Switzerland as he has said he has entered his name for World Athletics Tour silver label event there on August 30.

He collected three Diamond League points to be at 10th in the qualification ranking for the final in Zurich on September 7-8. He will not make the season-ending finale as only the top six qualify for it and there is no men's long jump event in the remaining two legs in Lausanne (August 26) and Brussels (September 2).

Tentoglou is at the top of the Diamond League rankings with 31 points, followed by Masso (20) and Montler (16).

A new Diamond League format for jumps and throws was approved in December, following outrage from the athletes regarding the controversial 'Final Three' — winner-takes-all last round — format.

Under the new format, the best throw or jump from the

entire competition, not just the final three, win the event. But only the top three competitors after the fifth round will get the sixth and final attempt.

Moreover, the best throwers/jumpers are seeded to perform at the start of each round. After round 3, only the top eight will remain in the competition and the order of jumps will be redrawn with the best performing athlete starting first in the next two rounds (rounds 4 and 5).

After round 5, the top three athletes get one additional attempt each. The order of the three remaining athletes is redrawn so that the best-placed athlete after round five goes first in the 'Final 3'.

There will be a two-minute break from the end of round five to the start of the final 3. Any 'live' field and track events will be stopped for the duration of a 'Final 3' competition.

The old format did not consider marks achieved in the previous five attempts, with the top three athletes going into a fresh competition in the sixth and final round to pick the champion.



Arjun likely to play for Goa next season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Legendary Sachin Tendulkar's son Arjun is all set to leave Mumbai and in all likelihood will ply his trade for south-western neighbours Goa in the next domestic season.

The 22-year-old left-arm pacer, who has also been a part of IPL franchise Mumbai Indians, have played two games for Mumbai, during the 2020-21 edition of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy against Haryana and Puducherry respectively.

It has been learnt that Tendulkar junior has already applied for No Objection Certificate (NoC) from his home association MCA.

"Getting maximum game time on the ground is important for Arjun at this juncture of his career. We believe that the shift will improve the probability of Arjun featuring in more competitive matches. He is embarking on a new phase of his cricketing career," SRT Sports Management said in a statement.

Tendulkar has played two 'Tests' for the India U-19 against Sri Lanka, three summers back and has featured in the Mumbai probables for the white ball leg of the domestic season even this time.

For Tendulkar, the

biggest disappointment has been getting dropped from the Mumbai squad this season without being given a chance to prove his mettle.

People who have monitored his progress feel that the youngster has the right attitude and work ethic but does need consistent game time to showcase what he is capable of.

He has recently been a part of Mumbai Indians' developmental squad that played a lot of T20 games in England.

The likes of Kumar Kartikeya, Anmolpreet Singh, Ramandeep Singh, Dewald Brevis were all part of the squad that played T20 games against club sides.

A senior Goa Cricket Association (GCA) did acknowledge that Tendulkar junior is expected to be considered among state's pre-season probables.

"We have been looking out for left-hand bowling talent as also add players to the middle order with multiple skills. In this context, we invited Arjun Tendulkar to join the Goa side. We will be playing pre-season trial-matches (white ball) and he will be playing in those games. The selectors will then take a call based on his performance," Goa CA president Suraj Lotlikar told PTI.

Jayawardene backs Babar to dethrone Root as top Test batter

PTI ■ DUBAI

Sri Lanka legend Mahela Jayawardene has picked Pakistan captain Babar Azam as the cricketer who, he believes, can dethrone England's Joe Root as top Test batter.

Root has been ruling the roost at the top of the Test rankings since June, with the Englishman enjoying a fine World Test Championship, and in a rich vein of form under new coach Brendon McCullum.

The former England captain has scored more runs than any other player since the turn of the decade, and deservedly claimed the ICC Men's Test Player of the Year award in 2021.

"Tough one!" Jayawardena said on the latest episode of The ICC Review, when asked who can dethrone Root from the top spot.

"I would say Babar Azam has an opportunity. He's been consistent in all three formats and it shows in his rankings. He's a naturally gifted player, plays in all conditions, he's got the game to adapt as well."

"It depends on the amount of cricket, who's playing when and how much but the Babar might be the guy."

Babar is the only player in



on him at least for a little while to hold to all three but there are some good quality players around who will keep pushing him."

Asked what makes Babar such a special player, Jayawardene said he was most impressed by the amount of time the Pakistan skipper has while at the crease.

"(I) think it is just the technique, the time that he has and the composure that he has out there in the middle," the former Sri Lanka captain said.

"He's not rattled at any time, whether he plays T20s, ODIs or Tests, he adjusts quite brilliantly."

"Joe (Root) in Test cricket is the same. He knows what he needs to do, he can the tempo when he wants to, bats to what the conditions offer. Babar has that same quality, so that's why he's been so consistent in all three formats."

The two star cricketers will come face to face later this year when England tour Pakistan for a three-match Test series in December.

Root could further solidify his No.1 spot in the upcoming series against South Africa, while Babar will have to wait until the series against England later in the year to make a charge for the top.

the top three in the batters' rankings in all three formats, occupying the top spot in each of the white-ball formats and currently ranked No.3 in Tests.

"T20s and ODIs, it is tough one to hold on to because there are a lot of good players who have to be consistent," Jayawardene said. "I would put my money



Santner stars as NZ beat WI in T20 series opener

AP ■ JAMAICA

West Indies' season of white ball was continued on Wednesday when New Zealand completed a 13-run win in the first T20I of a three-match series at Sabina Park in Jamaica.

