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Himachal CM swearing inSukhu is first Chief
Min from Lower
Himachal; Mukesh
Agnihotri takes
oath as Deputy CM

PNS ■ SHIMLA

The son of a bus driver, four-time MLA Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu took oath as the Chief Minister (CM) of Himachal Pradesh in an impressive function attended by top Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi as well as State PCC chief Pratibha Singh, who herself was a contender to the CM's post. Sukhu's choice for the Chief Minister's job is also being seen as the Congress party shifting its power Centre from Upper Himachal to Lower Himachal as he is the first CM from that region.

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar administered the oath of office and secrecy to Sukhu in a function organised at the Ridge ground in Shimla on Sunday. The Governor also administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mukesh Agnihotri as Deputy Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh on the occasion.

The swearing-in was a massive show of unity, as apart from Rahul, Priyanka and



Congress leader Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu being sworn-in as Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister by Governor Rajendra Arlekar at a ceremony, in Shimla on Sunday PTI Photo

Pratibha, the ceremony was attended by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh Bhupesh Baghel, Chief Minister of Rajasthan Ashok Gehlot, AICC in-charge for Himachal Rajeev Shukla, former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Mukul Wasnik, former Union Ministers Pawan Bansal and Anand Sharma, senior Congress leaders Randeep Surjewala, Jitendra Bittu and Sachin Pilot.

Family members of the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister, MLAs, senior Congress leaders, senior offi-

cers and people from all walks of life also attended the oath-taking ceremony.

The 58-year-old Sukhu, will be the 15th Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh. Agnihotri (60), the Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing Assembly, will be the State's first Deputy Chief Minister.

The elevation of grassroots leader Sukhu, the MLA from Nadaun, marks a generational shift in the State Congress which has been under the shadow of former Chief Minister Virbhada Singh who guided the party in the State for five decades.

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‘Old pension
scheme to be
implemented’

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday said that his Government will implement Old Pension Scheme in the first Cabinet meeting. “We have given 10 guarantees and we will implement them and give a transparent and honest Government,” he said, adding “We will implement Old Pension Scheme in the first Cabinet meeting.” PNS

In historic order, Air India may
buy 500 planes worth billionsDeal could top
\$100 bn, rank
among biggest
by single airline
in volume terms

AGENCIES ■ PARIS/NEW DELHI

Air India is close to placing landmark orders for as many as 500 jetliners worth tens of billions of dollars from both Airbus and Boeing as it carves out an ambitious renaissance under the Tata Group conglomerate, industry sources said on Sunday.

The orders include as many as 400 narrow-body jets and 100 or more wide-bodies, including dozens of Airbus A350s and Boeing 787s and 777s, they said, speaking on condition of anonymity as finishing touches are placed on the mammoth deal in coming days.

Such a deal could top \$100 billion at list prices, including any options, and rank among



the biggest by a single airline in volume terms, overshadowing a combined order for 460 Airbus and Boeing jets from American Airlines over a decade ago.

Even after significant expected discounts, the deal would be worth tens of billions of dollars and cap a volatile year for an industry whose jets are back in demand after the pandemic but which is facing mounting industrial and environmental pressures.

Airbus and Boeing declined to comment. Tata Group-owned Air India did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The potential order comes days

after Tata announced the merger of Air India with Vistara, a joint-venture with Singapore Airlines, to create a bigger full-service carrier and strengthen its presence in domestic and international skies.

That deal gives Tata a fleet of 218 aircraft, cementing Air India as the country's largest international carrier and second-largest in the domestic market after leader IndiGo. Air India, with its maharajah mascot, was once known for its lavishly-decorated planes and stellar service but its reputation declined in the mid-2000s as financial troubles mounted.

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AAP may witness
defections in GujSome newly-elected
MLAs are in touch
with BJP, one set
to switch sides

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trouble is brewing in Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Gujarat as some of its newly-elected MLAs are in touch with the BJP and at least one of them is all set to switch sides.

Interestingly, three of the five AAP MLAs were earlier members of the BJP but joined AAP as they were denied poll tickets by the saffron unit. According to sources, the BJP is in touch with five AAP MLAs and one of them Bhupat Bhayani may join the saffron party soon.

The speculation started after Bhayani said he would “support the BJP from outside.” “I am not going to join the BJP. I will ask the public what they want and then make a decision,” he said. Bhayani had won

the Visavadar Assembly seat on an AAP ticket in the recently-concluded Gujarat polls.

In an apparent justification for warming up to the BJP, Bhayani told NDTV that the Opposition's low score has made it weak and as an MLA sitting on the Opposition Benches will not enable him to do anything for the people who voted for him.

“My seat is in an area dominated by farmers. I need to solve their irrigation-related problems. There are many traders in the area as well. I need to look after them too. I'll not be able to do that if I do not have good connections with the Government. I have placed my demands before the Government and have got a positive response. I'll now consult the people, the leaders,” he added.

“The people of Gujarat have given a record mandate to Narendra Modi and the BJP. I respect that... I was earlier with the BJP and have good relations with the leaders,” he said.

Delhi BJP chief Gupta resigns
after party's defeat in MCDSachdeva gets
interim charge

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the BJP's defeat in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) polls to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), State BJP president Adesh Gupta has resigned from his post. Virendra Sachdeva has been appointed as the working president of Delhi BJP. Sachdeva is currently the vice-president of Delhi BJP.

“I sent the resignation to the party's national president on Saturday and it was accepted on Sunday,” Gupta said. He said the party did not get the expected results in the MCD elections, taking moral responsibility for the defeat, he has resigned from the post of Delhi BJP president.

Expressing gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, JP Nadda, he said it can happen only in the BJP that even an ordinary



Newly-appointed Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva takes charge at the party office, in New Delhi on Sunday Ranjan Dimri / Pioneer

worker like him was made the State president. He was appointed as Delhi BJP president in June 2020 as a successor to Manoj Tiwari.

An official statement from the party highlighted that the resignation was as per the direction of BJP national president Jagat Prakash Nadda.

In an order, the BJP's national general secretary Arun Singh said the resignation of Gupta as Delhi BJP president has been accepted and Delhi unit vice-president Sachdeva has been appointed the working State unit chief till the next

order. Soon after taking over charge at the Delhi BJP office, Sachdeva exhorted the party cadres to start working to ensure the victory of the party on all seven Delhi seats in Lok Sabha in the 2024 elections.

“I am grateful to the party's central leadership for giving this responsibility to an ordinary worker like me. It's a responsibility that I will discharge taking together all the party leaders and workers,” Sachdeva told reporters.

The BJP suffered an embarrassing loss at the hands of the AAP as the latter wrested the civic bodies' control from the saffron party for the first time.

The BJP, which had been in power in the MCD for 15 years could muster only 104 seats whereas AAP crossed the majority mark, securing 134 seats. Facing anti-incumbency, the BJP was eventually thrown out of power by the first-time winners AAP in the recently concluded civic polls. The BJP had won 181 seats last time.

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K'taka Govt renames
Tipu-era temple rituals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing its Opposition to the controversial “legacy” of the 18th Century Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan, the BJP on Saturday decided to rename the ‘Salaam Aarti’ ritual that was started under his reign in Kollur temple in Mysuru in Karnataka. The ritual will now be named as ‘Namaskara’ and will continue along with other rituals coming from the past. ‘Salaam Aarti’ worship was done on Tipu Sultan's behalf for the welfare of the Mysuru kingdom.

Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra supported the Government's decision to rename the Salaam Aarti ritual and said such decisions help strengthen Indian culture. “The decision to rename ‘Salaam Aarti’ is correct. Where should it happen if the work to



strengthen our culture does not happen in temples?” he said. Former Chief Minister of Karnataka, HD Kumaraswamy, slammed the ruling BJP for not focusing on the real issues and trying to tamper with history.

“The BJP doesn't want to focus on real issues; therefore, they're raking up such things. They want to change history and our old culture,” he said, reacting to the name changing decision by the BJP Government.

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Kane sends England's World Cup hopes over the bar

France in semis,
England lose as
Kane' penalty
sails over crossbars

AP ■ AL KHOR

Late in the match and with the ball resting motionless on the penalty spot, Harry Kane stood ready, concentrated, eyeing the goal and his teammate from Tottenham in front of it.

He started his run, he kicked the ball, and he missed — badly. The shot sailed well over the crossbar and flew into the stands. France forward Kylian Mbappe celebrated emphatically, but Kane was far less animated.

He pulled the front of his white England shirt up over his mouth, doing his best to ignore the wild scene going on around

him as an immediate return to the World Cup semifinals slipped away. That penalty chance came in the 84th minute and with England trailing 2-1 against the defending champions from France. It was the chance to get back on even terms, exactly thirty minutes after Kane had scored from that same penalty spot to make it 1-1.

The match ended 2-1, with France back in the semifinals and England gone — the team's earliest elimination from a major soccer tournament since the 2016 European Championship.

“We know how many penalties Harry's scored for us — he scored the first one — how many goals he's contributed for us to even get here,” England midfielder Jordan Henderson said. “He'll be stronger for it in the long run, I'm sure. He's a world-class striker, our captain and like I say, we wouldn't be here with-

out him.” Kane won the Golden Boot as the leading scorer at the 2018 World Cup, when England reached the semifinals for its best showing at soccer's biggest tournament since 1990. He scored four goals last year at Euro 2020, when England reached the final but lost to Italy in a penalty shootout.

In Qatar, Kane started all five matches and scored two goals. The first came against Senegal in the round of 16. The second on Saturday was Kane's 53rd goal for England, moving him into a tie with Wayne Rooney for the most goals scored for the national team.

“He's been incredible for us and is so reliable in those sorts of situations,” England coach Gareth Southgate. “We wouldn't be here but for the number of goals he's scored for us.” The penalties against France pitted Kane, a Tottenham striker, against Hugo Lloris, a Tottenham goalkeeper. On the first attempt, Lloris guessed the



France's Olivier Giroud scores his side's second goal during the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match between England and France, at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, Qatar on Saturday AP/PTI

wrong way, diving to his left as the ball went into the opposite

corner. Unfortunately for Kane, it didn't matter which way

Lloris dived on the second attempt.

India to UNSC: Era of classifying ultras as ‘bad, ‘good’ must end

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

The era of classifying terrorists as "bad" or "good" on the basis of "political convenience" must end immediately, a concept note circulated by India in the UN Security Council here has said, underlining that categorising terror acts by intent as religious or ideologically motivated will dilute the shared global commitment to fighting terrorism.

India, the current president of the 15-nation UN Security Council, will hold two signature events on reformed multilateralism and counter-terrorism to be chaired by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on December 14 and 15.

India proposes to organise a briefing of the Security Council on December 15 on 'Global counter-terrorism approach – principles and the

way forward" under the "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts".

Ahead of the meeting, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, in a letter to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, asked that a concept note intended to guide the discussions on the topic be circulated as a document of the Security Council. "The terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001 were a turning point in the global approach to counter-terrorism.

Since then, London, Mumbai, Paris, many parts of West Asia and Africa have also experienced terrorist attacks," the concept note last week said. It added that these attacks highlight that the threat of terrorism is grave and universal and that terrorism in one



part of the world seriously impacts peace and security in other parts of the globe.

"The threat of terrorism is

transnational. Terrorist actors and their supporters, facilitators and financiers collaborate while remaining in different jurisdictions to organise acts anywhere in the world. A transnational threat can be defeated only by the collective efforts of all States Members of the United Nations," it said.

Stressing that the menace of terrorism cannot be associated with any religion, nationality, civilisation or ethnic group, the note said that all acts

of terrorism are criminal. "Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations must be condemned. There cannot be an exception or justification for any act of terrorism, regardless of its motivation and wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed. The era of classifying terrorists as "bad", "not so bad" or "good" on the basis of political convenience must end immediately."

It said that existing and emerging threats call for a renewed collective approach to terrorism. "Looking at the motivations behind terrorist acts and categorising such acts by intent as political or religious and by ideological motivation will dilute our shared commitment to fighting terrorism," it said.

The concept note voices concern that in recent times, there has been a resurgence of terrorist activities in both range and diversity, as well as in geo-

graphical space. "The threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan, Al-Qaida, Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent and terrorist groups sheltering in Afghanistan has increased following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban in August 2021," the note said.

It added that the collective expectation of the Security Council, expressed in its resolution 2593 (2021) that was adopted under India's August 2021 presidency of the Council, was that Afghan soil would not be used for terrorism, to threaten or attack any country, to shelter or train terrorists or to plan or finance terrorist acts.

It however noted that "the threat prospects remain high." Further, Africa's home-grown terrorist groups have found ideological support from global terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida and ISIL. "The terrorist

threat was further complicated by pirates and organised criminal networks facilitating trafficking in arms, drugs, humans and finance for these terrorist groups. The threat continues to grow towards the coastal region of Western Africa."

The concept note said that proliferation of digitalisation, new and emerging communications and financing technologies has also increased the risk of these technologies being used by terrorist groups.

The risk of radicalisation through the Internet and social media, and terror financing using cryptocurrencies and crowdfunding platforms, was heightened, particularly during coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic.

Member states have, in recent times, also witnessed the use of unmanned aerial systems for the surveillance of targets, trafficking in drugs and

arms and the launching of terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure and public places, it said.

The proposed high-level briefing also aims to provide an opportunity for Council members to build on the recent deliberations of the Counter-Terrorism Committee meeting in Mumbai and Delhi held in late October under the chairmanship of India, to "further share their views on the current state of affairs and to aim to arrive at key principles of the global community's collective fight against terrorism going forward."

Among the guiding questions for the meeting is what are the trends that the global collective needs to be wary of in the fight against terrorism and how the sanctity of sanctions regimes against terrorists and terror entities can be safeguarded and made effective in combating terrorism.

19 State legislatures have less than 10% women lawmakers: Govt data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Women representation in parliament and most state legislatures across the country is below 15 per cent with 19 of state assemblies having less than 10 per cent women lawmakers, according to a government data.

The state legislatures which have more than 10 per cent women lawmakers are Bihar (10.70), Chhattisgarh (14.44), Haryana (10), Jharkhand (12.35), Punjab (11.11), Rajasthan (12), Uttarakhand (11.43), Uttar Pradesh (11.66), West Bengal (13.70) and Delhi (11.43).

According to the data presented by Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijju in the Lok Sabha on December 9, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Telangana have less than 10 per cent women legislators.

In the recently held Gujarat assembly elections, 8.2 per cent of the elected representatives are women, whereas, in Himachal Pradesh, only one woman has been elected this time.

According to the data, the share of women MPs in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha stands at 14.94 per cent and 14.05 per cent, respectively. At the same time, the average number of women MLAs in assemblies across the nation accounts for only eight per cent.

The question regarding the representation of women MPs and MLAs in Parliament and state legislatures was raised by Trinamool Congress MP in Lok Sabha Abhishek Banerjee, who also asked the Centre

about the steps it has taken to increase their overall representation. He further asked whether the government has any plans of bringing the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament. To which Rijju said, "Gender justice is an important commitment of the government. All political parties need to carefully discuss this issue on the basis of consensus before bringing the Constitution Amendment Bill before Parliament."

Recently, political parties like Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), Janata Dal United JD(U) and Trinamool Congress (TMC) have asked the government to introduce and pass the Women's Reservation Bill afresh in Parliament.

"BJD has asked the Centre to pass the bill during the current winter session of Parliament," Rajya Sabha member Dr Sasmit Patra told PTI.

"If the government brings a bill, our party will support it," he said, adding that Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has time and again expressed his commitment to the issue of women's empowerment.

A few days ago, in a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee convened by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Trinamool Congress's Sudip Bandopadhyay demanded an all-party meeting on the issue, which was supported by other parties. SAD MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal said the time has come to pass the Women's Reservation Bill and give women their due. JDU MP Rajeev Ranjan Singh said it is time to empower women and government should bring this bill.

TMC Parl delegation to visit EC over RP Act violation in Saket Gokhale's arrest

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A five-member TMC parliamentary delegation will visit the Election Commission of India on Monday to raise the alleged violation of the Representation of People's Act in connection with party spokesperson Saket Gokhale's arrest, the party said.

The delegation will comprise Lok Sabha MPs Saugata Roy and Kalyan Banerjee, and Rajya Sabha MPs Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Mausam Noor and Derek O'Brien, it said.

Earlier, the TMC had sent a memorandum to the Election Commission, urging it to order an immediate probe into the action initiated by the Gujarat Police against Gokhale and to put an end to all the alleged physical and mental harassment being inflicted upon him.

The TMC has alleged that

Gokhale was charged under section 125 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 which relates to promoting enmity between classes in connection with an election. Gokhale was arrested over a tweet on the prime minister's visit to Morbi after a bridge collapse there, following which the Press Information Bureau issued a 'fact check' calling the information fake.

Gokhale was arrested by the Gujarat Police from Jaipur in Rajasthan on December 6 without any intimation to the Rajasthan Police, the TMC alleged.

He was taken to Ahmedabad, where he was granted bail by a court on December 8, only to be rearrested hours later in another case. Gokhale was later given bail in the second case on December 9.

Punjab rocket attack: Sarhali police station incharge shifted



PTI ■ TARN TARAN (PUNJAB)

The station house officer of the Sarhali police station, which was targeted by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) a day ago, was shifted on Sunday, officials said.

A National Investigation Agency (NIA) team, which reached the spot on Saturday evening, was also carrying out its investigation by visiting the spot, they said.

The district police chief transferred SHO Parkash Singh to the crime investigation agency (CIA) wing while SHO Patti police station Sukhbir Singh has been posted as the SHO of Sarhali police station, they said.

The RPG was fired at the police station, which was the second such attack in the state in the last seven months.

The projectile, fired by some unidentified people, hit the Saanh Kendra adjoining the Sarhali police station on the Amritsar-Bathinda highway on Friday night.

There was no casualty but window panes and a portion of the wall of the building were damaged. Police have rounded up seven suspects and have been questioning them in connection with the RPG attack incident. Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav visited the

site on Saturday and said according to preliminary investigation, the grenade was fired by using an RPG from the highway at 11.22 pm and it hit the Suvidha Centre of the Sarhali police station.

Yadav said that it was military-grade hardware which was suspected to have been smuggled from across the border. "There is a clear indication that it is a strategy of the neighbouring nation to bleed India by a thousand cuts," the DGP said.

An FIR under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act has been registered in connection with the incident.

The DGP had also said the cowardly attack was carried out at night as the enemy nation was feeling rattled after the seizure of huge quantities of heroin and a cache of arms and ammunition in the last one month which were sent through drones.

Following the attack, Opposition parties demanded the chief minister's resignation and said it was the "direct result" of the AAP government's "apathy" in maintaining law and order.

Earlier in May, an RPG was fired at the Punjab Police's intelligence headquarters located in Mohali.

Russia's med panel visits Ganga Ram Hosp

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A delegation of medical workers from a healthcare institution in Russia visited a private hospital on Sunday to learn about its medical practices.

The 21-member delegation from Moscow State Healthcare Institution's City Clinical Hospital No 1 named after Nikolay Pirogov, a Russian scientist, visited Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) in central Delhi, the hospital authorities said.

The Russian delegation of medical workers visited in order to "study best medical practices" of the SGRH, and to "establish working contacts"



with doctors of the hospital, the hospital said in a statement. Welcoming the Russian delegation, Dr D S Rana, Chairman, Sir Ganga Ram Trust Society, said, "It is a matter of great pride that our

Russian friends have shown interest in working of our hospital." "The establishment of working contacts between Moscow State Healthcare Institution and the SGRH will help in developing academic

ties between two institutions.

It will also help in furthering academics and research between two great institutions," he said. The delegation was particularly interested in visiting the department of critical care and ICU, the SGRH authorities said.

"I am sure that this visit will help foster new partnerships between the two healthcare organisations.

We are keen to share experiences and expertise with the aim to further bolster the health sector in India and Russia and provide world-class patient-centered care," Dr Ajay Swaroop, Chairman (Board of Management), SGRH, was quoted as saying in statement.

Congress show of...

From Page 1

Party leaders paid floral tributes to a portrait of the six-time Chief Minister before the oath-taking ceremony.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Sukhu on his swearing-in and assured all possible cooperation from the Centre to further the development of Himachal Pradesh. This will only be the third Congress Government in States across the country currently after Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.

People in traditional attire gathered at the Ridge in large numbers to witness the ceremony, dancing to the tune of folk music and raising 'Sukhu bhai zindabad' slogans. Some enthusiastic supporters lifted probable Ministers on their shoulders to reach the venue.

However, no other leader was administered the oath of office in the State which can have a maximum of 12 Ministers. Sukhu's family including his mother, wife, and daughters were present at the

swearing-in ceremony. Considered a rival of Virbhada Singh, Sukhu hails from Nadaun in Hamirpur district and is the first Congress leader from Lower Himachal -- comprising areas merged in Himachal in 1966 such as Nalagarh, Una, Hamirpur, Kangra and lower hills of Kullu -- to occupy the top State post.

All former Congress Chief Ministers including YS Parmar, Virbhada Singh and Ram Lal Thakur were from Upper Himachal. Sukhu will be the second Chief Minister from Hamirpur district, after the BJP's Prem Kumar Dhupal.

A son of a driver in the Himachal Roadways Transport Corporation, Sukhu started his political career as a class representative at Government College Sanjauli during his student life.

He rose through the ranks -- serving as NSUI State chief, Youth Congress president, Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee president -- to become the CM of the State.

But his nomination to the top post was not smooth. Pratibha Singh's supporters had lodged their protest against his appointment and asserted their leader, who is an MP from Mandi, should be the CM. Singh later said they have accepted the decision of the party High Command.

In an attempt to put up a united face, her family was given due acknowledgment by the top Congress leadership during the swearing-in ceremony. Pratibha Singh, who was the last Congress leader to reach the venue, was accorded a warm welcome and was hugged by Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi. She was seated beside Priyanka Gandhi on the dias. Rahul Gandhi posed for a photograph with Pratibha Singh and her MLA son Vikramaditya Singh. Earlier, Sukhu personally went to the Holly Lodge, the residence of Pratibha Singh, to invite her to the venue, and said the "first invitation" was given to her as she is the leader of the

Congress organisation in the state. Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri, a journalist-turned-politician, is the Brahmin face of the Congress in Himachal Pradesh and with his elevation, the party hopes to sustain the community's support. Agnihotri was one of the frontrunners for the post of chief minister. But the party picked the Nadaun Sukhu for the top post and him as his deputy.

The five-time MLA from Haroli in Una district, Agnihotri belongs to a Congress family and his father, Onkar Sharma, had unsuccessfully contested the assembly election in 1988 from Santokgarh (now Haroli) after his retirement from the post of district public relations officer (DPRO).

The Congress wrested power from the BJP in the hill state winning 40 of the 68 assembly seats. The polling was held on November 12 and the results were declared Thursday.

Delhi BJP chief Gupta resigns

From Page 1

The MCD is one of the largest municipal corporations in the country and works with a budget of Rs 15,000 crore. The demand for an organisational overhaul in the Delhi BJP had begun immediately after the party's loss in the MCD elections. Amid the clamour for change, Gupta had in a meeting on the result day, asserted he was not going to give up to "conspiracies" against him.

Gupta's performance has been under scanner since he took charge as president of Delhi BJP in June 2020. Under his leadership, the party failed to win bypolls to some MCD wards in 2021 as well as Rajender Nagar Assembly bypoll.

K'taka Govt renames Tipu-era temple rituals

From Page 1

Announcing the decision, Karnataka Minister for Department of Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (Muzrai), Shashikala Jolle said the State Government has decided to rename 18th Century Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan-era temple rituals like 'Salaam Aarti', 'Salaam Mangalarathi' and 'Deevatige Salaam', and give them local nomenclatures.

She, however, clarified that the rituals were not being discontinued. "It has been decided that 'Deevatige Salaam' will be renamed as 'Deevatige Namaskara', 'Salaam Aarti' will be called 'Arathi Namaskara' and 'Salaam Manalarathi' as 'Mangalarathi Namaskara'.

"This is based on the opinions of senior 'Agama Pundits' of our department and a circular will be issued," Jolle said. She said that during the

Karnataka Rajya Dharmika Parishat meeting which comes under the Department of Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments, members pointed out that there were demands by devotees for the names of these rituals to be changed. She said it was discussed at length in the meeting.

"The rituals will continue as per tradition, while only their names will be changed to include words from our language," she added.

There were earlier demands by several Hindu groups to drop such rituals linked to Tipu Sultan at Kollur Sri Mookambika Temple, Melkote Cheluvanarayana Swamy Temple, among others.

Kashkekodi Suryanarayana Bhat, Member of Parishat stated that earlier the ritual was conducted for the welfare of the State administration, now it will be for the welfare of the people. Now, the ritual would be named as 'Namaskara', Hindu

organisations claimed that 'Salaam Aarti' was the symbol of slavery and was practiced to assert domination. They demanded ending the ritual.

However, the claim of a segment of people in Karnataka is that the tradition reflected the old bonds and harmony among Hindus and Muslims and must be continued as the great tradition.

While the BJP and some Hindu organisations see Tipu as a "religious bigot" and a "brutal killer", a few Kannada outfits also see him "anti-Kannada," citing that he had promoted Persian at the cost of the local language. The ritual had continued even after Tipu's death in the battle against the British.

The ritual was conducted in famous temples of Puttur, Subramanya, Kollur, Melkote and others in the then Mysuru kingdom. The BJP had earlier discontinued celebrations of Tipu jayanti in state.

Sulli Deals online auction of Muslim women

L-G Saxena gives nod to prosecute main accused

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday granted sanction to prosecute the main accused in the 'Sulli Deals' case, in which Muslim women were "auctioned" online.

The accused, Aumkareshwar Thakur, was arrested in January from his house in Indore for allegedly creating a webpage where photos of hundreds of Muslim women were posted insinuating that they're up for 'auction'.

According to sources, he will be prosecuted under section 196 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which pertains to prosecution for offences against the State and for criminal conspiracy to commit such offence. Police need the Lieutenant Governor's sanction to prosecute the accused under CrPC 196. "The Lieutenant Governor has noted that he is "of the considered view that a prima facie case is made out against the accused, and therefore sanction is granted for prosecuting the accused for the commission of the offences" detailed the FIR. It may be noted that the said



episode of 'auctioning' Muslim women on social media platforms in 2021 had created massive outrage and earned severe criticism from all sections of society," sources added.

A Delhi court later granted him bail in March saying he's a first-time offender and so "prolonged incarceration would be detrimental to his overall well-being and career".

The issue first came to light when several women talked on Twitter about how their images had been used without consent.

Thakur, who has studied Bachelors in Computer Applications (BCA) from IPS Academy in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, had allegedly created the Sulli Deals App and Sulli Deals Twitter handle that auctioned Muslim women on social media platforms with the

aim of insulting them with the Muslim community at large. Hundreds of Muslim women were listed for "auction" on the mobile application with their doctored photographs without their permission.

The police had registered a case under sections 153A/354A(3) IPC and 66/67 IT Act on July 7, 2021, and Thakur was arrested in January this year.

After Thakur's arrest, Deputy Commissioner of Police (IFSO) KPS Malhotra had said that the accused had admitted that he was a member of a group on Twitter and the idea to defame and troll Muslim women was shared there.

"Thakur had developed a code on GitHub. The access of GitHub was with all the members of the group. He had shared the app on his Twitter account. The photos of the Muslim women were uploaded by the group members," the officer had said.

The investigation has revealed that the accused had joined the group on Twitter by the name of "Tradmahasabha" in January 2020 using the handle @gangescion.

UP backs out from plan to give water to Delhi

Despite L-G making request to CM Yogi, according to RTI reply

GAURAV SAINI | PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh has backed out from the plan to provide 140 million gallons per day (MGD) of raw water to Delhi in lieu of equivalent quantity of treated effluent for irrigation despite the Lieutenant Governor making a request to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, according to an RTI reply.

The plan involved supply of 270 cusecs (1 cusec is equal to 1 cubic feet per second) of fresh water from the Murad Nagar Regulator to the Sonia Vihar water treatment plant in Delhi and the release of an equivalent quantity of treated effluent from the Okhla sewage treatment plant in the Agra Canal.

Documents accessed under the Right to Information Act showed that the two States held multiple meetings on the water exchange plan started on May 3, 2018, and the then LG Anil Bajjal and the then Chief Secretary Vijay Kumar Dev had also requested the UP Government to finalise the agreement.

A feasibility report the UP Jal Nigam sent to the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) on July 1, 2020, said the project was workable.

The DJB had paid ₹ 70 lakh for the preparation of the feasibility report and the Delhi Government had also agreed to bear the cost of laying pipelines



and construction and repair work needed for supply of raw water from UP and the release of treated effluent into the Agra Canal.

Bajjal discussed the issue with the UP chief minister on the phone on June 14 last year and wrote to him on June 23, requesting him to issue directions to the department concerned to provide 270 cusec (140 million gallons a day) of raw water to Delhi from Murad Nagar, the documents showed.

"Delhi does not have enough water resources of its own and depends on neighboring states to meet its drinking water needs. Amid the increasing population, Delhi needs 265 MGD of additional raw water to fulfill the requirement.

"The feasibility report dated July 1, 2020 says it is possible for UP to provide 270 cusecs of raw water to Delhi.

Therefore, I request you to please issue necessary directions to the department concerned in this regard," the LG's letter read.

On February 2 last year, Dev wrote to the UP chief secretary, requesting him to finalise the pact.

"I would like to thank you for the positive steps taken towards processing the request of Delhi...The offices of both the states have held various meetings, joint inspections and deliberations to take the matter forward."

"May I propose that the general understanding and consensus achieved by both the states till date may be formalised by way of a memorandum for understanding," Dev wrote to UP Chief Secretary R K Tiwari.

However, the executive engineer of the UP government in a letter dated July 9, 2021, informed the DJB that the "competent authority" did not approve the feasibility report and "it may be treated null and void".

The UP government also

returned Rs 70 lakh that the DJB gave for the preparation of the report without citing any reason for backing out from the plan, the RTI reply showed.

The documents showed the DJB later asked the Delhi government that "intervention and persuasion at the highest political level be done for seeking consent of the UP government" but the request did not elicit a response.

Delhi requires around 1,200 MGD of water, while the

DJB supplies around 950 MGD.

Haryana supplies a total of 610 MGD of water to Delhi through two canals -- CLC (368 MGD) and DSB (177) -- and the Yamuna (65 MGD). CLC and the DSB are supplied water from Hathni Kund via Munak canal and the Bhakra Beas Management Board.

Besides, Delhi receives 253 MGD from Uttar Pradesh through the Upper Ganga Canal, and 90 MGD is drawn from ranney wells and tube wells installed across the city.

Water supply to be hit in N-E Delhi on Dec 12, 19

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Water supply will be affected in north east Delhi in the national Capital between December 12 and 19 during the evening hours. Informing about the areas where the water supply will be hit, the Delhi Jal Board said that Yamuna Vihar, Tahirpur, Nand Nagari, Maujpur, Brijpuri, Jagjeet Nagar, Jaiprakash Nagar, Gamri, Village & Gamri Extn., BhajanPura, Harsh Vihar, Mandoli, Dilshad Garden, Dilshad Colony, Old Seemapuri, New Seema Puri, Sunder Nagri, Water Emergency Tahirpur, Water Emergency Yamuna Vihar,

Sonia Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Mustafabad and adjoining area will witness the water at low pressure. In a press statement, the DJB said that water supply will be affected due to the maintenance work. "The water supply in some areas/ colonies will be available at low pressure in evening on December 12, 2022, and December 19, 2022, due to Renovation of 700 mm dia Sluice Valve at Sonia Vihar, it said.

The DJB also advised the people to store sufficient quantity of water to avoid any inconvenience and said that during the shutdown water tanker will be available at contacting the board.

BJP appoints Sachdeva working prez of Delhi unit

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a major development, the BJP on Sunday appointed Virendra Sachdeva as a new working president of the Delhi BJP. The party high command's decision surprised many as several leaders were set to be in the race for the post, including MPs Parvesh Verma, Ramesh Bidhuri, Meenakshi Lekhi and Gautam Gambhir, party's co-incharge for Jammu and Kashmir Ashish Sood, Kapil Mishra and state general secretary Harsh Malhotra.

Sachdeva is from a Punjabi family settled in Old Delhi after being displaced from Pakistan at the time of partition of the country, which has carved a niche for itself in the society with a lot of hard work.

A Swayamsevak since childhood Sachdeva is a graduate by education and has done first-year training from



Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh too. Sachdeva has discharged duties on various posts, including district presidents of Chandni Chowk and Mayur Vihar.

Soon after taking over charge as acting president at Delhi BJP office, Sachdeva exhorted the party workers to start working for a victory of

the party on Delhi's all the seven Lok Sabha seats in 2024 elections. "I am grateful to the party's central leadership for giving this responsibility to an ordinary worker like me. It's a responsibility that I will discharge taking together all the party leaders and workers," Sachdeva said after assuming the charge of acting president.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta who tendered his resignation from the defeat in the MCD polls, said in a tweet welcomed Sachdeva on his appointment as working president of Delhi BJP.

"Hearty congratulations to my friend and old colleague Virendra Sachdeva on being appointed as working president of Delhi BJP," Gupta tweeted.

Active in politics since 1988, Sachdeva has held posts of District Vice President and General Secretary of Chandni Chowk District BJP and then became the District President of Chandni Chowk in 2007.

In 2009, Sachdeva was appointed as the Secretary of the Delhi BJP. After the change of residence, Sachdeva was also elected President of the Mayur Vihar district in 2014.

Between 2012 to 2014 Sachdeva headed the party workers training wing. From

2017 to 2020 he was a member of the party's National Good Governance Department.

In 2020, Sachdeva was promoted with the post of Delhi BJP Vice President. He has held the responsibility of the District In-Charge of various organizational districts from time to time.

Sachdeva is Treasurer of the Indian Archery Association and President of the Delhi Archery Association at present. He has also been an Associate Executive Member of the Indian Olympic Association.

The AAP ended the BJP's 15-year-rule in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) after winning the civic body elections with 134 seats (out of total 250 wards), while the BJP bagged 104. The demand for an organisational overhaul in the Delhi BJP had begun immediately after the party's loss in the MCD elections.

City's air quality poor

National Capital max temp settles at 28.4 degrees

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The air quality in Delhi was recorded in the 'poor' category on Sunday even as the maximum temperature settled at 28.4 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal, the India

Meteorological Department (IMD)said. The 24-hour average air quality index was recorded at 306, according to the Central Pollution Control Board. The Minimum temperature of the Capital was settled at 8.8 degree Celsius, normal for this season. The visibility at the time of Shallow Fog is reduced from 999m to 500m. The relative humidity in the weather of Delhi at 8:30 am was 88 percent and 59 at 5:30 pm, recorded at Delhi base weather station, Safdurdurg.

However, the AQI of the adjoining regions of the capital including Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Noida, and Gurugram stood at 275, 270, 268, and 204 in the 'poor' category, while the air quality of Greater Noida was the same as Delhi's under the 'very poor' category at 306.

Out of the total 36 stations, most of the stations in the city recorded the AQI in the 'very poor' category are Anand Vihar (338), NSIT Dwarka station (355), Jahangir Puri (340), Vivek Vihar (335), Wazirpur (301), Jawahar Lal Nehru stadium (318), Ashok Vihar (312), R K Puram (319), Narela (355), Shadipur (343), Pusa (309), Rohini (314), Mundka (316), Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium (316), Nehru Nagar (358), Patparganj (337), Punjabi Bagh (317), and Sonia Vihar (343)," data stated.

Apart from this, North



Campus, Delhi University (272), Mandir Marg (288), Najafgarh (245), Okhla Phase 2 (298), CRRI Mathura Road (269), Sirifort (298), Alipur

(292), Bawana (295), IHBAS, Dilshad Garden (220), and ITO (274) has recorded the AQI in 'poor' category, the pollution board stated.

NGT forms panel to look into environmental violations by housing project in Ghaziabad

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has formed a committee to obtain a factual report on the alleged violations of environmental norms by a housing project in Ghaziabad.

The green panel was hearing a petition alleging the Siddharth Vihar Yojana in Ghaziabad, a scheme or project by the Awas Vikas Parishad, was being developed through several builders in violation of environmental norms.

"In our view...Let a factual report be obtained by the tribunal, for which purpose we

constitute a joint committee comprising the state pollution control board (PCB) and District Magistrate, Ghaziabad, within one month," a bench comprising judicial member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and expert member A Senthil Vel said in an order passed last

week.

The bench also said, "The report besides covering issues raised like sewage treatment plant (STP), developing plantation and others, may also provide status of existing infrastructure in the area to carry treated sewage (sewerage) and solid waste collection and transportation systems for processing at identified sites."

It then directed a copy of the order be sent to the authorities concerned for compliance. The matter has been listed for further proceedings on January 12.

According to the petition, some projects in the scheme were complete and allowed to be occupied in contravention of the environmental norms, such as the non-installation of STPs and the non-development of green belt. "Thereby the constructions raised are causing huge pollution," it said.

Exam dates for 10,th 12th on social media fake: CBSE



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Sunday said purported date sheets for class 10 and 12 exams doing the rounds on social media are fake.

The board is yet to announce the exam date sheets, and officials said it will be done soon."

The multiple versions of datesheets doing the round are fake. The exam schedule will soon be announced and the students and parents should wait for official information," a senior board official said.

The board had earlier announced it will conduct theory examinations for class 10 and 12 for the academic year from February 15, 2023.

"The practical examinations will begin from January 1 and schools have been directed to complete the syllabus for these till then. The practical examinations for Class 12 will only be conducted by external examiners appointed by the board, while for Class 10, these will be conducted by internal examiners," the official explained. The board has also released the subject-wise CBSE Class 10 and Class 12 sample papers along with the marking schemes for all the subjects.



IIT Delhi showcased over 80 plus technologies developed by its researchers at 4th Industry Day focussed on future-ready solutions in the field of healthcare technologies, electric vehicle research, communications and sustainable clean energy and environment on Sunday. Inaugurating the 4th Edition of Industry Day, Anant Krishnan, executive vice president and CTO, TCS, who was also the chief guest at the Industry Day 2022 said, "No industry can survive in isolation and industry needs to work with academia for exploratory works. He emphasised the need to create more future-ready solutions from IIT Delhi and how the four themes of the Industry Day are interlinked to India's mission of "atma nirbharta"

Illegal fishing delays migratory birds' visit to Najafgarh lake

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

On the one hand, the climate change has delayed the arrival of the winged guests in the national Capital, but still those on the journey, on the other hand, are preferring to skip Najafgarh jheel, Delhi's one of the most important wetlands, from their itinerary.

The extreme disturbance caused by rampant illegal fishing at the biodiversity hotspot may be accounted for deterring the migratory birds to look safe greener pastures for feeding and roosting, say avian experts.

Usually, with the onset of winter, more than 25 species of resident water birds and more than 50 species of winter migratory water birds arrive from far Central Asia, and North Asia including the Russian and Siberian parts to the wetland at this time of the

year.

However, the usual hustle-bustle is missing at the Najafgarh jheel which has been the feeding, resting, roosting, and foraging habitats for the water birds. It is also one of the enlisted largest annual Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) sites in NCR-Delhi carried out by the Wetlands International South Asia.

After monitoring the wetland in the first week of December 2022, veteran ecologist, TK Roy said that this year due to impact of global climate change, the migration of long distant winter migratory water birds is slow and lesser. Even this was not enough, and the illegal fishing at the wetland has compounded the matter for the birds.

"Still the arrival of about eight to ten thousand of winter migratory water birds of



more than 24 species largely ducks, geese, and waders was recorded only on the extended part of the jheel in private land till November 2022 last week, but not on the main part of the jheel due to extreme disturbance of illegal fishing across the wetland," he rued.

"By the start of December 2022, the extended part of the jheel largely dried and the migratory ducks, geese, and wader species completely left the jheel except for 17 species of small waders in smaller numbers, and only 14 species of resident birds minimal in



number without Greater Flamingo was recorded on the outer periphery of the jheel. No winter migratory Ducks and Geese species are seen on the jheel first time ever this month," Roy said.

Informing about the reason behind the no-show of migra-

tory water birds on the wetland, the bird expert said that the Najafgarh jheel has been subjected to neglect and has gone unprotected due to rapid urbanization, extreme human intervention, misuse of natural resources of the wetland, irregular pattern of rainfall,

large scale illegal fishing, etc.

"Besides, water pollution and encroachment of the drying parts of the wetland for agriculture are destroying the ecology and functioning of the ecosystem of the wetland and degrading the aquatic biodiversity habitat. This results in fluctuation of water level, shrinking of the wetland, and subsequently, declining water bird species diversity and population," he said.

Earlier this year in January 2022, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had directed the Delhi and Haryana State Governments to implement the 'Environment Management Plans' for the Najafgarh jheel so as to conserve the jheel from further degradation, pollution, and encroachments.

"Even after the NGT directions that came following a petition by the Indian National

for Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) for conservation, notification, and protection of the jheel, no action has been taken by governments till date," Roy lamented.

Najafgarh jheel

Najafgarh jheel, the second largest wetland in NCR-Delhi located partly in Haryana, Gurgaon District, and partly in Delhi, Southwest District at 210 meters Mean Sea Level (MSL) consisting total revenue land area of the jheel on record in Delhi wetland area 5.84 sq km and buffer zone 5.55 sq km and in Haryana wetland area 4.46 sq km and buffer zone 9.17 sq km and further some more sq km extended part of the jheel locates on the private land.