Fresh from a successful European sojourn, the Black Caps posted a formidable 185 for five batting first in a rain-interrupted innings before their premier bowlers combined to limit the Caribbean side to 172 for seven in reply.

Since getting the better of Bangladesh 2-0 in a T20I duel, the West Indies have been swept 3-0 by the Bangladeshis and India in successive ODI series before going down 4-1 to the Indians in another T20I

campaign immediately preceding this assignment.

New Zealand almost paid for a period of complacency towards the end of the match as an explosive unbroken 58-run eighth-wicket partnership between Romario Shepherd (31 not out) and Odean Smith (27 not out) gave the hosts a glimmer of hope after they had crashed to 114 for seven in the 16th over.

But they were left with too much to do as 'Man of the Match' Mitchell Santner's haul of three for 19 ripped the heart of the West Indies batting as he claimed the wickets of captain Nicholas Pooran first ball before adding Shimron Hetmyer and top-scorer Shamrah Brooks (42) to his list of victims.

Rashid, Rabada, Livingstone to play for 'MI Cape Town'

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Afghanistan's star spinner Rashid Khan, South African pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada and dashing English batter Liam Livingstone are among the five direct signings of MI Cape Town which will take part in the inaugural Cricket South Africa (CSA) T20 League.

The talented Dewald Brevis, who played for Mumbai Indians in IPL along with England all-rounder Sam Curran are the other two direct signings of the franchise.

For the record, Rashid plays for Gujarat Titans, Rabada and Livingstone for Punjab Kings and Curran last played for CSK in the Indian Premier League.

MI-Cape Town has thus signed three overseas players, 1 capped South African and 1 uncapped South African.

"With our direct player signings, we have taken the first step towards building the MI philosophy — having a strong core around which the team will be planned. I am glad to welcome Rashid, Kagiso, Liam, Sam and happy to have Dewald continue with us on this new journey," team owner Akash Ambani said.



CSK-owned franchise ropes in Faf du Plessis

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former South Africa captain Faf du Plessis has been roped in by the Johannesburg franchise owned by IPL giants Chennai Super Kings (CSK) as their marquee signing for the inaugural edition of the Cricket South Africa (CSA) T20 League, according to a report.

Du Plessis, who played for the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in the IPL last season, was part of the CSK from 2011 to 2021, except for 2016 and 2017 when the team was suspended.

Wednesday was the last day for the direct acquisition of players for the six-team upcoming league.

The inaugural edition of the CSA T20 League is scheduled to be played in January-February 2023 and all the six franchises in the tournament have been acquired by current IPL team owners.

The CSK-owned Johannesburg franchise is also believed to have roped in England all-rounder Moeen Ali as one of its marquee players, according to Cricbuzz.

Ross Taylor says he faced racism

AP ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand Cricket said on Thursday that they are looking into allegations by former skipper Ross Taylor that he suffered racism.

The 38-year-old, who is of New Zealand-Samoan descent, retired from international cricket in April after a glorious career spanning 16 years.

Taylor's comments are the latest accusation of racism in cricket.

In his autobiography *Black and White* released on Thursday, the legendary batsman says he endured racially barbed comments from teammates, but does not specify at what level of the game in New Zealand.

Taylor said that for most of his career he was "an anomaly, a brown face in a vanilla line-up".

"In many ways, dressing-room banter is the barometer," he wrote.

"A teammate used to tell me, 'You're half a good guy, Ross, but which half is good?"



You don't know what I'm referring to. I was pretty sure I did.

"Other players also had to put up with comments that dwelt on their ethnicity."

He represented New Zealand in 112 Tests, scoring 7,683 runs between 2006 and 2022. He was captain of the Black Caps for two years until 2012.

A spokesman for New Zealand Cricket said they have contacted Taylor about the allegations.

"NZC has reached out to Ross to discuss some of the comments in his book, both to better understand the details of them and to offer support. These discussions are ongoing," said the spokesman.

Ross currently sits on an NZC working group seeking to improve the game's engagement with Pasifika communities and his input is greatly valued.

"We consider him an important part of our cricket family and are deeply disappointed he's been exposed to this type of behaviour."

AP ■ HARARE

Sikandar Raza's golden run ended with a golden duck as his Zimbabwe side lost by 105 runs to Bangladesh on Wednesday in the third ODI in Harare.

An unbeaten 85 by Afif Hossain lifted Bangladesh to 256-9 in 50 overs when put in to bat and Mustafizur Rahman then took 4-17 as Zimbabwe were all out for just 151 in 32.2 overs.

Pakistan-born Raza batted brilliantly in guiding Zimbabwe to a winning 2-0 lead in the three-game series last weekend, hitting unbeaten knocks of 135 and 117 in superb run chases for two five-wicket victories.

But the 36-year-old, whose childhood dream to be a fighter pilot in the Pakistan Air Force was dashed by an eyesight glitch, finally met his

Raza out for golden duck as Zimbabwe lose 3rd ODI



match in ODI debutant Ebadot Hossain.

Facing his first ball with Zimbabwe reeling at 17-3, Raza fell victim to an inswinging

Yorker that flattened the middle and off stumps.

"It would have been nice to score lots of runs and win again, but my mood does not

change when I fail to do so," said Raza.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to play cricket for Zimbabwe, to enjoy life and be in good health."

"India will be here next week for three ODIs and all of us are looking forward to that huge challenge."

Raza skipped Zimbabwe on Wednesday after wicket-keeper Regis Chakabva — standing in for injured captain Craig Ervine during the series — sprained a hand.

Reacting to the first ODI victory on the tour, Afif said: "I think we played very well but we have to improve our bowling and today we did very well with the ball."