The main source of water for the jheel is the Sahibi River and monsoon rainfall.

Delhi excise policy scam: CBI grills Telangana CM's daughter

Kavitha was quizzed for over 7 hours at her residence in Hyderabad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Sunday questioned Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's daughter and BRS MLC K Kavitha for over seven hours at her residence in Hyderabad in connection with the Delhi excise policy scam.

A team of CBI officials reached her residence at 11 am and quizzed her till 6.30 pm amid beefed up security in the locality.

Last week, the CBI informed Kavitha that a team from the premier investigating agency would visit her residence in Hyderabad on December 11 for an examination.

Kavitha, who has been served a notice by the CBI for recording her statement on December 6 in connection with the case, told the agency she will be able to meet the officials from December 11-15 (except for December 13).

The probe agency issued the notice under Section 160 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC) and asked her to intimate the place of res-



CBI officials arrive at TRS MLC Kavitha's residence in Hyderabad on Sunday

PTI

idence as per her convenience for the "examination" at 11 AM on that day.

Under Section 160 of CrPC, the investigating officer can summon any person as witness in a particular case.

After her name cropped up in a remand report filed by the Enforcement Directorate in a Delhi court on the alleged

kickbacks in the 'scam', Kavitha had said she was ready to face any probe.

The CBI on November 25 filed its first charge sheet in the money laundering case linked to the Delhi excise policy scam against seven accused.

"As per the investigation carried out so far, Vijay Nair, on behalf of leaders of AAP has

received kickbacks to the tune of at least ₹100 crore from a group, called South Group (controlled by Sarath Reddy, Ms K Kavitha, Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy) by various persons including Amit Arora," the ED had said in the remand report filed on one of the accused Amit Arora in a designated court here.

AAP has no appeal outside Delhi, says Cong leader

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister P Chidambaram on Sunday said Congress is best placed to be the "pole" around which a non-BJP front can be built for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

After last week's election results, Chidambaram asserted that the Aam Aadmi Party does not have much appeal outside Delhi with the exception of Haryana and Punjab.

Chidambaram also stressed that there were lessons to be learnt by the Congress from the Gujarat loss, saying there is no such thing as a "silent" campaign in a hard-fought election. He also said AAP played spoiler in Gujarat, like it did earlier in Goa and Uttarakhand.

On Congress playing an important role in the Opposition alliance to take on



the BJP in 2024 polls, Chidambaram said, "Yes, the Congress is best placed to be the pole around which a non-BJP front can be built."

Talking about Opposition unity, the former FM said, "Opposition unity has always been difficult to build and maintain. Remember 1977 and 1989? If the Congress undertakes the task with humility and if the other parties undertake the task with realism, I think it is possible to forge unity for an electoral alliance."

He weighed in on the recent elections in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh assemblies and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi should reflect

on the fact that the BJP was in power in all three but was defeated in two.

"That is a huge setback for the BJP. The win in Gujarat, important as it is, cannot hide the fact that the BJP, the incumbent, was defeated decisively in Himachal Pradesh and MCD," the ex-finance minister said.

The Congress in Himachal and the AAP in MCD polls won by a decisive margin of seats, he pointed out.

"The overall margin of votes in Himachal Pradesh may be small, but it was not a state-wide presidential kind of election. It was a constituency-wise election and we have to look at the margin in each constituency," he said.

"In many of the 40 constituencies won by the Congress, the margins were sizable. A state-wide margin is an inappropriate measure in a constituency-wise election," Chidambaram said when asked about the PM highlighting the less than one per cent vote share difference between the Congress and the BJP in Himachal.

Asked about the Congress' debacle in Gujarat and the low key campaign in the state, Chidambaram said he was not fully acquainted with the strategy, if any, followed in the state.

"My sense was the Congress did not have great expectations in Gujarat. As a general rule, I believe that in every election the party must put its best forward and throw into the battle all the available resources - human, material and digital," Chidambaram told a news agency.

On whether the AAP would pose a challenge to the Congress' leadership of the Opposition block after winning MCD polls and bagging about 13 per cent of the vote share in Gujarat, Chidambaram said the AAP's win in the MCD election was not surprising as it is the ruling party in Delhi.

WHO to formulate guidelines to regulate human milk bank system

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned at mushrooming growth of human milk banks in several countries against the backdrop of the absence of global regulation, the World Health Organization (WHO) has for the first time embarked on a process to frame guidelines for establishing and implementing the safety and quality of such systems.

These guidelines will include minimum standards for the safety and quality of donor human milk and/or considerations across the human milk donor, recipient, and product pathways, aligned with guidance to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.

The global health agency recommends donor human milk for low and very low birthweight infants, as well as small and sick newborns who cannot be fed their mother's own milk, however so far there is no global criteria to regulate the banks.

To begin with, the WHO Guidelines Development Group will hold two days virtual meeting from Monday to deliberate on the proposed



Donor Human Milk Banking Guidelines. The GDG will engage in a consensus-building process to establish PICO questions that can be addressed by systematic reviews and inform subsequent phases in the guidelines development process. From India, Dr Sushma Nangia? Department of Neonatology, Lady Harding Medical College and Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital, Delhi will be among several experts in the sector who will attend the meet.?

In 2020, it was estimated that there were 756 milk banks in 66 countries, with an increasing number of milk banks being established in low- and middle-income countries, according to reports. The countries have set up their own regulatory mechanisms for such structures. As of 2021, there are over 90 human milk banks in India.

"However, there is no global coordinating body issuing minimum quality, safety and ethical standards to inform national policies on donor human milk. While milk banks may need to adapt to the restrictions, resources and needs of their local area, they need to apply similar baseline processes to provide safe and high-quality donor milk," said the report published in the WHO bulletin last October.

Experts in human milk banking have suggested that the subject would benefit from global guidance on a variety of important issues, and have called for international leadership and local government oversight, said the authors of the report as they suggested key issues in human milk banking that need to be addressed by up-to-date, evidence-based global guidance, as well as the knowledge gaps currently limiting this process.

Despite the growth in human milk banking, the majority of human milk banks are not routinely being regulated at the national level. Global regulation is lacking altogether.

Uddhav Sena slams PM over 'short term politics' remark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI | MUMBAI

Uddhav Thackeray faction led Shiv Sena on Sunday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on short-term politics not helping the country and questioned the manner in which BJP formed a Government by breaking the party with a faction led by incumbent Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in Maharashtra.

The PM made the statement while addressing a gathering in Nagpur earlier in the day after launching and inaugurating projects worth ₹75,000 crore. He said the "country's development cannot take place through shortcut politics" and that "some political parties are trying to destroy the country's economy and people should expose such politicians and parties".

Terming the statement as "funny", Shiv Sena spokesperson Priyanka Chaturvedi said "short-term politics is undermining the Constitution, the

federal structure of the country, democracy and agencies to form an illegal and unconstitutional government".

In a reference to the Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis Government getting formed in June after a rebellion in the Uddhav Thackeray-led outfit, Priyanka Chaturvedi said, "You could have waited for five years for elections and then got your majority. But what you have done is a result of short-term gains, short-term politics and short-sightedness that damages constitutional morality".

The party's member in Rajya Sabha further claimed Maharashtra currently had a CM whose party was not even registered. Post the split in the Shiv Sena, Shinde's faction is called 'Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena', Thackeray's Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray).

Both groups have staked claim to being the original Shiv Sena and have sought the use of the party's name and symbol.

Modi has revived spiritual link between Kashi, TN: Thakur

PNS ■ VARANASI

Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting and Youth Affairs & Sports Anurag Singh Thakur said on Sunday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has revived the age-old historical, cultural, and spiritual connection between Kashi and Tamil Nadu.

He was speaking on the sidelines of cultural programmes at Kashi Tamil Sangamam at Banars Hindu University in Varanasi.

Thakur thanked the Prime Minister for his initiative of Kashi Tamil Sangamam and said that on the initiative of the Prime Minister 2500 people from different parts of Tamil Nadu are coming to Kashi.

He said by adding games and sports to this event, he has created enthusiasm among the youth. "This shows the importance of sports for Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat. He said that losing or winning a game is immaterial, this friendly match will help in getting to know each other. Even if one doesn't know the language, one can communicate and get to know



each other," he said.

Thakur highlighted PM's vision during Amrit Kaal that [people should not only seek rights but also take responsibility. He said the level of developmental work done in Varanasi in the last eight years has not been seen before. This development is not only in Varanasi but also throughout India. No one thought about Kashi Tamil Sangamam before.

He said that this is just the beginning. 2500 people who came to Kashi now will bring 25000 tourists back to Kashi. He lauded the efforts of different Ministries who worked together to make this Sangam happen. He urged to make

Tamil Nadu's arts, culture, and literature popular.

Thakur urged the people of Uttar Pradesh to go to places like Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu which is connected with Kashi. He said there was an age-old connection of Kashi with many towns in Tamil Nadu. He said this was brought to life by the Prime Minister. He said that the Prime Minister had made the temples in Somnath, Kedarnath and Ayodhya magnificent and divine.

Thakur felicitated the players of a friendly cricket match held in Varanasi.. Dr L Murugan, Minister of State of Information & Broadcasting was also present on the occasion.

Thakur addressed the gathering in Kashi Tamil Sangamam. Governor of Manipur Shri L Ganesan, Dr L Murugan and former Governor of Meghalaya Shri Shanmuganathan were also present.

Sports festival was organized as part of Kashi Tamil Sangamam. On the fourth day, a friendly cricket match was held between Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

India key nation for sustainable aerospace programme: Boeing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

American plane maker Boeing on Sunday said India is a priority country for its ambitious programme to decarbonise aerospace globally from both the civilian and military aircraft and to chart a path toward a sustainable future.

Brian, Boeing's Vice President for Global Sustainability Policy and Partnerships, said the company is confident of delivering commercial airplanes capable of flying on 100 per cent Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) by 2030.

"India is hugely important to Boeing and to our aviation business, but also to our sustainability journey. I think

some of the commitments and potential that we see here in India to become self-reliant through the scaling of sustainable aviation fuel is really promising," he told PTI.

In a significant global announcement, Boeing said last year that its commercial airplanes will be capable and certified to fly on 100 per cent sustainable aviation fuels by 2030.

There has been growing deliberations globally on curbing carbon emissions from flying.

Boeing has been a major partner of India's aerospace sector for almost eight decades, both as the mainstay of the country's commercial aviation sector as well as for the armed forces.

Heritage sites to host gala dinners, excursions for G20 delegates

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

From Ajanta and Ellora Caves in Maharashtra to Qutub archaeological park in Delhi, India will showcase its centuries-old architectural heritage to G20 delegates by hosting excursions and gala dinners at many of the ASI sites, starting mid-December, official sources said.

India assumed the year-long presidency of G20 on December 1. More than 200 meetings will be held in India across 55 locations. The first meeting of G20 was held in the first week of December in Udaipur when the G20 Sherpa met. Besides, experiencing the rich cultural heritage and hospitality of Rajasthan, delegates

were also taken on a half-day excursion to the Kumbhalgarh Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage site, officials said.

"Now, an itinerary has been drawn for the events that will take place at some of the very well-known ASI sites from December-March as part of the G20 meetings in India to showcase our cultural and architectural wealth to the delegates. The events will include excursion and gala dinners hosted with a monument in the backdrop," official source told PTI.

The event lined up at a centrally-protected site, immediately after the Sherpa meet in Udaipur, is a half-day excursion for delegates to Elephanta Caves in Maharashtra from December 12-15, he said.

ia," Dr Lord said.

"Currently it's incredibly challenging to test large groups of people, such as the population of a village or town - you have to take blood from everyone and mix it with a reagent to get a result," he said.

"But with this tool we can find out very quickly whether a whole village or town is suffering from, or carrying, malaria.

"The technique is chemical-free, needle-free and detects



malaria through the skin using infrared-light - it's literally just a flash on a person's skin and it's done.

"The device is smartphone operated, so results are acquired in real time."

The researchers believe the technology is the first step to eliminating malaria.

"Most of the cases are in sub-Saharan Africa, where 90 per cent of deaths are children under five years old. "The biggest challenge in eliminating

the disease is the presence of asymptomatic people in a population who act as a reservoir for transmission by mosquitoes.

"The World Health Organisation has proposed large-scale surveillance in endemic areas and this non-invasive, affordable and rapid tool offers a way to achieve that."

The technology could also help tackle other diseases.

"We've successfully used

this technology on mosquitoes to non-invasively detect infections such as malaria, Zika and dengue," Dr Lord said.

In our post-COVID world, it could be used to better tackle diseases as people move around the globe.

"We hope the tool could be used at ports of entry to screen travellers, minimising the re-introduction of diseases and reducing global outbreaks.

"It's still early days, but this proof-of-concept is exciting"

Infrared light beam could be used to detect malaria

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A fast, needle-free malaria detection tool developed by a University of Queensland-led team could help save hundreds of thousands of lives annually, a research published in PNAS Nexus said.

Malaria is usually detected by a blood test, but scientists have devised a method using a device that shines a beam of harmless infrared light on a

PM launches ₹75K cr projects in Maha, slams Opp fo ‘short-cuts’

■ RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi sounded an early bugle for the 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Maharashtra on Sunday, as he launched eleven key development projects worth Rs 75,000 crore and slammed the Opposition parties for practising “short-cuts” that “are the biggest enemy of the country’s taxpayers”.

Fresh from the ruling BJP’s superlative electoral performance in Gujarat where it recaptured power, Modi used the Gujarat poll outcome to drive home his point. “The election results in Gujarat are the result of the economic policy of permanent development and permanent solution,” he said.

Addressing a public rally in

Nagpur after he laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation various projects worth more than 75,000 crore in Maharashtra, Modi said: “Today a constellation of eleven new stars is rising for the development of Maharashtra... Infrastructure cannot just cover lifeless roads and fly-overs, its expansion is much bigger... Those who were deprived earlier have now become priority for the government”.

“We cannot lose the next 25 years.... Those who were deprived earlier have now become priority for the government,” Modi said.

Coming down heavily on the Opposition parties in the state, Modi said: “Politics of short-cuts is a malady... Political parties that adopt short-cuts are the biggest enemy of the country’s taxpayers”.

“No country can run with short-cuts, a permanent solution with a long-term vision is very important for the progress of the country,” the Prime Minister said.

“The political parties are looting the hard-earned taxpayers’ money for political interests and adopting short-cuts with the aim of forming the government by making false promises. At a time when the country is working towards becoming a developed nation in the next 25 years, some political parties want to destroy the economy of India for their own self-interest,” the Prime Minister said.

Lamenting the lost opportunities of not being able to take advantage of the first industrial revolution and lagging behind during the second-third industrial revolution, Modi reiterated that when it is

time for the fourth industrial revolution, India cannot miss it. “No country can run with short-cuts, a permanent solution with a long-term vision is very important for the progress of the country,” Modi said.

“There are self-centered politicians and political parties...expose them...You can win the elections, I am sure you can with stable development and strategies,” he said.

Citing the example of how Korea transformed itself with developed strategies, Modi said: “Look at the Gulf...what it was some years ago, see it today...there are lakhs of Indians who are working there,” he said.

“Let’s look at what Singapore was a few decades ago...it was an island country dependent largely on fishing...and see today, its an economic hub,” the Prime Minister

said.

The Rs 75,000 crore worth projects that the Prime Minister either laid foundation stone or dedicated to the nation included national rail projects worth more than 1500 crores, National Institute of One Health (NIO), Nagpur and Nag river pollution abatement project, Nagpur. During the programme, the Prime Minister also dedicated ‘Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET), Chandrapur’ to the nation and inaugurated ‘Centre for Research, Management and Control of Hemoglobinopathies, Chandrapur’.

“Today is a very special day for Maharashtra when a bouquet of development works is being launched from Nagpur. These projects will transform

the lives of people,” he said.

Listing the 11 projects that he launched, the Prime Minister said: “Hindu Hriday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samridhi Mahamarg is now ready from Nagpur to Shirdi, while AIIMS will benefit the people of Vidarbha The establishment of National Institute of One Health, ICMR’s research Centre built in Chandrapur, the establishment of CIPT Chandrapur will benefit the people in this region.

The other projects that he launched included projects in Nagpur to reduce the pollution of Nag river, the inauguration of Metro Phase I and laying the foundation stone of Phase II, Vande Bharat Express between Nagpur to Bilaspur, the project of redevelopment of ‘Nagpur’ and ‘Ajni’ Railway Station, maintenance depot of 42 thou-



sand horsepower rail engine at Ajni and inauguration of Kohli-

Narkhed route of Nagpur-Itarsi line.

Police arrest Suvendu’s aide in corruption case

■ SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

In yet another development that can further escalate the ongoing dogfight between the Trinamool Congress and Opposition BJP the Bengal Police on Sunday arrested Shyamal Adak a close aide of Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari.

Officers of Sutahata Police Station in East Midnapore arrested Adak, a former chairman of Haldia municipality in cases related to corruption in floating of tenders.

Adak was arrested in the small hours of Sunday the police said adding as the Chairman of Haldia municipality he was involved in a major corruption racket related to floating of tenders in a number of projects.

According to reports a complaint was earlier filed by one Kamlesh Chakrabarty that Adak had obtained money twice by showing the same work during his tenure as the



Chairman of Haldia municipality. Haldia is a major port and industrial hub adjacent to Nandigram.

Adak who was questioned earlier too was summoned to the Sutahata Police Station and arrested. He has been to judicial custody.

Though there was no immediate reaction from the BJP, sources close to Adhikari said that Adak’s arrest had a lot to do with the increased activities of Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation in Bengal that had led to the arrests of senior TMC leaders like Partha Chatterjee, Manik Bhattacharya, Anubrata

Mondal and others.

Whiel Chatterjee and Bhattacharya a former senior minister and an MLA were arrested in relation to school level recruitment scams Mondal a Birbhum district TMC president and party national executive member was arrested by the CBI in cattle smuggling cases.

“As they have no viable ground to arrest BJP leaders and Mr Adhikari and as he has been leading from the front the war to bring down the Mamata Banerjee Government they have used the police to falsely implicate Shyamal Adak ... this is in order to coerce him into rejoining the Trinamool Congress,” a East Midnapore leader close to Adhikari said.

Though the Opposition Leader also has several FIRs against his name the Calcutta High Court has restrained the police from arresting him and also directed the State to seek its permission before initiating any strong action against him.

7 L candidates sit for WBBPE TET exam, Edu Min trashes report of question paper leak



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Nearly seven lakh candidates on Sunday appeared in the TET examination conducted by the WBBPE to fill up around 11,000 vacancies for primary teacher posts in West Bengal Government-sponsored and aided schools.

The West Bengal Board of Primary Education Board (WBBPE) conducted the Teachers’ Eligibility Test (TET) examination after a gap of five years in 1,460 examination centres across the state amid tight security arrangements,

officials said.

West Bengal Education minister Bratya Basu on Sunday denied there has been any question paper leak in the TET examination and alleged “some people” wanted to disrupt the examination process to discredit the Mamata Banerjee government by circulating fake question papers on WhatsApp. Basu told reporters that he was satisfied the exams could be conducted smoothly despite attempts by “some people” to derail the process and give a bad name to the Mamata Banerjee government.

40 newly-elected Gujarat MLAs facing criminal cases, says ADR

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

As many as 40 newly-elected MLAs in the 182-member Gujarat Assembly have criminal cases pending against them as per their election affidavits, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and the Gujarat Election Watch.

Of these 40 MLAs, 29 members (16 per cent of a total 182) are facing serious criminal cases, such as the attempt to murder and rape, the ADR analysis showed. Among the 29 members, 20 belong to BJP, four to Congress, two are from Aam Aadmi Party, two are Independents, and one is from Samajwadi Party.

In the just-concluded Assembly elections, counting for which was held on December 8, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a seventh straight term in Gujarat by winning record 156 seats. The Congress won 17 constituencies and AAP 5.

The ADR study shows 26 (17 per cent) of the 156 MLAs of BJP, 9 (53 per cent) of 17 MLAs of Congress, two of five MLAs of AAP (40 per cent), two (68 per cent) of three Independents and Ione Samajwadi Party candidate- Kandhal Jadeja- have declared criminal cases pending against them.



ADR works for electoral reforms and prepares such reports after analysing affidavits of all 182 newly-elected MLAs.

The study said the number of MLAs facing criminal cases decreased compared to 2017 when 47 elected members were found to be facing such cases.

At least three winning candidates have declared they are facing cases of attempt to murder under section 307 of the Indian Penal Code. These candidates are Congress MLA from Vandsa, Anant Patel, Congress MLA from Patan, Kirit Patel, and BJP MLA from Una, Kalubhai Rathod.

The study also shows four winning candidates have declared cases related to crimes against women under section 354 (outraging modesty of women) or under section 376 (rape) of the IPC.

Demonetisation, wrongly-designed GST reasons for high unemployment rate: Ramesh

PTI ■ BUNDI

Demonetisation, wrongly designed GST and faulty economic policies of the Narendra Modi government are the reasons why the country is facing the highest unemployment rate in 45 years, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh alleged on Sunday.

He was addressing a press conference in Bundi district’s Laban village, where Bharat Jodo Yatra halted for the morning break after clocking 12.8 km from Baldevpura.

“Demonetisation was the major factor followed by GST (Goods and Services Tax) that destroyed small and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises which generate maximum employment,” he said.

On the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Ramesh said one of its significant aspects is to raise issues such as economic disparities and inequalities.



“We are raising our voice against rising prices, unemployment rate and wrongly designed and implemented GST and closure of small scale industries,” Ramesh said as he released a movie on unemployment.

The Congress leader said it was appropriate to release the movie in Rajasthan as it was the first state to launch urban employment grantee scheme, which was named after Indira Gandhi, in September.

Ramesh also referred to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gurantee Scheme, saying it gave relief to

several lakh people in the two to three Covid-hit years, but the scheme was criticised by some people, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Ramesh congratulated Ashok Gehlot for implementing Indira Gandhi Urban Employment Guarantee scheme to eradicate unemployment in urban areas.

“Economic disparities are increasing among states, between poor and rich, and the middle class is suppressed. We are highlighting this in the Bharat Jodo Yatra,” Ramesh said.

Responding to a question on Gehlot and his nemesis and former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot travelling by the same helicopter to Shimla to attend the oath-taking ceremony of the new Himachal CM, Ramesh all party leaders are already “united” and the two leaders travelling together was not just for photographs.

Former JKPC president Mir appointed coordinator of Bharat Joda Yatra in J&K

PTI ■ JAMMU

Former Jammu and Kashmir pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) president G A Mir has been appointed as the coordinator for Rahul Gandhi-led “harat Jodo Yatra” in the Union Territory, a party spokesperson said on Sunday.

Mir will monitor preparations and will make necessary arrangements for the yatra, which is likely to enter Jammu and Kashmir in the third week of January.

The spokesperson said a high-level meeting of the JKPCC, chaired by AICC J-K in-charge and MP Rajni Patil was held in Jammu to discuss the upcoming Bharat Jodo



Yatra and measures to be taken to make it successful.

“Mir was appointed as coordinator of Bharat Jodo Yatra. He will look after the preparations, operations and other necessary measures that are to be taken to make the yatra successful in J-K,” he said.

The spokesperson said the meeting also appointed two co-coordinators for the yatra from Jammu as well as Kashmir.

Brother of Lakhimpur violence witness attacked by youth

PTI ■ LAKHIMPUR KHERI

The brother of the witness in the last year’s Lakhimpur violence was allegedly attacked by a youth, police said on Sunday.

The incident that happened on Friday night had no connection with the 2021 violence, they said.

Injured Sarvajeet Singh is reported to be the brother of Prabhjeet Singh, who is a witness in the Lakhimpur violence of October 3, 2021, in which eight persons, including four farmers, a journalist, two BJP workers and a driver were killed.

In his complaint, Singh alleged that he was attacked when he had gone to attend a party in Tikunia town organised by a friend. Accused Vikas Chawla along with his associ-



ate abused and attacked him with sharp weapons, thereby, injuring him.

Police said an FIR under section 307 (attempt to murder) of IPC has been registered on the complaint of the aggrieved person and legal proceedings are underway.

Lakhimpur Kheri’s Superintendent of Police (SP) Sanjiv Suman said in a statement, the brother of Tikunia case witness Prabhjeet was attacked by the accused, following a dispute while attending a ‘mundan’ party organised by their friend.

Festering wounds of CAA protests keep citizenship issue alive in Assam

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Widespread protests in Assam after the enactment of CAA on this day three years ago have left behind a festering wound that has kept the citizenship issue alive in the northeastern state sharing a long border with Bangladesh.

The BJP government at the Centre asserts that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 will be implemented but is yet to frame the rules, leading to allegations from various quarters that the saffron party is using it as a “political card” to polarise the nation.

The Citizenship Act, 1955 was amended to provide citizenship to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian religious minorities fleeing persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan and seeking refuge in India till 2014.

The Opposition protested the Act as being based on religious criteria and wanted it to

be amended.

The protests against the Act in Assam were led by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) but the stir was different from those in other parts of the country as agitators asserted that the state cannot be a dumping ground for foreigners irrespective of their religion.

The agitation in Assam had turned violent, with five people losing their lives in police firing and KMSS leader Akhil Gogoi and four others being arrested. The stir was called off with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the aftermath of the agitation, two new political parties -- Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) led by the then AASU leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi and Rajior Dal headed by Akhil Gogoi - were born in Assam.

“The BJP uses CAA as a political tool, particularly during elections, and it has not framed the rules as it wants to

keep the ‘foreigners’ issue’ alive in Assam. What’s worse is that the party has brought a communal angle through the Act with its narrative ‘Hindu khate mein hain’ (Hindus are in danger),” AJP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi told PTI.

The Assam Accord and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) irrelevant, he claimed.

“The Centre must give constitutional safeguards to Assam like those accorded to other northeastern states against further settlement of ‘foreigners’,” Rajior Dal working president Bhasko de Saikia said.

“We are firm on our opposition to the Act which we consider to be a part of the BJP’s communal politics and if they frame the rules, the ‘foreigners’ should be taken to other states,” Saikia said.

The RSS and the BJP, however, asserted that both the CAA and NRC are not against any Indian and that the communal narrative has been cre-



ated “by some” for political mileage.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had pointed out here last year that no Muslim will face any persecution due to CAA.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had also asserted that the CAA is for those who are “victims of Partition and persecuted in a communal country created on the basis of religion”.

Sarma had claimed that “so-called secular protesters” at the national level tried to give a communal colour to the protests in Assam.

Political writer and analyst Sushanta Talukdar said the government has been delaying the implementation of CAA as it is wary of adverse reactions in Assam and Tripura where the ruling BJP has high stakes. “The Centre is apprehen-

sive of exposing linguistic and ethnic fault lines in the Northeast and antagonising its own and alliance partners’ electoral support base because, without adequate constitutional safeguards, the Act could lead to the marginalisation of indigenous people by the migrant population which might result in their loss of political power and identity,” Talukdar added.

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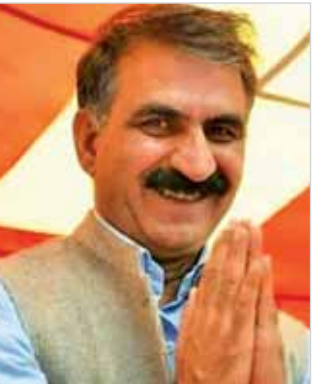
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PAPER WITH PASSION

A tightrope

Himachal CM Sukhu must ensure amity within party unit and development in the hill State

The story of Congress leader Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who took oath as the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh on Sunday, is in consonance with the contemporary anti-elitist narrative. The narrative has gained currency primarily because of the spectacular rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also of humble origins, in the Bharatiya Janata Party. In a way, it is an eternally elevating story—a person without many means reaching the top using their skills and diligence only. ‘A self-made person’ is admired everywhere. Son of a bus driver, Sukhu sold milk in his earlier days. He eventually got a law degree. Along the way, he got active in student politics at Himachal Pradesh University, rising through the ranks in the Congress-affiliated National Students’ Union of India or NSUI and becoming the president of the student organisation. His elevation to the office of the Himachal Pradesh Youth Congress chief, where he remained for a decade, helped him grow as a state leader. He went on to head the Himachal Pradesh Congress from 2013 to 2019, which is a record. Victory from Nadaun in the Assembly election in 2003, his first, was another important point in the rising graph. Since then, he has won every Assembly election, save that of 2012. He can also boast of executive experience, as he served twice as the chief of the Shimla Municipal Corporation.



In his 40-year political career, Sukhu faced many challenges. As Shimla Municipal Corporation chief, he was often at odds with the late Virbhadra Singh, the party stalwart in the state who served as chief minister six times. His widow, Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee president Pratibha Singh, is still Sukhu’s rival. She reminded everyone after the party victory in the state that Virbhadra’s “legacy” could not be ignored. What was implied that she was the embodiment of that legacy. The Congress leadership, which was earlier worried about the poaching of its MLAs by the BJP, seems to have overcome that fear. It has tried to please all factions in the state’s party unit, with Pratibha Singh becoming its president and Mukesh Agnihotri, Deputy Chief Minister. Agnihotri, the journalist-turned-politician, is said to be a protégé of Virbhadra’s. Congress workers and supporters would hope that his arrangement works smoothly, but the party top brass cannot afford to be complacent or laid back. It should not forget that a similar arrangement was made in Rajasthan four years ago but it came unstuck; there have been several flare-ups in the desert state, with neither of the two combatants, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlaut and former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot, willing to yield an inch. While the Congress high command should be vigilant about any dissidence or friction, the newly Himachal Chief Minister will also have to walk a tightrope. He has to keep the interests and sensitivities of his rivals in mind without compromising development. Neither he nor the top Congress leaders would like to have a repeat of desert storm.



A Rosy Pelican flies over a pond at Delhi Zoo, in New Delhi

Afghan human crisis

The world looks the other way as Afghans face another harsh winter and starvation

It is going to be a harsh winter for the people of Afghanistan. According to various agencies working in Afghanistan, starvations staring in the face as more than 90 per cent of Afghan households who are going hungry. Afghanistan under Taliban is a miserable place; one for the misgovernance and whimsical rule of Taliban and second for the world apathy. The world today is too busy with the Ukraine crisis to think about Afghanistan. It slapped sanctions on the Taliban regime but at the end of the day it is the people of Afghanistan who are bearing the brunt. The grants-in-aid that poured in Afghanistan before the Taliban took over is almost zilch. The sanctions that were put in place to pressurize the Taliban haven’t worked. Taliban is able to generate its funds by several other ways as the common people suffer. Afghanistan food security is absent and recent floods and onset of winter has made the condition worse. A national drought was officially declared in June 2021 and is the worst in more than 30 years.



The Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, and ever since the country is witnessing humanitarian crisis, be it gender issues or social parameters of education or health, Afghanistan is on the brink. Hundreds of thousands of people are in grave danger. They are fighting for their survival, braving cold and hunger. The most at-risk are marginalized ethnic groups, urban poor, minority groups, undocumented recent returnees, households headed by women, and many others. The Taliban has imposed several restrictions on these vulnerable groups thereby making their survival even more difficult. According to Human Rights Watch, since capturing Kabul in August 2021, “Taliban authorities have imposed severe restrictions on women’s and girls’ rights, suppressed the media, and arbitrarily detained, tortured, and summarily executed critics and perceived opponents, among other abuses.” Csaba Korösi, President of the UN General Assembly, also shared the same sentiment, “Afghanistan is facing complex and interlinked challenges that the Taliban have shown they cannot—or would not—solve.” India’s presidency of COP and UNSC could make a difference if it pushes for the Afghan cause as India has first-hand experience of working in Afghanistan. It also has a wide network and infrastructure in place that can come handy. We can lead from the front and not only make a significant difference in Afghanistan but also win laurels.

Kerala fishermen take on Adani port

The fishermen of Kerala, taking a cue from north India farmers, are on warpath & demanding scrapping of Vizhinjam International Port project



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Taking a cue from the farmers of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana who brought New Delhi to a standstill against the Farmers’ Bill introduced by the BJP Government at the Centre, fisher folk of Vizhinjam in Kerala has struck at the CPI (M) government for 140 days before calling temporary truce last Tuesday. They are in an agitation against the state-of-the-art Vizhinjam International Port, reportedly the largest of its kind in South Asia, being built by the Adani Group.

Sashi Tharoor, the reigning super star of Kerala politics, who is on a lecture tour in the State to establish himself as an alternative to Pinarayi Vijayan as well as the existing leaders of the Indian National Congress declared in his recent speech that God’s Own Country has become Satan’s Own Land thanks to the myriad and gnawing issues haunting the southern coastal stretch.

The State’s catch word has long been replaced with the phrase Devil’s Own Hell by political critics dejected with the approach of the two leading fronts—Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the CPI(M) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) under the auspices of the Congress. Though both the Fronts accuse each other for nepotism, corruption, bending of rules and misuse of government machinery, there is no hope of these maladies coming down. Last fortnight saw the suburbs around the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram being set ablaze by rioters and gangsters masquerading as fishers. Two police stations were vandalized and more than forty cops were attacked by fishers of Vizhinjam Action Committee, a collective of coastal residents led by the spiritual leaders of the Latin Catholic Archdiocese. They set fire to many police vehicles parked in the station compounds and public property worth Rs two crores was destroyed by the rioters. Their demand? The stoppage of construction works of Vizhinjam International Seaport. The port, hardly two or three nautical miles from the international shipping



route and with a depth of 20 meters, would have made Vizhinjam a favorite location for berthing giant carriers and crew changing hub of global shipping companies.

The VAC alleged that the Port would lead to erosion of the coastal region. They demand high compensation in lieu of the land acquired by the Government of Kerala for building the Port. The 140-day long agitation, meticulously planned and executed under the patronage of the holy fathers saw a replication of the sit-in staged at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu by those opposed to the 1000 MW nuclear power plant which was being built with Russian aid. The Kudankulam agitation turned violent thanks to the People’s Movement Against Nuclear Energy which had forecast a nuclear disaster once the plant got commissioned and produced power. It is more than five years since the two mega reactors (each of 1000 MW) started generating and providing power to the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and the union territory of Pudusseri. Till date no untoward incidents have been reported from the reactors. Anil Kakodkar, the then chairman of the



THOUGH THE HOLY FATHERS DECLINED THE ADDITIONAL CASH COMPENSATION OFFERED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF KERALA, THE LEADERS WERE SILENT ABOUT THE REASON BEHIND THE SUDDEN WITHDRAWAL OF THE SIT-IN

Atomic Energy Commission, had said in 2005 itself that Kudankulam nuclear reactors stand out because of the “safety in depth” concept.

The fishermen who went on rioting last week were from Vizhinjam who have been sufficiently compensated by Kerala Government as well as the builders of the port. The real victims are the residents of Mulloor, a fishing hamlet far away from Vizhinjam, the residents of which are yet to get the minimum compensation promised by the Government. Since they do not have spiritual leaders who command vote banks through their organized bargaining power, the Mulloor residents whose 1000 acres were taken away for developing the port continue with their Gandhian Satyagraha.

While leaders of Vizhinjam Action Council allege of coastal erosion due to the port, they cover up the fact that Chennai based National Institute of Ocean Technology has developed a solution to coastal erosion which has been proved effective in Pudusseri. The agitation which peaked last week was called off rather dramatically by the leaders after a meeting with the CM. “We are following the foot-

prints of the farmers who staged countrywide agitation against the Farmers Bill in 2019. Our agitation stands suspended for the time being and we will be back soon,” said Eugene Pereira, the vicar of Vizhinjam who spearheaded the agitation.

Though the holy fathers declined the additional cash compensation offered by the Government of Kerala, the leaders were silent about the reason behind the sudden withdrawal of the sit-in. Now comes the report that the Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax Department are in hot pursuit of foreign funds more than Rs 4.2 crore received by a NGO that is closely associated with the VAC. The NGO is headed by the elder brother of a minister in Vijayan’s cabinet. The minister himself is under investigation for his role in tinkering with the underwear of an Australian junkie who smuggled heroin worth crores! The Kerala High Court too played its role well by asking for deployment of central paramilitary forces in and around the port area.

(The writer is a senior journalist with The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INCREASING RENEWABLE ENERGY

Sir — The International Energy Agency (IEA) in their annual report said that the Global renewable energy capacity is expected to be almost double in the next five years as the ongoing energy crisis is driving a sharp acceleration of installations of renewable power projects. Global renewable power capacity is expected to grow by 2,400 gigawatts (GW) over the 2022-2027 period, which will allow it to overtake coal as the largest source of electricity generation by early 2025. Renewables are set to account for over 90 per cent of global electricity expansion over the next five years, and will help keep alive the possibility of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. As per report the renewables were already expanding quickly, but the global energy crisis has kicked them into an extraordinary new phase of even faster growth as countries seek to capitalize on their energy security benefits. The world is set to add as much renewable power in the next five years as it did in the previous 20 years.

With this the amount of renewable power capacity added in Europe in the 2022-2027 period is forecast to be twice as high as in the previous five-year period, driven by a combination of energy security concerns and climate ambitions. The report of IEA was timely one and informative.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

MULTIPLE WIVES

Sir — Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has expressed that his party is against men from the Muslim community having multiple wives. Sarma has rightly asserted that a man cannot have 3-4 women without divorcing the previous spouse. The reaction of Sarma came in response to Lok Sabha MP and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) Chief Badruddin Ajmal’s reported advice that women can give birth to 20-25 children. Sarma has bemoaned that some leaders like Ajmal say that women must give birth to children as soon as possible because that is a fertile land. “If there are doctors from Assamese Hindu families, there should be doctors from Muslim families as well”. But,

Election results show maturity



Results of the elections are an indicator of matured democracy in India and in matured democracy there is no place of caste, creed, religion and only repeat development matters along with national interest and integrity of the country. In Gujarat how the electioneering was vitiated by using the unparliamentary language. To pay the respect for Mulayam Singh there should have been an unopposed election but his daughter in law Dimple Yadav won the election comfortably. Janta Dal (U) lost the election which is a lesson for Nitish who has the habit of changing the political alignments. Rampur seat was won by BJP with huge margin which testify that action taken against Azam Khan was correct and it is a lesson for other

politicians also not to use unparliamentary language in politics.

In the corporation election of Delhi the message is very much clear: the public is tired of corruption by BJP corporators. It is a time of introspection for the Cong party why the party failed miserably in Gujarat. Results of Gujarat indicate that BJP will easily win the parliament elections in 2024 if the opposition parties failed to frame the united opposition front. Congress has won election in Himachal Pradesh but the state has only four parliament seats and voters have different approach for the parliament elections and we have the example of Delhi where BJP had won all the seats in parliament in 2014 and 2014 whereas in the assembly AAP has thumping majority. AAP is now a national party and it is considered that this party is natural replacement of Cong party and it will definitely dent the prospect of Cong party everywhere where it will contest the election in 2024. In the last we can say that results of elections had changed the entire political scenario and also proved that our country has matured democracy.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

says Sarma, many MLAs don’t give such advice because they need the votes of Pomuwa Muslims. Pomua Muslims are Bengali-speaking Muslims originating from East Bengal or the present day Bangladesh. The Dhubri MP Ajmal has reportedly advised Hindus to marry young to produce more children like Muslims. After the statement assumed controversial proportions, Ajmal tendered an apology the next day and admitted that he was ashamed of the controversy his statement stoked. Further, he maintained that his comments were twisted and he had not targeted any community. The apology has come only as a face saving device. India must have one nation, one law for all. For this, the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) must come into force. Personal laws cannot have upper hand over Constitutional laws.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

POLITICS ALL THE TIME IS NOT GOOD

Sir — Now Gujarat, HP, and Delhi municipal elections results are out and we should stop discussing election results, now. Just vote on the given day and that’s it. A solution can be to have E-campaigning/E-canvassing, E-public meetings, E-ballot. In European nations, the public is not over-obsessed with politics they talk about good things inlife; joy, success, solutions. No politics, diatribe, histrionics, fooling around, and blame game. Let us learn good things from them. So no politics from today, talk about how to increase happiness in the country and find solutions for a better India.

Madhav P | Secunderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Parliamentarians, including from the opposition, have told me that disruption and adjournment in Parliament is not good and this also denies younger MPs an opportunity to learn.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



First thing to do would be to take action against corruption. This cancer has to be exterminated. Governing Peru will not be an easy task.

President of Peru — Dina Boluarte

One of my biggest inspirations has been my grandfather, Raj Kapoor, who incarnated a Chaplinesque tramp character, to which I as his grandson paid direct tribute in Saawariya and Barfi!



Actor — Ranbir Kapoor



So, Sachin, being a nice, greatest guy on the planet Earth, greatest batsman... I went up to him, looked at him, checked him out and said ‘Brother, you have no chance against me’. So, I got him out on the first ball in Kolkata. First time ever happened in the history of cricket.

Former Pakistani cricketer — Wasim Akram

The presidency of G20 coming to India is not an ordinary thing, and the world needs India now.

RSS chief — Mohan Bhagwat

FIRST COLUMN

UNIVERSAL COVERAGE IS NEED OF THE HOUR

Today is the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day



KAMAL NARAYAN OMER

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day is observed annually since 2017 on December 12 to remind people that good health is a necessity and everyone irrespective of their economic and social status should have access to quality healthcare. The pandemic made the world realize that as far as health is concerned, working in silos is no longer a sustainable option. The clarion call for ensuring UHC thus is a rallying point to make nations and governments make smarter investments in health and remind the world about the imperative need of UHC.

The United Nations General Assembly passed the resolution on UHC on December 12, 2012 and urged the member nations to ensure and accelerate the growth towards affordable, accessible and quality healthcare for all.

With the launch of the Ayushman Bharat the government has already taken the much - needed step towards UHC in 2018, further improvements like Ayushman Digital Mission and PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission are ensuring that digital technology makes health infrastructure accessible and gaps in health care are recognized and addressed respectively. No doubt the transformation of 1.5 lakh sub centres and primary health centres to 'Health & Wellness Centres' will provide an enormous boost to health infrastructure. Palliative care must be part of Ayushman Bharat.

Private sector is a major stakeholder in the healthcare sector, as its collaboration with the government can be a game changer. Private sector players offer great potential in addressing the gaps and barriers in healthcare right from creating a skilled healthcare workforce to providing innovative solutions to healthcare. Pharmaceutical companies, research institutes, digital health IT, insurance, health analytics, civil society, NGOs and education technology organisations could work hand-in-hand with the government to bridge the current gap of workforce availability and capacity building.

The concept of UHC encompasses that all citizens are entitled to quality health care from prevention to promotion, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliation – without the strain of economic hardship. The concept has three important cornerstones: access, quality, and financial protection and, not surprisingly, the private sector forms an important chunk of all three of them. Fruitful partnerships with all relevant stakeholders are the way forward that can keep check on 'Out-of-Pocket' expenses (OOP) and drive families out of this vicious circle of poverty and dearth. In the Indian context, the maximum OOP is spent on out-patient consultations as well as screenings and diagnostic tests, hence the focus of PMJAY needs to shift from in-patient care and hospitalisation towards out-patient care, to bring down catastrophic health expenditure. This will also ensure the much- needed shift from curative healthcare to a preventive one as well as early detection of many NCD's.

In keeping with the theme of Universal Health Coverage Day this year "Build the world we want: A healthy future for all" and enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, UHC includes a full range of essential health services from health promotion and awareness to prevention, and treatment. The very essence of the concept depends on leaving no one behind as non - availability of quality healthcare anywhere is a threat to human health everywhere, as seen during the pandemic.

The economic and social repercussions of UHC can go a long way in tackling the issues of human rights, economic development and empowering the population, at large. The attainment of all other SDGs is invariably linked to UHC and the long term and sustainable progress of any nation is hugely dependent on the health and wellbeing of its citizens, the path to which is linked to the realization of UHC.

(The author is CEO, IHW Council)

Fertiliser subsidy must go to farmers directly

This is the only way to eliminate diversion, prevent excess use, promote competition, and lower cost

The Centre is planning to conduct pilots in a few districts of the country on a modified version of direct benefit transfer (DBT) in fertilisers that would establish some connection between land holding and the nutrient's consumption. The intent is to monitor consumption, prevent excess usage and chances of misuse.

DBT, as the wording implies, has to do with transfer of fertiliser subsidy. Fertiliser subsidy arises because the Centre directs manufacturers/importers to sell fertilisers to farmers at a low maximum retail price (MRP), unrelated to the cost of supply, which is much higher. In the case of urea, the difference is reimbursed to the manufacturers as a subsidy on a 'unit-specific' basis.

In the case of phosphate and potash (P&K) fertilisers (call them non-urea fertilisers), it fixes 'uniform' subsidies on a per-nutrient basis for all manufacturers and importers who are expected to deduct this from the cost to arrive at MRP.

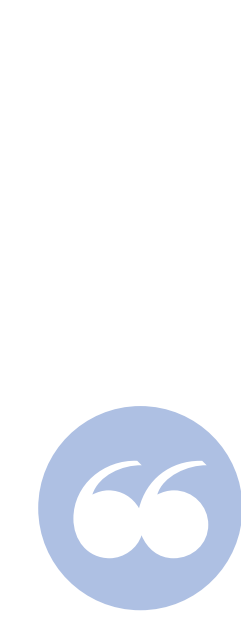
The fundamental point to note here is that unlike other sectors where the manufacturers/importers charge consumers a price that fully covers the cost of supply (or market determined price), fertiliser producers—under directions from the Central government—charge less. For instance, against Rs 3,000 being the cost of a 45 kg bag of imported urea, they charge only Rs 242 from the farmers and get reimbursement of the shortfall of Rs 2,758 as subsidy from the Centre.

The benefit of subsidy accrues to farmers (it is embedded in the price) as but for financial support of Rs 2,758, they would not have got access to urea at Rs 242.

This system is highly susceptible to misuse and excessive use. First, the existing scenario, namely selling price being a small fraction of the cost of supply (1/12 of imported urea and 1/10 of domestic urea) is very tempting for industrial users in India and even to our neighboring countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, etc. Dubious traders deploy all tactics to divert this material—available at a throw-away price—to them (industries and neighbors) and make a killing.

Second, the system of calculating the cost of making urea for the arriving at subsidy on unit-specific basis protects high cost and inefficient units, even as it doesn't incentivize low cost, efficient units. Moreover, it scuttles innovation by the industry to make better and customized solutions to meet farmers' diverse needs. Above all, this is far from being conducive to attract investment for growth.

Third, keeping the MRP at a ridiculously low level leads to excessive use of urea, which in turn leads to imbalance in fertilizer use (the present NPK use ratio is 6.7:2.4:1 against the desired 4:2:1) and resultant decline in crop yield, deterioration in soil health and adverse impact on the environment.



THE SYSTEM OF CALCULATING THE COST OF MAKING UREA FOR THE ARRIVING AT SUBSIDY ON UNIT-SPECIFIC BASIS PROTECTS HIGH COST AND INEFFICIENT UNITS, EVEN AS IT DOESN'T INCENTIVIZE LOW COST, EFFICIENT UNITS

(The author is a policy analyst)



Fourthgiving subsidies by ordering sale at a uniform MRP creates an anomalous situation whereby even the better off/rich farmers get its benefit (albeit by default). In fact, the quantum of subsidy availed increases in proportion to the quantity of fertiliser purchase— as the scheme doesn't provide for any cap.

The misuse is happening on a large scale, which is evident from an analysis by the chief economic advisor (CEA) in the Economic Survey for the FY 2015-16. As much as 24 per cent of the subsidy is spent on inefficient producers, 41 per cent is diverted to non-agricultural uses, including smuggling to neighboring countries, and 24 per cent is consumed by larger, presumably richer farmers.

Prior to March 2018, manufacturers were getting 95 per cent of the subsidy on urea (85 per cent in case of non-urea fertilisers) 'on receipt of material at a district's railroad point or approved go-down' and balance 5/15 per cent on confirmation of sales to farmers by states. That arrangement was prone to "wholesale diversion" of fertilizers straight from the railroad or go-down.

From March 2018, the government has made disbursement of subsidy to manufacturers conditional upon actual sales to farmers and these getting registered on point-of-sale (PoS) machines after undergoing Aadhaar authentication.

However, there is no restriction on the number of bags a farmer can purchase. This new regime together with tracking of physical move-

ment under a mobile Fertiliser Monitoring System (m-FMS) (launched in 2013-14, m-FMS provides information on stock position, sale and receipt of fertilizers till the last retail point), ensures a much higher level of accountability on all stakeholders in the supply chain, namely, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers.

In August 2020, the Centre had taken a number of administrative measures viz. restricting purchase of urea to 100 bags (down from 999) per transaction by one purchaser, capping the number of such transactions per month and keeping a tab on top 20 urea purchasers in each of their districts in 22 major fertilizer-consuming states. This shows that even under the new dispensation, diversion was happening at wholesale level prior to material reaching the retail point.

Even after sale at the retail level, diversion is not ruled out as the buyer need not be a farmer and can buy any quantity of fertilizers as all that she has to do is to furnish her identity/Aadhaar number.

To prevent it, the government had also mooted barring non-farmers from purchasing subsidised fertilisers and putting a cap on the number of bags a farmer can buy at the subsidized price for the whole season. If the farmer still wants to buy extra, those bags would be available only at the non-subsidized price. For over two years, this idea was under wraps; it has been resurrected now.

Under the proposed system, farmers' details will be fed on the PoS machines, including the land

she holds, crop grown, area under cultivation, etc., and requirement of the number of bags of fertilizers such as urea, DAP, etc. All this will show up the moment a farmer enters the Aadhaar details and sale of subsidized material will be restricted to the quantity shown on the machine.

Given the allurements of low-priced fertilisers, diversion can happen at any level in the supply chain; authorities however alert can't prevent it. In 2015-16, the government made neem coating of urea mandatory (it makes urea unsuitable for use in chemical factories). But this has failed to make a dent.

The modification does nothing to change the extant system of reimbursing subsidy on unit-specific basis. So, a portion of the subsidy will continue to be cornered by inefficient producers. Moreover, continued availability of low priced urea will ensure that its excessive use continues.

Finally, there is nothing in the proposal to suggest that rich farmers will be denied access to subsidised fertilisers. The solution to the problems can't be divorced from the root cause. This has to do with routing subsidies through the suppliers. The government should stop it, end control on MRP and allow manufacturers/importers the freedom to fix retail prices based on the market forces. The subsidy should be directly given to farmers. This is the only way to eliminate diversion, prevent excess use, promote competition, lower cost, enhance efficiency and restrict subsidies only to poor farmers.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE PM WHO GOES TO GIVE HIS VOTE IN AHMEDABAD FOR OVER 2.5 HOURS WAS TELECAST LIVE BY ALL NEWS CHANNELS FREE OF COST. SHOULDN'T YOU BE CHARGING THE BJP? WHY ARE YOU DOING IT FOR FREE?
— CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON PAWAN KHERA



THE PM WALKED UP TO THE POLLING BOOTH TO CAST HIS VOTE AND THIS IS THE EXACT PROVOCATION THAT PAWAN KHERA IS TALKING ABOUT. YOU WON'T DRIVE INSIDE THE POLLING BOOTH WITH YOUR VEHICLE, WILL YOU?
— BJP SPOKESPERSON TOM VADAKKAN



Bharatiya Bhasha Divas on Dec 11 hails diversity

When Indian languages become the medium of education from primary to higher level, India will realise its soul

India is a country of diversities. The multicoloured geographical construct of the country is such that it embraces several cultures. Diversity in lifestyle, beliefs, faith and food habits amaze foreigners. Language is a key component of such diversities. Man has tirelessly acquired language to express and communicate. With language, he contemplates. The original text of human intelligence, the Rigveda, says in reference to language that 'the steadfast man utters the language with a mind purified like flour filtered in a sieve and pure virtue is established in speech. Saint Kabir said, "Sanskrit hai koop jal, bhakha bahta neer." Poet Tulsiidas, despite being a Sanskrit scholar, created literature in Awadhi and Braj - the



RAGHAVENDRA P TIWARI

(The author is Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda)

two prominent regional languages. The languages of modern times are the result of continuous refinement over a long period of time. Just as threshing chaff is removed from the food grains, the redundant and archaic language is removed through its consistent usage.

December 11 is the birthday of modern Tamil poet Subramaniam Bharathi. Educated in Tamil Nadu and Varanasi, Bharathi enthused the public with his writings during the Swaraj struggle and is considered a bridge between north and south. He composed fiery songs imbued with the spirit of nationalism. The decision of the Government of India to celebrate this day as 'Bharatiya Bhasha Divas' is really commendable.

It is well known that Indian languages occupied the backseat under British rule. These languages were despised due to Macaulisation of education. Consequently, English received protection and promotion. English was imposed on Indians as the medium of administration and education. It was around 1929 that the philosopher Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya emphasized on the 'Swaraj of Language' to inculcate Swaraj in thoughts as Swaraj was the dream and dreams are seen only in the mother tongue.

About 20 per cent of the Indian languages have become extinct in the last 50 years and many are on the verge of extinction. For centuries, the traits of our civilization have

been preserved in local languages, culture and public life.

The recommendation of the National Education Policy-2020 is succinct that 'as far as possible, at least up to grade five and even till grade eight and beyond' the mother tongue/local/regional language should become the medium of instruction. Higher quality textbooks should be made available in the mother tongue in all subjects, including sciences and technology. The decision of Madhya Pradesh Government to impart MBBS education in Hindi language is exemplary. The inauguration of engineering books, technical glossaries and e-Kumbh portal in Odia language by the President of India Draupadi Murmu is also a trend-setter for the promotion of regional

languages. The National Testing Agency has added a new chapter in the sphere of language promotion by conducting Combined University Entrance Test in 13 Indian languages. It should be the endeavor of the educationists to make available all disciplines of knowledge in Indian languages at the earliest.

The beginning may be with translation but the ultimate aim should be to write original texts in Indian languages. To fructify this, the 'Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation' will have to be established soon. However, there are genuine concerns of the stakeholders. The 'National Translation Mission' should be strengthened to perform effectively. Although the NEP talks about education in the mother tongue till pre-secondary level, there is no clarity on the medium education at higher level. In such a scenario, there is an apprehension in the minds of the parents that if English will be the medium of education in future, why should they not educate children in English medium from primary education itself. Government should address this concern on priority. To strengthen multilingualism, every Indian should learn more than one Indian language, so that the eternal culture of unity in diversity remains engraved in the minds of the public and India reaps the dividends of linguistic diversity.

Irony is that the Indian languages, which have been the mother of global culture, are themselves struggling to get rid of colonialism, imperialism and marketism. Realizing this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that 'taking inspiration from the NEP, efforts will be made to teach all technical courses, including medical and engineering, in the mother tongue'.

When Indian languages become the medium of education from primary to higher level, India will be able to realise its soul in the light of its rich tradition of knowledge and knowing. In essence, only those languages survive which are used by the people.

Hindi poet Bhartendu Harishchandra, endowed with modern consciousness, says: "Nij bhasha unnati ahai, sab unnati ko mool; bin nij bhasha gyan ke, mitat n hii ko sool".

Free for month, Kherson still toils to clear Russian traps

AP ■ KHERSON, UKRAINE

A hand grenade jerry-rigged into the detergent tray of a Kherson home's washing machine. A street sign maliciously directing passers-by toward a deadly minefield. A police station that allegedly housed a torture chamber but remains so booby-trapped that demining crews can't even start to hunt for evidence.

Sunday marks exactly one month since Russia's troops withdrew from Kherson and its vicinity after an eight-month occupation, sparking jubilation across Ukraine. But life in the southern city is still very far from normal.

The departing Russians left behind all sorts of ugly surprises, and their artillery continues to batter the city from new, dug-in positions across the Dnieper River. The regional administration said Saturday that shelling over the past month has killed 41 people, including a child, in Kherson, and 96 were hospitalized.

Residents' access to electricity still comes and goes, although water is largely connected, and indoor heating has only very recently been restored — and only to about 70-80% of the city — after the Russians last month blew up a giant central

heating station that served much of the city.

For authorities and citizens, sifting through the countless headaches and hazards left behind by the Russians, and bracing for new ones, is a daily chore.

On Friday alone, according to the local affiliate of public broadcaster Suspilne, Russian forces shelled the region 68 times with mortars, artillery, tank and rocket fire. Meanwhile, in the last month, a total of 5,500 people have taken evacuation trains out, and work crews have cleared 190 kilometers (115 miles) of road, Suspilne reported.

When aid trucks arrived a month ago, war-weary and desperate residents flocked to the central Svoboda (Freedom) Square for food and supplies. But after a Russian strike on the square as a line of people queued to enter a bank in late November, such large gatherings have become less common and aid is doled out from smaller, more discreet distribution points.

Regional officials say some 80% of Kherson's pre-war population of about 320,000 fled after the Russians moved in, days after their invasion began on Feb. 24. With some 60,000-70,000 residents remaining, the



city now has a feel of a ghost town. Those who remain mostly keep indoors because they're cautious about making forays into the streets.

"Life is getting back to normal, but there is a lot of shelling," said Valentyna Kytaiska, 56, who lives in the

nearby village of Chornobaivka. She lamented the nightly "Bam! Bam!" and the unsettling uncertainty of where the Russian ordinance may land.

Normal is a relative term for a country at war. There's no telling whether what Russia insists on calling a "special

military operation" will end in days, weeks, months or even years.

In the meantime, painstaking efforts go on to establish a better sense of normalcy, like clearing the mess and mines left behind by the Russians, in tough wintertime weather.

"The difficulties are very simple, it's the weather conditions," said one military demining squad member, who goes by the nom de guerre of Tekhnik. He said some of their equipment simply doesn't work in frost conditions "because the soil is frozen like concrete."

The deployment of additional teams could help ease the heavy workload, he said. "To give you an idea, during the month of our work, we found and removed several tons of mines," said Tekhnik, adding that they focused only on about 10 square kilometers (about 4 square miles).

In Kherson's Beryslavskiy district, a main road was blocked off with a sign reading "Mines Ahead" and rerouting passersby to a smaller road. In fact, it was that side road which was mined, and cost the lives of some military deminers. A few weeks later, four police officers were also killed there, including the police chief from the northern city of Chernihiv, who had come down to help Kherson regain its footing.

The general state of disrepair of weather-beaten roads helped the outgoing Russians disguise their deadly traps: Potholes, some covered with soil, provided a convenient place to lay mines. Sometimes, the Russians cut into the asphalt to make holes themselves.

Demining squads go slowly house-to-house to ensure it's safe for owners or previous residents to return. Experts say a single home can take up to three days to be cleared.

One crew turned up a hand grenade in one house, stuffed into a washing machine — the pin placed in such a way that opening the detergent tray would set off an explosion.

The city's main police station, where detainees were reportedly tortured, is packed with explosives. When demining squads tried to work their way in, part of the building exploded — so they've shelved the project for now.

Longer term questions remain: Kherson sits in an agricultural region that produces crops as diverse as wheat, tomatoes, and watermelon — a regional symbol. The fields are so heavily mined that about 30% of arable land in the region is unlikely to be planted in the spring, Tekhnik the deminer said. A cursory look reveals the tops of anti-tank mines poking up in the fields.

Even so, after a night of shelling from Friday evening into Saturday, Kherson resident Oleksandr Chebotariov said life had been even worse under the Russians for himself, his wife and 3-year-old daughter.

"It's easier to breathe now," the 35-year-old radiologist said — only to add: "If the banging doesn't stop before the New Year, I'm going on vacation."

Ukraine utility crews adapt, overcome after Russian strikes

AP ■ KYIV, UKRAINE

Over the grinding wail of a chainsaw pruning trees, Oleh Brahmnyk recalls how his crew sprang into action in Kyiv a week earlier to repair power lines downed by Russian missiles and keep electricity flowing to his beleaguered fellow Ukrainians.

Brahmnyk, an electric company foreman, knows the stakes: Like many others in Ukraine, his family has dealt with daily power outages caused by Russian strikes.

"We, too, sit in the dark," he says, acknowledging that his home gets power for only about half of each day. In recent months, Russia has rained missiles on Ukraine to try to take out power grid equipment and facilities that keep lights on, space heaters warm and computers running. It's part of Moscow's strategy to cripple the country's infrastructure and freeze Ukraine into submission this winter. Brahmnyk's crew is one of many from energy company DTEK that moves swiftly in Kyiv — occasionally under artillery and rocket fire — to keep the city ticking. Colleagues across Ukraine do the same.



plants were brought back online within 24 hours, although power cuts affect about 30% of Kyiv's residents during the day, dropping as low as 20% at night, DTEK spokeswoman Antonina Antosha said. DTEK, which works closely with Ukrainian energy company NEC Ukrenergo, says Russian forces have attacked its facilities 17 times since early October, including twice on Monday alone. The company has reported the deaths of more than 106 employees since Russia invaded Ukraine in late February, the vast majority of them members of the military, but says 14 were killed while either off-duty or working.

Three Ukrainian energy workers were killed and 24 injured in the past week, DTEK said.

On Thursday, Brahmnyk's crew had little more to worry about than freezing temperatures and piles of snow as they pared

back branches near overhead electricity lines that power homes and businesses on much of the left bank of the Dnieper River that cuts through the capital.

That doesn't diminish their constant state of alert. When the missiles started dropping mid-afternoon on Nov. 23, the crew rushed to an unspecified emergency site, assessed the damage, and quickly determined what repairs needed to be done within a span of a few hours. A second "brigade" was then called in to do the actual repair work.

"Three or four lines were snapped," and it required several hours of work to install new ones, Brahmnyk said.

The crews can't just rush in. In theory, but not always in practice, de-mining experts are expected to arrive first and give the all-clear that there's no danger from unexploded ordinance. Then, clean-up crews, when needed, clear away debris and

fragments from downed lines and blast destruction so trucks and heavy equipment can get through to complete the repairs.

The infrastructure-targeted strikes aren't as perilous as the attacks of the opening phase of the war, when Russian forces advanced to the outskirts of Kyiv and some neighborhoods of the capital before being pushed back. At that time, repair work was done under fire.

"That was much worse," Brahmnyk recalled. "These days, it's better because the rockets are being fired from farther away."

Ukraine has adapted. A popular mobile phone app whose name title translates as Air Alarm regularly sounds warnings that Russian strikes are under way, specifying the region.

In light of the new Russian strategy, "when we hear that there is an incoming strike from Russia, we already know they're going to aim at the power supplies, or power lines," Brahmnyk said. DTEK's crews now stay close to their operational base, ready to load up and deploy on a moment's notice. The risks remain real.

"Even now, we're not really confident because no one knows if they will do a double hit when we deploy to repair a site that they've just struck," he said.

The psychological strain also weighs heavy. "The hardest thing is ... hearing the explosions and the strikes and we don't know what it is exactly: it could be incoming missiles or SWAT teams de-mining fields so other brigades can get through," Brahmnyk said.

For the electric company crews, it's about getting the job done, "no matter what's happening around us," he said. "We're just here to fix it."

Bangladesh seeks support to implement \$230 bn National Adaptation Plan

IANS ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday urged international partners to support her country's efforts to implement its recently launched National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for 2023-2050, which requires a total of 230 billion US dollars.

Bangladesh needs 230 billion US dollars "for implementing our NAP from both domestic and international resources. Bangladesh continues to seek a 50-50 distribution between adaptation and mitigation from international climate financing," she was quoted

as saying by Bangladesh's official news agency BSS, Xinhua News Agency reported.

She made the remarks from her official residence Ganabhaban when opening via video link the Global Hub on Locally Led Adaptation at Foreign Service Academy here.

She said the Bangladeshi government now spends 6 or 7 per cent of the country's gross domestic product for climate adaptation, adding that the Climate Change Trust Fund launched in 2009 has so far implemented 800 projects for both climate adaptation and mitigation in the South Asian



country.

"Our NAP will complement the work being done under our Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 and Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan. I invite our partners from the international public and private sectors to join us in this effort," she said.

While pledging the Bangladesh government's full support for the Global Hub on Locally Led Adaptation, the prime minister said Bangladesh looked forward to seeing the emergence of the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) Regional Office in Dhaka as a centre of excellence for the region and beyond.

Peru's new President swears in Cabinet

IANS ■ LIMA

Peruvian President Dina Boluarte swore in her cabinet, asking the members to perform their duties "without committing acts of corruption."

Boluarte on Saturday appointed nine men and eight women for 17 ministerial positions in her first Council of Ministers headed by Pedro Angulo Arana as prime minister. The appointment of the heads of the Labor and Employment Promotion, Transport, and Communications ministries is still pending, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Angulo was an anti-corruption prosecutor, who once served as dean of the Lima Bar Association and ran for presi-



dent in 2020.

Boluarte assumed Peru's presidency on Wednesday after her predecessor Pedro Castillo was removed in an impeachment vote by Congress for alleged "permanent moral incapacity."

Boluarte called on legislators to give her a "political

truce" to advance her government, promising that she would undertake a fight against corruption, a "cancer that must be rooted out." Currently, she is engaging in dialogue with various political groups in Congress.

Although Boluarte took office to complete Castillo's mandate extending through July 2026, she said Friday that if the situation warrants it, she would call new general elections.

Boluarte's remarks came as protests broke out along parts of the Pan-American Highway in Peru's Arequipa, Ica and Tacna regions, where residents have put up roadblocks with stones and sticks to express opposition to Castillo's arrest and demand his release.

'I'll kill you all': Man kills 3 in Rome condo board meeting

AP ■ ROME

A man opened fire Sunday during a condominium board meeting in a coffee shop in northern Rome, killing three people and injuring others, authorities and witnesses said.

Rome Mayor Roberto Gualtieri called an emergency security meeting for Monday after what he called "the grave episode of violence that has struck our city." In a tweet, he confirmed three people were killed in the shooting in the working class neighborhood of Fidene. "The shooting occurred in an enclosed outdoor seating area of the bar, called 'Il Posto Giusto,' or 'The Right Place.'"

Shoppers, workers clash over post-pandemic expectations

AP ■ NEW YORK

Before the pandemic, Cheryl Woodard used to take her daughter and her friends to eat at a local IHOP in Laurel, Maryland after their dance practice. But now they hardly go there anymore because it closes too early.

"It is a little frustrating because it's not as convenient as it used to be," said Woodard, 54, who also does most of her shopping online these days instead of in person because of stores limiting their hours.

Before the pandemic, consumers had gotten accustomed to instant gratification: packages and groceries delivered to their doorstep in less than an hour, stores that stayed open around the clock to serve their every need.

But more than two and a half years later in a world yearning for normalcy, many workers are fed up and don't want to go back to the way things were. They are demanding better schedules, and sometimes even quitting their jobs altogether.

As a consequence, many businesses still haven't been able to resume the same hours of operations or services as they continue to grapple with labor shortages. Others have made changes in the name of efficiency. For instance, Walmart, the nation's largest retailer and private employer, announced this past summer it doesn't have any plans for its supercenters to return to its pre-pandemic 24-hour daily operations.

IHOP says a vast majority of its locations have returned to their pre-pandemic hours and some have even expanded them. But others, like the Laurel location that Woodard used to frequent, have indeed cut back.

The changes are creating a disconnect between customers who want to shop and dine like they used to during pre-pandemic times and exhausted employees who no longer want to work those long hours — a push-pull that is only being heightened during the busy holiday shopping season.

"Nobody is winning," said Sadie Cherney, a franchise



owner with three resale Clothes Mentor boutiques in South Carolina. "It is so demoralizing to see that you are falling short on both ends."

Across all industries, the average number of hours worked per week per worker totaled 34.4 hours in November, unchanged from February 2020, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. But for the

retail industry, it slipped 1.6% to 30.2 hours per week during the same period. Hours worked at restaurants were down by similar amount in October, according to the most recent data.

Meanwhile, the National Restaurant Association's most recent monthly survey of 4,200 restaurant operators conducted in early August found that 60% of restaurants reduced hours of

operation on the days they were open, while 38% closed on the days they would normally be open compared to right before the pandemic. And a report published by food and beverage research firm Dataessential showed the average U.S. restaurant as of October was open around six fewer hours per week than in 2019 — a 7.5% decline.

Cherney noted her stores returned to pre-pandemic hours last year but with the worsening labor shortages and higher labor costs, she has struggled to keep those same hours this year.

Her store in Columbia is open one hour later, but she had to offer wage increases to her workers. For her two other locations in Greenville and Spartanburg, hours have been reduced for personal shopping appointments throughout the week, and no longer accept second-hand clothing from shoppers on Sundays.

Cherney noted customers often complain about long waits to process their second-hand offerings, while her staff is

overextended because they're working 20% more than what they would like. The end result: Cash flow and profitability have both taken a hit.

Mani Bhushan, owner of Taco Ocho, a taco restaurant with four locations in the Dallas area, still struggles to hire cooks at his McKinney location, which opened in July 2021. He said many workers can't afford to live in this upscale suburb and have to travel from elsewhere. Several times a week he's had to close the location early — something he has never had to do in the 40 years he has worked in the business.

Even when Bhushan is able to keep his normal hours of operation, he still has to cut off online orders earlier in the day and the service is not up to par with his other locations.

"I am a perfectionist," he said. "I am not happy. But I can't fix it right now."

The worker shortages should remain acute into next year even as several big tech companies have reduced staff or have frozen corporate hiring.



S Korea top Nuclear envoy leaves for Indonesia to meet US, Japanese counterparts

IANS ■ SEOUL

Kim Gun, special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, left for Indonesia on Sunday for meetings on North Korean nuclear issues with his counterparts from the US and Japan.

In Jakarta, Kim is scheduled to meet with Sung Kim, US special representative for North Korea, on Monday, and a meeting with his Japanese counterpart, Takehiro Funakoshi, the

next day, according to officials. The three will also hold a trilateral meeting Tuesday, Yonhap News Agency reported.

It marks the first gathering of the three top nuclear envoys since their last meeting in Tokyo in September. They are expected to share their assessments on regional tensions attributable to North Korea's evolving missile provocations and discuss ways to respond to the country's military provocations through trilateral and global collaboration.

‘Lockerbie bomb suspect in US custody’

AP ■ LONDON

U.S. and Scottish authorities said Sunday that the Libyan man suspected of making the bomb that destroyed a passenger plane over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 is in U.S. custody.

Scotland's Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service said in a statement that "the families of those killed in the Lockerbie bombing have been told that the suspect Abu Agela Mas'ud Kheir Al-Marimi is in U.S. custody."

The U.S. Justice Department confirmed the information, adding that "he is expected to make his initial appearance in the U.S. District Court for the District of



Columbia." It gave no information on how Mas'ud came to be in U.S. custody.

Pan Am flight 103, travel-

ing from London to New York, exploded over Lockerbie on Dec. 21, 1988, killing all 259 people aboard the plane and

another 11 on the ground. It remains the deadliest terror attack on British soil.

The U.S. Justice Department announced new charges against Mas'ud in December 2020, on the 32nd anniversary of the bombing.

"At long last, this man responsible for killing Americans and many others will be subject to justice for his crimes," William Barr, the attorney general at the time, said at a news conference.

In 2001, former Libyan intelligence officer Abdelbaset al-Megrahi was convicted of bombing the flight. He is to date the only person convicted over the attack. He lost one appeal and abandoned another before being freed in 2009 on

compassionate grounds because he was terminally ill with cancer.

He died in Libya in 2012, still protesting his innocence.

A breakthrough in the investigation came when U.S. officials in 2017 received a copy of an interview that Mas'ud, a longtime explosives expert for Libya's intelligence service, had given to Libyan law enforcement in 2012 after being taken into custody following the collapse of the regime of the country's leader, Col. Moammar Gadhafi.

In that interview, U.S. officials said, Mas'ud admitted building the bomb in the Pan Am attack and working with two other conspirators to carry it out. He also said the

operation was ordered by Libyan intelligence and that Gadhafi thanked him and other members of the team after the attack, according to an FBI affidavit filed in the case.

While Mas'ud is now the third Libyan intelligence official charged in the U.S. in connection with the Lockerbie bombing, he would be the first to stand trial in an American courtroom.

The Crown Office in its statement added that "Scottish prosecutors and police, working with U.K. government and U.S. colleagues, will continue to pursue this investigation, with the sole aim of bringing those who acted along with al-Megrahi to justice."

Biden aims to narrow trust gap with US-Africa leaders' summit in DC

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is set to play host to dozens of African leaders in Washington this week as the White House looks to narrow a gaping trust gap with Africa — one that has grown wider over years of frustration about America's commitment to the continent.

In the lead-up to the three-day U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit that begins Tuesday, Biden administration officials played down their increasing concern about the clout of China and Russia in Africa, which is home to more than 1.3 billion people.

Instead, administration officials tried to put the focus on their efforts to improve cooperation with African leaders.

"This summit is an opportunity to deepen the many partnerships we have on the African continent," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said when asked about the shadow that China and Russia cast on the meetings.

"We will focus on our efforts to strengthen these partnerships across a wide range of sectors spanning from businesses to health to peace and security, but our focus will be on Africa next week."

To that end, White House officials said that "major deliverables and initiatives" — diplomatic speak for big announcements — will be peppered throughout the meetings.

The White House previewed one major summit announcement on Friday, saying that Biden would use the gathering to declare his support for adding the African Union as a permanent member of the Group of 20 nations.

The summit will be the biggest international gathering in Washington since before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local officials are warning residents to brace for road blocks and intensified security as 49 invited heads of states and leaders — and Biden — whiz around the city.

Talks are expected to centre on the coronavirus, climate



change, the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Africa, trade and more, according to White House officials.

Biden is set to deliver remarks at a U.S.-Africa business forum, hold small group meetings with leaders, host a leaders' dinner at the White House and take part in other sessions with leaders during the gathering.

Biden has spent much of his first two years in office trying to assuage doubters on the international stage about American leadership after four years of Donald Trump's "America First" foreign policy.

With this summit — a follow-up to the first such gathering held eight years ago by President Barack Obama — Biden has an opportunity to assuage concerns in Africa about whether the U.S. is serious about tending to the relationship.

Biden's effort to draw African nations closer to the U.S. Comes at a complicated moment, as his administration has made plain that it believes that Chinese and Russian activity in Africa is a serious concern to U.S. And African interests.

In its sub-Saharan Africa strategy unveiled in August, the Biden administration warned that China, which has pumped billions into African energy, infrastructure and other projects, sees the region as an arena where Beijing can "challenge the rules-based international order, advance its own narrow commercial and geopolitical interests, undermine transparency and openness."

Huge human toll feared as zero-Covid controls dismantled in China



IAN S ■ LONDON

Beijing's abrupt dismantling of zero-Covid controls has been welcomed by economists, even as the country braces itself for the human impact of letting the disease spread through a vulnerable population, media reports said.

The leadership's abrupt U-turn on how it handles the pandemic appears to have been triggered by protests against controls that began last month, a nationwide show of discontent on a scale China had not seen in decades, The Guardian reported.

Nearly one in five young people in cities are unemployed. Small and medium businesses have been particularly badly hit by the uncertainty, and the

impact of unpredictable and often long-lasting shutdowns of entire cities.

But almost no one has been exempt. The founder of Foxconn, a key Apple supplier, had warned Beijing that controls threatened China's place in the global supply chain, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The IMF's Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, welcomed the "decisive" steps by Chinese authorities in "recalibrating Covid policies", and said they could boost the regional international economy.

"This can be very good for the Chinese people and economy, and also good for Asia and the world economy," she said after a summit in China's eastern Huangshan city.

EU Parliament chief takes action as lobbying scandal simmers

AP ■ BRUSSELS

A vice president of the European Union's parliament was suspended from her duties on Saturday after being caught up in an investigation into influence peddling at the EU assembly allegedly involving officials from Qatar.

Eva Kaili, a 44-year-old Greek former TV news anchor, was suspended by her party in Greece and the EU assembly's Socialists and Democrats group Friday after Belgian police staged 16 raids across Brussels as part of a probe into corruption and money laundering at the parliament.

Four people were detained for questioning, and investigators recovered around 600,000 euros (USD 633,500) in cash and seized computer equipment and mobile telephones. Prosecutors did not identify the four but at least one was an EU lawmaker and one was a former member.

Authorities have not identified the Gulf country suspected of offering cash or gifts to officials at the parliament in exchange for political favours, but several members



have linked the investigation to Qatar.

Parliament President Roberta Metsola "has decided to suspend with immediate effect all powers, duties and tasks that were delegated to Eva Kaili in her capacity as vice president of the European Parliament," Metsola's spokesman said late Saturday.

The decision was taken "in the light of the ongoing judicial investigations by Belgian authorities," he said, without providing further details.

The EU assembly is set to hold its last plenary session of the year in Strasbourg, France, beginning Monday.

The co-president of the Greens group, Philippe Lamberts, called for a parliamentary inquiry and for the issue to be put to debate this week, echoing calls from some other political groups.

The Greens "strongly condemn corruption and bribery, cash and precious gifts cannot draw the political lines in this house," Lamberts said in a statement. He added that his group "will vote against visa facilitation for Qatar in this week's plenary vote."

The EU's executive branch, the European Commission, proposed in April that citizens from Qatar be granted short visa-free stays in the 27-nation bloc provided they have a biometric passport. The legislation has been working its way through the assembly.

Kaili's party in Greece, the Socialist Pasok-Movement for Change, publicly distanced itself from remarks she made in the EU parliament last month praising Qatar, which is currently hosting soccer's gala event, the World Cup.

She said the World Cup is "proof, actually, of how sports diplomacy can achieve a historical transformation of a

country with reforms that inspired the Arab world." Kaili also repeated what she said is an International Labour Organization view that "Qatar is a frontrunner in labor rights." After Friday's raids, Belgian prosecutors said federal judicial police suspect that an undisclosed country in the Gulf region has been trying "to influence the economic and political decisions of the European Parliament."

It said this was allegedly done "by paying large sums of money or offering large gifts to third parties with a significant political and/or strategic position within the European Parliament."

In Italy on Saturday, Article One, a small center-left party, suspended former EU lawmaker Pier-Antonio Panzeri following reports he was caught up in the scandal.

In a statement posted on the party's Facebook page, Article One said it was "disturbed" by the reports but expressed full confidence in Belgian investigators. It added that it "hopes that Panzeri can show he is not involved in something that is completely incompatible with his history and political commitment."

Japanese firm's lander rockets towards moon with UAE Rover

AP ■ CAPE CANAVERAL

A Tokyo company aimed for the moon with its own private lander Sunday, blasting off atop a SpaceX rocket with the United Arab Emirates' first lunar rover and a toylike robot from Japan that's designed to roll around up there in the gray dust.

It will take nearly five months for the lander and its experiments to reach the moon.

The company ispace designed its craft to use minimal fuel, to save money and

leave more room for cargo. So it's taking a slow, low-energy path to the moon, flying 1 million miles (1.6 million kilometers) from Earth before looping back and intersecting with the moon by the end of April.

By contrast, NASA's Orion crew capsule with test dummies took five days to reach the moon last month. The lunar flyby mission ends Sunday with a Pacific splashdown.

The ispace lander will aim for Atlas crater in the north-eastern section of the moon's near side, more than 50 miles (87 kilometers) across and just

over 1 mile (2 kilometers) deep. With its four legs extended, the lander is more than 7 feet (2.3 meters) tall.

With a science satellite already around Mars, the UAE wants to explore the moon, too. Its rover, named Rashid after Dubai's royal family, weighs just 22 pounds (10 kilograms) and will operate on the surface for about 10 days, like everything else on the mission.

In addition, the lander is carrying an orange-sized sphere from the Japanese Space Agency that will transform into a wheeled robot on the



moon. Also flying: a solid state battery from a Japanese-based spark plug company; an Ottawa, Ontario, company's

flight computer with artificial intelligence for identifying geologic features seen by the UAE rover; and 360-degree cameras from a Toronto-area company.

Hitching a ride on the rocket is a small NASA laser experiment that will fly to the moon on its own to hunt for ice in the permanently shadowed craters of the lunar south pole.

The space mission is called Hakuto, Japanese for white rabbit. In Asian folklore, a white rabbit is said to live on the moon. A second lunar landing by the private company is planned for 2024 and a

third in 2025.

Founded in 2010, ispace was among the finalists in the Google Lunar XPRIZE competition requiring a successful landing on the moon by 2018. The lunar rover built by ispace never launched.

Another finalist, an Israeli nonprofit called SpaceIL, managed to reach the moon in 2019. But instead of landing gently, the spacecraft Beresheet slammed into the moon and was destroyed.

With Sunday's predawn launch from the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station,

inspace is now on its way to becoming one of the first private entities to attempt a moon landing. Although not launching until early next year, lunar landers built by Pittsburgh's Astrobotic Technology and Houston's Intuitive Machines may beat ispace to the moon thanks to shorter cruise times.

Only Russia, the U.S. and China have achieved so-called "soft landings" on the moon, beginning with the former Soviet Union's Luna 9 in 1966. And only the U.S. has put astronauts on the lunar surface: 12 men over six landings.

Tensions run high in north Kosovo as Serbs block roads



AP ■ PRISTINA (KOSOVO)

Tensions were high in northern Kosovo on Sunday, with Serbs blocking roads as shots and explosions rang out overnight, Kosovo police and media reported Sunday. No injuries were reported.

The blocking of the roads with heavy vehicles and trucks happened a day after the Serbian president said he would ask the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo to permit the deployment of 1,000 Serb troops in the Serb-populated north of Kosovo, claiming they are being harassed there.

The road blocks, which Serbs say were erected to protest recent arrest of a former Kosovo Serb police officer, came despite the postponement of the Dec. 18 municipal election the Kosovo

Serbs were opposed to.

Serbia's president Aleksandar Vucic said Sunday that his message to the Serbs in Kosovo is that "there is no surrender and there will be no surrender." He claimed the Serbs had been "forced" to erect the road barricades to protect themselves from Kosovo security forces. The European Union rule of law mission, known as EULEX, reported that "a stun grenade was thrown at an EULEX reconnaissance patrol last night," causing no injury or material damage.

EULEX, which has some 134 Polish, Italian and Lithuanian police officers deployed in the north, called on "those responsible to refrain from more provocative actions" and said it urged the Kosovo institutions "to bring the perpe-

trators to justice."

Unidentified masked men were seen on the Serb barricades that were blocking main roads leading to the border with Serbia, as Kosovo authorities closed two border crossings to all traffic and pedestrians.

On Sunday morning, the situation was calm on the barricades, but with an increased presence of Kosovar Albanian police in the areas with a mixed population in the north, and more international police and soldiers elsewhere.

Elsewhere, Serbian officials claimed that heavily armed Kosovo policemen "burst into" premises of a strategic Serb-controlled dam on the artificial Gazivode Lake on the border with Serbia. The report could not be independently verified. The Serb officials asked urgent EU action to "restrain the thugs" who, they alleged, want to trigger another war with Serbia.

Serbia and Kosovo have intensified their war of words in recent days.

Vucic said on Saturday he would formally request permission from the NATO-led KFOR mission in Kosovo to deploy Serbian troops in the northern Kosovo, while conceding the request was unlikely to be granted.

HDB Financial Services LimitedGround Floor, Zenith House, Keshavnagar Khadye Marg, Mahalakshmi, Mumbai - 400034Tel No.: +91 22 49116300

FINAL AUCTION CUM SALE NOTICE FOR GOLD ORNAMENTS

The borrower(s) (whose details are provided in the table herein below), in particular, and the public, in general, are hereby informed that the below mentioned accounts are overdue, and the borrowers/account holders have not responded/complied with the communication, and notice send by HDB Financial Services Limited (the "Company") requesting the borrower to clear his/her/their dues as per the documents in respect of the below mentioned loan signed/accepted by the borrower(s) (such documents, collectively "loan agreement") and therefore defaulted in terms thereof. The Company has in exercise of its rights as a pledgee, decided to enforce the pledge and therefore hold a public auction of the gold ornaments pledged to the company as security for the loan for the purpose of selling the same and realizing/recovering the dues owned by the borrower(s) to the company. The auction will be conducted on **14-12-2022** at the below mentioned local branch of HDB Financial Services Limited from 11.00 am onwards on the date and branches mentioned in the below table:-

Loan No	Customer Name	Date of Loan	Overdue Amount Rs.	Branch Name
24140357	Sudama Shiriram	16/05/2022	11110	Delhi-Bhajanpura
14742828	Vinod Kumar	23/03/2021	20660	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
14429824	Hirdev Kumar	27/02/2021	7435	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
13750043	Munna Kumar	31/12/2020	15824	Delhi-Jagatpuri
16818530	Reena Sachdev	12/08/2021	13080	Delhi-Jagatpuri
20284697	Raj Bahadur	15/12/2021	22259	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
21461283	Hemlata Bansal	29/01/2022	8495	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
21593214	Hemlata Bansal	02/02/2022	6492	Delhi-Kailash Nagar
23935839	Kisore Kumar Sharma	10/05/2022	14015	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
25246981	Yogesh Kumar	24/06/2022	7952	Delhi-Lajpat Nagar
22946476	Abhishek Rajgora	07/04/2022	7438	Delhi-Mahviya Nagar
17917158	Sanjeet Rai	25/09/2021	5640	Delhi-Nai Sadak
22530956	Kamal Garg	25/03/2022	33416	Delhi-Nangloi
18836436	Umesh Khatri	26/10/2021	10629	Delhi-Narela
16214887	Pritam Gupansingh	14/07/2021	15730	Delhi-Patel Nagar
20173228	Ashish A	10/12/2021	2789	Delhi-Rohini
11112291	Jitender Singh	04/03/2020	5140	Delhi-Uttam Nagar
16786099	Sujit Kumar Mishra	10/08/2021	35736	Delhi-Uttam Nagar
20313158	Raj Kumar	15/12/2021	92265	Delhi-Uttam Nagar
23815719	Sunita K	05/05/2022	12970	Delhi-Uttam Nagar

The auction shall be conducted on an **"AS IS WHERE"** and **"AS IS WHAT IT"** basis and the Company is not making and shall not make any representation or warranties as regards the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments. It shall be the sole and absolute responsibility of the potential purchaser to verify, examine and satisfy themselves about the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments prior to placing their bid and for such purpose it shall be open to potential purchasers to examine, at their sole cost and expense, and at the address set out herein above, the gold ornaments whether with or without expert advice 45 minutes prior to the time stipulated for the conduct of the auction. All the bid shall be subjected to such minimum reserve price as the company may deem fit to fix in this regards. The auction process and sale (if any) pursuant to such auction shall be subjected to such further terms and condition as the company may at sole discretion deem fit to impose.

If the borrower(s) mentioned above pays the amount due to the Company in terms of the loan agreement in his individual loan account in full before the auction as mentioned above, the pledged ornaments securing the said loan may be withdrawn from the said auction without further notice. Please note that it is the absolute discretionary power of the undersigned authorized officer of the company, either to postpone or to cancel the auction proceeding without prior notice and without assigning any reason thereof and to reject any or all the bids or offer without assigning any reason for the same.

Place : DELHI
Date : 12-12-2022

Authorised Officer
(HDB Financial Services Ltd)

FORM NO. URC 2

Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Act [Pursuant to section 374 (b) of the Companies Act, 2013 and rule 4 (1) of the Companies (Authorised to Register)Rules, 2014]

1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub section (2) of Section 366 of the companies Act, 2013, an application is proposed to be made after fifteen days hereof but before the expiry of thirty days hereinafter of the Registrar at 4thfloor, IFCI Tower, 61, Nehru Place, New Delhi -110019 that AFI DIGITAL SERVICESLLP, a Limited Liability Partnership may be registered under part I of chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares.

2. The principal objects of the Company are as follows:

I. To Carry on business of Graphic Designing service providers and to promote, form and encourage establish and run retail Graphic Designing business magazines, journals, souvenirs, newsletters, periodicals, bulletins, pamphlets, forms catalogues, diaries, calendars, posters, pictures, stickers, text books, law books, school books, college books, newspapers & other allied publications on any subject whatsoever in print as well as in electronic media and to develop software, cos, cassettes, floppies or any other electors mode, devices, systems and to act as job work, contractor, subcontractor, consultant, date entry operator, page maker, website designer, copyright owner and to deal in all goods, articles and things necessary for the attainment of the above objects. To carry on the Business of Publishers, designers, authors, writer & editors of publication all arieties description, Specifications Applications and uses including books, magazines & journals. souvenirs, newsletters, periodicals, bulletins, text books, school books, college books, newspapers & other allied publications on any subject whatsoever in print, online & are relative activities.

II. To carry on in India or elsewhere the business as printers, publishers, typesetter, DPT operators, proofreaders, binders, cutter, perforators, laminators, designers, authors, writer and editors of publication all varieties, descriptions, specifications, applications & uses including books, novels, magazines, journals, souvenirs, newsletters, periodicals, bulletins, pamphlets, forms catalogues, diaries, calendars, posters, pictures, stickers, text books, law books, school books, college books, newspapers & other allied publications on any subject whatsoever in print as well as in electronic media and to develop software, CDs, cassettes, floppies or any other electors mode, devices, systems and to act as jobwork, contractor, sub-contractor, consultant, date entry operator, page maker, website designer, copyright owner and to deal in all goods, articles and things necessary for the attainment of the above objects.

III. To carry on the business of proprietors or managers of theatres, places and halls, studios and cinematographs, shows and exhibitions and to purchase, hire or otherwise. Acquire any photographic and other apparatus in connection with cinematographic shows and exhibitions.

IV. To apply for Corporate Credit Cards, other Credit Cards, Business Loan, Overdraft, working capital facilities etc.

3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office aB-17 CHANDER VIHAR MANDAWALI DELHI East Delhi 110092.

4. Notice is hereby given that any person objection to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at Central Registration Centre (CRC), Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Plot No. 6,7,8, Sector 5, IMT Manesar, District Gurgaon (Haryana) Pin Code-122050, within twenty one days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the company at its registered office.

DATED this 12 day of December 2022

FOR AFI DIGITAL SERVICES LLP

1.(VJAJI LAXMI SINGH)
Designated Partner
DIN: 07582493

2.(VIKRANT SINGH)
Designated Partner
DIN: 07582493

G20 Finance Track to kickstart from Dec 13

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The G20 Finance Track meetings under India's presidency will start on Tuesday and deliberate on various matters of global relevance, including infrastructure development, sustainable finance, global health, international taxation and financial sector issues.

India assumed the G20 presidency on December 1 from Indonesia. The G20 Leaders' Summit will be held in New Delhi in September 2023.

The first G20 Finance and Central Bank Deputies (FCBD) meeting, jointly hosted by the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), is scheduled to be held during December 13-15 in Bengaluru.

The meeting of the G20 Finance and Central Bank Deputies will be co-chaired by Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth and RBI Deputy Governor Michael D Patra, the finance ministry said in a statement.

Their counterparts from G20 member countries, and from several other nations and

international organisations invited by India, will participate in the meeting.

The G20 Finance Track discusses key issues of relevance for the global economy, encompassing the global economic outlook, the international financial architecture, infrastructure development and financing, sustainable finance, global health, international taxation and financial sector issues, including financial inclusion, it added.

In the Bengaluru meeting, discussions will focus on the agenda for the Finance Track under the Indian G20 Presidency.

This includes reorienting international financial institutions to meet the shared global challenges of the 21st century, financing cities of tomorrow, managing global debt vulnerabilities, advancing financial inclusion and productivity gains, financing for climate action and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a globally coordinated approach to unbacked crypto assets and advancing the international taxation agenda.



On the sidelines of the meeting, it said, a panel discussion will be held on 'Strengthening Multilateral Development Banks to Address Shared Global Challenges of the 21st Century'.

A seminar on the 'Role of Central Banks in Green Financing' will also be held.

In a recorded video message, Seth said, "Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) in his address at the Bali G20 Summit said that the need today is that the benefits of development are universal and all-inclusive. Ministry of Finance has imbibed this idea in the G20 Finance Track agenda."

The Prime Minister has also given us a vision that India

will strive to ensure that the G20 acts as a global "prime mover" to envision new ideas and accelerate collective action over the next one year, Seth added.

The G20 Finance Track, led by finance ministers and central bank governors of G20 countries, focuses on economic and financial issues. It provides an effective forum for global economic discourse and policy coordination.

The First Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting will be held during February 23-25 in Bengaluru.

The Indian G20 Presidency's theme of 'One Earth One Family, One Future' will guide the G20 Finance Track discussions.

RBI shortlists 7 global consultancy firms to use AI, ML to improve regulatory supervision

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank has shortlisted seven global consultancy firms, including Pricewaterhouse Coopers, McKinsey and Boston Consulting Group (India), to use artificial intelligence and machine learning for supervisory functions.

The RBI is looking to extensively use advanced analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning to analyse its huge database and improve regulatory supervision over banks and NBFCs. For this purpose, the central bank plans to hire external experts.

In September this year, the RBI invited expressions of interest (EoI) for engaging consultants for use of advanced analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning for generating supervisory inputs.

Based on the scrutiny/evaluation set out in the EOI document, the central bank has shortlisted seven applicants for participating in the request for proposal process (RFP) for the selection of consultant(s), according to an RBI document.

The seven firms are Accenture Solutions Private Limited; Boston Consulting Group (India) Pvt Ltd; Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP; Ernst and Young LLP; KPMG Assurance and Consulting Services LLP; McKinsey and Company; and Pricewaterhouse Coopers Pvt Ltd.

While the RBI is already using AI and ML in supervisory processes, it now intends to upscale it to ensure that the benefits of advanced analytics can accrue to the Department of Supervision in the central bank.

The Department of Supervision has been developing and using linear and a few machine-learned models for supervisory examinations. The interest now is to explore the data to identify its attributes that can be leveraged to generate new and improved supervisory inputs, said the EoI issued in September.

The supervisory jurisdiction of the RBI extends over banks, urban cooperative banks, NBFCs, payment banks, small finance banks, local area banks, credit information companies and select all Indian financial institu-



tions.

It undertakes supervision of these entities with the objective of assessing their financial soundness, solvency, asset quality, governance framework, liquidity, and operational viability to protect depositors' interests and financial stability.

The RBI undertakes continuous supervision of SEs with the help of on-site inspections and off-site monitoring, the EoI said.

Across the world, regulatory and supervisory authorities are using machine learning techniques (commonly referred to as 'suptech' and

'regtech') for assisting supervisory and regulatory activities, it added.

Most of these techniques are still exploratory, however, they are rapidly gaining popularity and scale.

On the data collection side, AI and ML technologies are used for real-time data reporting, effective data management and dissemination.

For data analytics, these are being used for monitoring supervised firm-specific risks, including liquidity risks, market risks, credit exposures and concentration risks; misconduct analysis; and mis-selling of products.

Srei CoC offers window for resolution applicants to revise bids by Dec 15

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Consolidated Committee of Creditors (CoC) of two debt-ridden Srei companies are asked to submit their revised bids by December 15, a top official said on Sunday.

The CoC, however, remains committed to the January 5 (2023) deadline offered by the adjudicating authority to complete the corporate insolvency resolution process, he said.

The Kolkata-based Srei Infrastructure Finance Ltd (SIFL) and Srei Equipment Finance Ltd (SEFL), which are

undergoing a resolution process in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), have received three bids.

"Intense negotiations are taking place with each of the bidders, and after another meeting slated on December 12, bidders will be offered to submit their revised bids by December 15," a top official involved in the process told PTI.

The CoC will "vote on the resolution plans after the revised bids are submitted and the RBI nod will be taken" before submitting to the NCLT, he said.

"The deadline of January

5 to conclude the resolution process will be met," the official stated.

RBI-appointed Srei administrator Rajneesh Sharma could not be reached for his comment.

The CoC has been holding internal meetings besides deliberating with the three bidders -- Varde Partners and Arena consortium, National Asset Reconstruction Co Ltd and Authum Investment and Infrastructure -- in Mumbai for Srei group's NBFCs.

The consortium of Varde Partners and Arena has submitted a bid value of Rs 14,000 crore, while NARCL sent a resolution plan worth

Rs 13,500 crore, a government official, who attended the meetings, told PTI.

The third bid from Authum Investment and Infrastructure is valued at Rs 7,000 crore, he said.

The value of resolution plans could not be independently verified.

The total value of resolution plans submitted by the applicants involves upfront cash payout, deferred payments through instruments like NCDs and OCDs. The timeline to clear the debt ranges between three and seven years.

Authum's cash payout component was the highest at

Rs 2,800 crore and it proposed to complete the payout of total committed value within 3.5 years. The other two bidders will take 5-7 years to clear the payments, the official said.

In contrary to banks' expectations, NARCL is not able to offer the government guarantee for deferred payment instruments, he said.

"NARCL has stated that government guarantees are applicable only in nomination cases where banks directly transfer an asset to NARCL and not in an asset acquired through a bidding process," the official said.

The three bidders were among 17 final potential res-

olution applicants for the two companies of the Srei group.

Big names, like Capri Global and AM Mining, a subsidiary of ArcelorMittal, were on the final list of potential resolution applicants. However, they did not submit resolution plans and opted out of the race.

After the insolvency petitions filed by the Reserve Bank of India were approved by the Kolkata bench of the National Company Law Tribunal, proceedings against SIFL and its subsidiary SEFL began in October 2021.

The resolution process is scheduled to be completed by January 5, 2023.



Financial creditors have admitted claims totalling around Rs 32,000 crore.

Financial lenders of the two Srei companies include

State Bank of India, Punjab and Sind Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, Union Bank of India, IDBI Bank, UCO Bank, and Indian Overseas Bank.

DGCA issued record 1,081 commercial pilot licences so far this year: Data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aviation regulator DGCA has issued 1,081 commercial pilot licenses in 2022, which is the highest for any year in the last one decade, according to official data.

The record issuance of Commercial Pilot Licenses (CPLs) also comes at a time when the country's civil aviation sector is recovering at a fast pace after being hit by the coronavirus pandemic and the domestic air traffic is inching towards the pre-pandemic level.

A senior official at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) told PTI on Sunday that 1,081 CPLs have been issued in 2022 till December 6 and the number is likely to cross 1,100 by the year-end.

This is also the highest for any year since 2011, as per the data. In 2014, the number of CPLs issued stood at 896 while the count was at 862 in



2021.

In 2015, the CPLs issued declined to 394 and rose to 537 in 2016. Further, it increased to 552 in 2017 and 640 in 2018.

The data showed that in 2019, the number of CPLs touched 744 before declining to 578 in 2020.

The count of CPLs issued stood at 823, 654 and 591 in 2011, 2012 and 2013, respectively.

An individual is eligible to apply for CPL after completing at least 200 hours of flying and

fulfilling other conditions.

Besides, the individual has to clear theory papers and once successful, the CPL is given for a period of five years subject to complying with various requirements.

An increase in the number of Flying Training Organisations (FTOs) and most of them working on two shifts are helping pilot aspirants to clock more flying hours. Also, the license application process is online through the regulator's eGCA platform, the official said.

Tata's Air India puts in place ethics governance structure

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Tata group-owned Air India has put in place an ethics governance structure and is also establishing committees at the apex and regional levels to bolster the ethics culture at the airline, according to an internal document.

The apex ethics committee has been set up at the senior leadership level with Air India Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Campbell Wilson as its head and includes the airline's Chief Ethics Counsellor, Chief Human Resources Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operations Officer as its members.

This committee has the mandate to formalise ethics-related guidelines, approve policies and procedures related to ethics, and will be the final escalation point for the regional ethics committees.

Tata Group, which regained ownership of Air India from the central govern-



ment in January this year, had in September announced a comprehensive transformation plan -- Vihaan.AI -- to put the loss-making airline on the path to sustainable and profitable growth, among others.

On the other hand, the regional committees will be responsible for building a "positive ethics culture" through continuous engagement, communication and ethics training, and will be supported by local ethics counsellors (LEC) and ethics champions in each region, as per the document.

Air India, in the internal

communication, also informed the employees that it has brought in Gurjot Malhi as its Chief Ethics Counsellor (CEC) from Vistara, where he has set up a similar mechanism.

Malhi has been with the Tata group for ten years during which he has served as Advisor to Managing Director at Tata Steel, Advisor to Tata Sons in Bombay House and Advisor to CEO Vistara.

He has set up the structure of the ethics in Vistara and was the CEC at Vistara from 2014, before joining the current position last month, it stated.

Disinformation undermines right to free speech; threat to democracy: MoS IT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Disinformation has the effect to undermine the fundamental right to free speech and is a threat to democracy, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Sunday.

The reaction from the minister comes after the revelation of "Twitter Files", which shows that the microblogging site allegedly manipulated tweets and other information on the platform.

"Disinformation has the effect of undermining our fundamental right to Free speech n also is a threat to Democracy n Open debate. We must regulate n stop disinformation to ensure Safe&Trusted Internet n Democracy," Chandrasekhar tweeted.

The minister had earlier



said the revelations provide more cause to think about elements that the government should include in the proposed Digital India Act, which will replace the IT Act 2000.

He had said that Twitter has weaponised disinformation, which has come to a grinding halt now.

"Disinformation is created n spread to harm people, institutions and interests - ranges from distortions in electoral process, incitements to violence, fuel dangerous conspiracy theories," Chandrasekhar said in a tweet.

Markets to track inflation data, US Fed interest rate decision this week: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The trading activity in the domestic equity market this week will be largely driven by a host of macroeconomic data announcements and the US Fed interest rate decision, analysts said.

Industrial Production data and retail inflation rate are scheduled to be announced on Monday. Besides, wholesale inflation data will be released on Wednesday.

"This week is going to be crucial in terms of global cues, where the US inflation numbers and the outcome of US Fed policy decision will be the most important events for the market.

"On the domestic front, our industrial production and retail inflation numbers will be announced on December 12,

while wholesale inflation numbers will be announced on December 14," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Apart from this, news flows from China, the movement of crude oil prices and the dollar index will be other important factors. Institutional flows also need to be watched, as FIIs have been net sellers for the past week, Meena further said.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) sold equities worth Rs 4,305.97 crore, throughout the week. "The leader of the current bull market, Nifty Bank, continued its strong show despite the hawkish RBI policy, Meena added.

On Friday, Nifty Bank ended 36.60 points or 0.08 per cent higher to settle at 43,633.45.



Last week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised the key interest rate by 35 basis points (bps) in a move to bring down inflation to a tolerable limit.

"The RBI raised policy rates by 35 basis points as expected while remaining cautious and signalling a further rate hike in the upcoming meeting. The policy stance was maintained as 'withdrawal of accommodation' to bring inflation within the target range while sup-

porting growth," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

According to Nair, the GDP forecast for FY23 was brought down from 7.0 per cent to 6.8 per cent, considering the spillover effect of the global economic slowdown. Crude oil prices dropped. However, while easing COVID curbs in China benefited the demand outlook, fresh sanctions on Russian oil further added volatility to global oil markets.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BharatPe's former MD Ashneer Grover, who was recently slapped with a civil suit and criminal charges for cheating and siphoning off funds from the company he co-founded, has advised startup founders not to go by Western concept of arm's length and related party transactions.

In his new book 'Doglapan', Grover says there is nothing wrong in giving spouses a board position as they invest in founders' success and will be a victim of their failure, like no one else.

"Just because your business has capital coming in from the US, you do not have to go by their concept of management - of not involving family in business," he writes.

"To my mind, the concept



of a related party transaction in India is totally irrelevant."

BharatPe, a fintech unicorn, has in recent days taken three legal actions against Grover - filed a civil suit in the Delhi High Court, a criminal complaint with the Economic Offences Wing and filed an arbitration for clawing back his restricted shareholding and founder title over alleged lapses and misdoings during his tenure.

His wife, Madhuri Jain Grover, was head of controls at BharatPe, and is one of the

accused in the civil and criminal cases. Charges include creating fake bills, enlisting fictitious vendors to provide services to the firm, overcharging the firm for recruitment and using the company's funds for personal use.

Jain was fired for alleged misconduct and Grover resigned from the company and its board in March. Grover holds about 8.5 per cent stake in the company. Of this, 1.4 per cent is not vested. BharatPe is seeking up to Rs 88.67 crore in damages.

"If I work with family, I will still give them the same rate as the market and will get the same deliverables. The added advantage that I may get is that a family member may work with me on a lower MOQ (minimum order quantity) or that they may take a credit risk

on me.

"Being the capitalist economy that India is, everything in any case happens at arm's length here - after all, dhandha, dhandha hai aur rishtedari, rishtedari; business and relations can be handled separately with the same individual," he wrote in the book saying there is need to be absolutely unapologetic about working with family.

He says spouses can be given co-founder titles and positions on the board. "If you choose to work with your spouse, there should be no hesitation in designating them as co-founders as well as giving them a seat on the board, by virtue of their capability but also of the fact that they are invested in your success and will be the victims of your failure, like no one else," he wrote.

MBAPPÉ TO FACE GOOD FRIEND HAKIMI IN WORLD CUP SEMIFINAL

AP ■ DOHA, QATAR

Kylian Mbappé is going to meet his good friend Achraf Hakimi again at this World Cup.

Not like the first time in Qatar last week, when the France star went to visit his Paris Saint-Germain teammate at the Morocco team hotel in downtown Doha.

On Wednesday, Mbappé will be marked by Hakimi in a World Cup semifinal — his path to Morocco's well-defended goal down the French left wing blocked by a player he rates highly.

"ACHRAF HAKIMI. BEST RB IN THE WORLD," Mbappé wrote in English on his Twitter account in January, referring to the right back position Hakimi occupies for club and country.

It is a high-level duel as both approach a World Cup summit that would be historic for either team.

Mbappé versus Hakimi — the tournament's top scorer



with five goals in five games against the standout talent in the tournament-best defense that has conceded just once, and it was an own-goal.

It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship when the Moroccan player joined Mbappé at PSG in July 2021

from Inter Milan for a transfer fee reported to be 60 million euros (\$63 million).

Two young men born within several weeks of each other in 1998 — just a few months after France won its first World Cup title — soon got along.

Hakimi has talked of how they share the same tastes in music and video games, and that Mbappé helps his Madrid-born friend learn French.

Hakimi is a devout Muslim and for the Eid Mubarak holiday this year they teamed up for a video shared by their club.

Hakimi guided Mbappé, who has family ties to Morocco's north African neighbor Algeria, through tasting food from the Arab region.

On the field for the French champion, they have a series of rehearsed handshakes and goal celebrations. Playing for PSG gives them many opportunities.

"It's easy to play with a player like him," Hakimi has said of Mbappé. "To give him the ball, knowing that he will make the difference."

Mbappé has been the difference at this World Cup, especially when he score twice in wins over Denmark in the group stage and Poland in the round of 16.

In the quarterfinals on Saturday, Mbappé was kept in check about as much as is possible by England's speedy right back Kyle Walker. He got just one clear shooting chance that went high and wide.

Still, he was involved in the move that led to France's first goal in a 2-1 win and the deci-

sive late winner followed a corner on the left flank that he helped create.

Morocco's defense has stood like an immovable force and all its European opponents so far — Croatia, Belgium, Spain and Portugal — failed to score in four full games plus extra time for the Spanish.

Hakimi has helped limit Morocco's opponents to just 10 goal attempts on target combined, according to FIFA post-game statistics. Canada got an own-goal from defender Nayef Aguerd in a 2-1 win for Morocco. Mbappé, meanwhile, has had 10 shots on target just by himself for a France team whose 11-goal total is the best of the four semifinalists.

At Al Khor Stadium on Wednesday, Mbappé continues pursuing his goal of being the youngest player besides Pelé to have two World Cup titles. France can become the first to retain its title since Pelé and Brazil in 1962.

Mbappé laughs, shows his joy as World Cup history beckons

AP ■ AL KHOR

Kylian Mbappé's immense sense of joy was written all over his face.

"The France forward's mouth opened as wide as could be and his eyes squinted tight in elation after what he had just witnessed at the World Cup.

"France's fragile 2-1 lead in a tough quarterfinal match on Saturday was still intact after England forward Harry Kane sent a penalty kick high over the bar in the 84th minute. The defending champions held on to win 2-1 and make their way back into the semifinals.

"Kane is one of the most reliable penalty takers in world soccer, and his first chance from the spot in the 54th minute had evened a back-and-forth game at 1-1. Missing the second was a surprise to everyone.

"Mbappé knew it and let his glee show, a reaction that some may find disrespectful but can easily be excused given what was at stake.

"Then, when the final whistle blew, Mbappé stood alone in the center circle leaning back with both arms raised.

"At the age of 23, he is only



two games away from winning the World Cup for a second time.

"That is rarified air to breathe. Only the great Pelé's two World Cup wins by the age of 21 — in 1958 and 1962 — compares. 'France, meanwhile, is looking to become the first team since those illustrious Brazil squads from 60 years ago to retain the title.

"Mbappé and France will return to Al Bayt Stadium on Wednesday for a semifinal match against a Morocco team on its own mission. The Moroccans became the first team from Africa and the first from an Arab nation to reach the World Cup semifinals by beating Portugal 1-0.



World Cup exit leaves Southgate considering England position

AP ■ DOHA, QATAR

After a third shot at a major tournament ended in disappointment, Gareth Southgate wants time to consider his future as England coach.

Southgate is under contract until December 2024, but after the 2-1 loss to France in the World Cup quarterfinals on Saturday, he could not guarantee he would stick around until then.

"Whenever I've finished these tournaments I've needed time to make the correct decision because emotionally you go through so many different feelings and the energy that it takes through these tournaments is enormous," Southgate said after the match at Al Bayt Stadium. "I want to make the right decision, whatever that is for the team, for England, the FA. I think it is right to take time to do that."

Southgate's bosses at the English Football Association are certainly delighted with the progress the national team has made since he was hired in 2016.

Back then, England was in crisis after a humiliating loss to Iceland in that year's European Championship. Sam Allardyce took over but lasted just one game and 67 days in charge after being fired by undercover journalists offering advice on how to sidestep an outlabeled player transfer practice and trying to cash in on his job with

speaking engagements.

The FA turned to Southgate and hasn't looked back.

England made it to the semifinals of the World Cup in 2018 and lost on penalties to Italy at Euro 2020.

The quarterfinals exit against France is the earliest Southgate has been knocked out of a tournament.

"They could not have given any more. But, of course, tonight we have come up short. And we felt we could come here to win the tournament," he said Saturday. "Tonight is probably the best, I think, we've played against a major nation across the period I've been in charge. In the end, the scoreline is all that matters, so that's very hard to take."

Southgate was jeered by England fans after a 4-0 loss at home to Hungary in June — its worst home defeat since 1928.

He has also been criticized for being too cautious in the biggest games.

But England dominated possession and chances against defending champions France — and if Harry Kane had converted his 84th minute penalty to tie the game, it could have been a different story.

Kane had already struck once from the spot following Aurelien Tchouameni's opening goal for France. But he fired his next effort over the bar after Olivier Giroud had restored France's lead.

AP ■ DOHA, QATAR

The fortunes of Portugal's national team have been inextricably linked with Cristiano Ronaldo for nearly two decades.

Is a new era upon us? Ronaldo was in tears as he made his way to the locker room following Portugal's 1-0 loss to Morocco in the World Cup quarterfinals on Saturday.

It remains to be seen if that was the last time the world saw Ronaldo on soccer's international stage. If it is, it marks a huge moment for the Portugal team, given Ronaldo is its captain, record scorer and greatest ever player. There's a chance the team might also have a different coach for the first time since 2014 when qualification for the 2024 European Championship begins in March.

EXPECTATION VS. PERFORMANCE

Reaching the quarterfinals was the minimum expected of Portugal considering the depth of talent in its squad. The team sailed through the group phase by winning its opening two games. Coach Fernando Santos rotated most of his starting lineup for the final



group-stage match against South Korea, which won 2-1 on a late goal, and then thrashed Switzerland 6-1 in the round of 16. Despite Morocco's strong defense and status as the surprise of the tournament, Portugal was still

expected to beat the North African nation in the quarterfinals so, in that sense, it is another missed opportunity and probably an overall underperformance by Ronaldo and his team.

WHO'S OUT

The world is waiting to see if the 37-year-old Ronaldo retires from international duty after scoring 118 goals — a record in men's soccer — and making 196 appearances in his 19 years with the national

World Cup mania: 9,000 football-crazy Kolkatans visit Qatar, more to travel ahead of final match

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The euphoria surrounding this year's FIFA World Cup has been "unprecedented" in football-mad Kolkata, with nearly 9,000 fans having already travelled to Qatar to witness the showpiece event and many more slated to arrive in the next few days, officials said.

"People are still making queries regarding ticket and accommodation availability and travel packages for Qatar, days ahead of the semi-finals and the final next week, they said.

"Around 10,000-12,000 football fans have travelled to Qatar from eastern India so far,



including close to 9,000 people from Kolkata. People are still very keen to make it to the semis and the final, and we expect at least another 1,500

Kolkatans to visit the Arab country," Anil Punjabi, eastern region head of Travel Agents' Federation of India (TAFI), told PTI.

"Though the craze for the business end of the world cup has died down to an extent following the exit of giants such as Brazil and Portugal, Argentina's advance to the semi-finals is reason enough for many of Kolkata's football enthusiasts to pack their bags for Qatar.

"It's all about Messi this time as it will be his last world cup. I had made up my mind months ago that if Argentina progresses to the semis, I will head to Qatar. Who knows, I might actually see Messi lifting the coveted trophy, which would be an unreal experience," Subham Mitra, a resident of Lake Gardens, said.

Ecstatic Moroccans celebrate World Cup victory over Portugal

AP ■ MOROCCO

Ecstatic Moroccans poured into the streets of cities across the North African country and far beyond on Saturday, waving flags, honking horns and lighting flares to celebrate the national soccer team's historic victory over Portugal at the World Cup.

Morocco beat the Portuguese 1-0 in Qatar, knocking Cristiano Ronaldo out of the tournament and making the Atlas Lions the first African and first Arab team to reach the World Cup semifinals.

The capital, Rabat, was

bursting with joy while Morocco fans also celebrated in the streets of Doha and in cities across Europe, where many Moroccans live. Other fans from the Middle East and Africa who have adopted the Atlas Lions as their team were also jubilant.

"We were so stressed as if we were on the pitch with the players, but now we want the trophy," said Mohamed Amine, celebrating in Rabat. "The players, this team lifted Morocco's reputation high among the nations of the world."

The victory has Morocco fans full of confidence for the days ahead. The team will face



defending champion France

in the semifinals on Wednesday.

"I am so happy that I don't even know if I can express myself, but if we are here now, I believe that we can make it to the final," Yasmine Benmehredj said during celebrations in the Moroccan capital. "I think we can win this World Cup."

In Qatar, hundreds of elated fans clad in green and red outside Al Thumama Stadium celebrated Morocco's win, chanting, ululating, banging on drums and waving the national flag. Some chanted: "Congratulations to us for this beginning! It will only go on and on!"

"This is unbelievable. It's the first time ever," said Saleh al-Rayes, a 27-year-old fan from Saudi Arabia in Doha.

As an Arab at the first World Cup held in the Middle East, al-Rayes said he feels a sense of inclusion and representation in the world of soccer, a spot that has been dominated by European and South American teams.

"You come in as an underdog and then you win. It's Arab pride," al-Rayes said. "All Arab countries were here in the stadium supporting Morocco."

Palestinians packed cafes and a sporting hall, turned into a free World Cup viewing

venue by Qatar for residents of the impoverished Gaza. Some held posters with Palestinian and Moroccan flags and a slogan that said: "One People, One Country."

Morocco's success has touched Palestinians since the players and many of their supporters expressed solidarity on and off the field during the World Cup. Palestinian flags were regularly featured in groups of Morocco's supporters in Qatar and among fans celebrating in Europe. On Tuesday, some of the team's players unfurled Palestinian flags on the field after they defeated Spain.



England looks to future after latest World Cup heartbreak

AP ■ DOHA, QATAR

It was a new twist on an old story for England. Harry Kane's late penalty flew high over the bar at Al Bayt Stadium Saturday, effectively sealing the national team's World Cup fate. France held out for a 2-1 win that sent the defending champions back to the semifinals and England home.

Penalties have cost the Three Lions time and again at major tournaments — they have lost shootouts on seven occasions at World Cups and European Championships since 1990.

It didn't come down to that against France, but Kane still faced a test of nerve from the spot when standing over the ball in the 84th minute.

The England captain had already scored one penalty to tie Aurelien Tchouameni's opening goal, but couldn't repeat that act after Olivier Giroud put France back in front with what turned out to be the winner.

England's wait for a first trophy since its one and only World Cup win in 1966 goes on.

EXPECTATION VS. PERFORMANCE

A potential quarterfinal match with France always stood out as the moment England's World Cup hopes could end. And that's how it turned out. But that doesn't tell the whole story of a game in which England dominated possession and chances against one of the tournament favorites. If Kane had converted his second penalty, it could have been a different story. It was a performance that exceeded expectations, even if it ended in defeat, and provides encouragement for English fans. England was also the leading scorer in the tournament with 13 goals, which points to a more attacking style than in past years. But after reaching the semifinals in 2018 and the Euro 2020 final, which England lost on penalties to Italy, a quarterfinals exit feels premature.

India hand Australia first loss of 2022 after thrilling super over

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Smriti Mandhana sizzled in regulation time as well as the super over to script a famous win for India against the mighty Australia in a high-scoring second women's T20 International here on Sunday.

Tahlia McGrath (70 not out off 51) and Beth Mooney (82 not out off 54) tore into the Indian bowling attack with their belligerent knocks to power Australia 187 for one after the visitors were asked to bat.

In front of a packed D Y Patil Stadium, India were able to take the match right down to the wire after a whirlwind 76-run opening wicket stand between Mandhana (79 off 49) and Shafali Verma (34 off 23).

India needed 14 off the last over bowled by Megan Schutt and Devika Vaidya managed to find two fours to reach 187 for 5 and tie the game, forcing the game into the Super Over.

The home team put on 20 runs in the super over bowled by Heather Graham, thanks to a six and four from Mandhana



after Richa Ghosh smashed the first ball for a maximum.

Renuka Thakur was able to defend that total under extreme pressure after getting rid of Alyssa Healy, handing Australia their first loss of the year.

The thrilling finish meant Indian women finally ended up

on the right side of the result in a tense finish. It was also the first time that India featured in a game that was stretched to the super over.

With India's win, The five-match series is levelled 1-1.

Earlier in the run chase, Mandhana changed gears after the fall of Shafali who was

caught at extra cover off leg spinner Alana King.

Mandhana then shared a 61-run stand with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur who struggled for 22-ball 21.

Mandhana's off side play was a treat to watch as usual but she got the bulk of the runs over the midwicket region.

She dispatched a full toss from King over deep mid wicket for a maximum before slog-sweeping her for a four to bring her half century. Her sublime knock brought the equation down to 55 runs off the last 30 balls.

After hitting a flat straight six off Sutherland in the 17th over, Mandhana fell to an avoidable shot. When she was executing her strokes in front of the wicket perfectly, she walked across the stumps for a paddle stroke and ended up disturbing her stumps.

Richa Ghosh came and hit a barrage of sixes, three to be precise, to stun the opposition and reduced the equation to a very gettable 18 off 12 balls.

After asking Australia to bat considering the dew factor, Indian bowlers were not able to put any sort of pressure on the rampaging visitors.

McGrath and opener Mooney shared an entertaining 158-run stand off 99 balls for their second successive 100-plus stand. The partnership was highest ever for Australia for any wicket in T20s.

Jonassen ruled out of India tour with hamstring injury



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Australian spinner Jess Jonassen was on Sunday ruled out of the ongoing five-match T20 series against the India women's cricket team due to a hamstring injury.

Jonassen will be replaced by leg-spinner Amanda-Jade Wellington who is expected to reach India by Tuesday. Australia won the series-opener by nine wickets and the second game will be played on Sunday.

Jonassen strained her hamstring while fielding in the first match. "She's since been assessed and it's evident that the timeframes required for a return during this series are too short," Australia team physiotherapist Kate Beerworth told cricket.Com.Au.

"Jess will be unavailable for the remainder of the series and will return to Brisbane to continue her rehab."

Pakistan vs England 2nd test poised for exciting finish

AP ■ MULTAN

Pakistan lost the key wicket of half centurion Imam-ul-Haq late on the third day to give England renewed hope in the second cricket test on Sunday.

Pakistan finished the day on 198-4 and needs a further 157 to deny England a second successive victory in the three-match series.

England, which held a 79-run first innings lead, had set up another imposing target of 355 runs on a deteriorating Multan Cricket Stadium wicket after it was bowled out for 275 in its second innings.

The tourists had already successfully defended 342 runs on a flat wicket in the first test to clinch a 74-run win at Rawalpindi in England's first test in Pakistan for 17 years.

The lefthanded pair of Imam, who made 60, and Saud Shakeel (54 not out) had thwarted England seam and spin for just over 2-1/2 hours and shared a 108-run stand before Imam played a lose drive against Jack Leach and was caught in the slip late in the last session.

The lefthander put his head down in despair before leaving the field as Leach provided the much-needed breakthrough.

Both lefthanded batters showed grit and determination and used their feet well against England's spinners until



Imam's miscue.

England had earlier missed an opportunity to dismiss Imam soon after he completed his half-century. Television replays showed a tiny spike on Imam's bat when he tried to glance Mark Wood down the legside delivery and was well caught by Ollie Pope. However, captain Ben Stokes didn't go for the referral.

James Anderson, Ollie Robinson and Wood had baffled Pakistan with a superb display of seam and swing bowling in the middle session, claiming three wickets for 17 runs before Imam and Shakeel dug in and took Pakistan to

136-3 at tea.

Imam didn't open the innings after feeling discomfort in his right hamstring and went to hospital for MRI scans, but batted without much trouble at No. 5 though Will Jacks had a chance to end his innings but couldn't hold onto a sharp return. Harry Brook also couldn't grab a low one-handed catch at forward short leg when Shakeel was on 4.

Brook had earlier hit his second successive century and made 108 off 149 balls before England was bowled out for 275 to set up another imposing target in the series.

In the absence of Imam,

Olympian and 1970 Asian Games 4x100m relay bronze winner Kenneth Powell is no more

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympian and India's 1970 Asian Games 4x100m relay bronze-winning team member Kenneth Powell died on Sunday in Bengaluru, the Athletics Federation of India said. He was 82.

Powell was one of the top sprinters of the country in the nineteen sixties. He overcame the disappointment of failing to make it to the 1962 Asian Games and played a key role in the Indian 4x100m relay team reaching to the semifinal of the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Similarly, left out of the Asian Games in Bangkok in 1966, he remained motivated and helped India get the 4x100m relay bronze in 1970 in Bangkok.

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) condoled the death of Powell, who is also an Arjuna awardee.

AFI President Adille Sumariwalla said the sport has lost a gentleman sprinter in Powell's passing.

"Indian athletics grew in stature back in the 60s because of the efforts of athletes like Kenny Powell who won 19 titles in sprint events in the National Open Championships and National Inter-State Championships," he said.

Injured Rohit out of first Test against Bangladesh, Easwaran to replace him

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

India captain Rohit Sharma was on Sunday ruled out of the first Test against Bangladesh, starting here on Wednesday, due to a thumb injury.

Rohit had gone back to India after hurting his left thumb while fielding in the second ODI against Bangladesh in Mirpur on December 7. K L Rahul will captain the side in Rohit's absence. Abhimanyu Easwaran has been named as Rohit's replacement.

"India captain Rohit Sharma met with a specialist in Mumbai for his left thumb injury, which he sustained during the 2nd ODI against Bangladesh," the BCCI said in a statement.

"The BCCI Medical Team will take a call on his availability for the second and final Test at a later stage. The All-India Senior Selection Committee has named Abhimanyu Easwaran as his replacement for the first Test."

The second Test begins in Mirpur on December 22 and Rohit will be racing against time to get fit for the match. Easwaran comes into the side after scoring 299 runs in two games for the India 'A' side



currently touring Bangladesh.

Pacer Navdeep Saini and uncapped Saurabh Kumar were named as replacements for injured Mohammad Shami and Ravindra Jadeja.

Left-arm spinner Saurabh was the leading wicket-taker in the A series against Bangladesh with 15 wickets while Saini took six in the two first-class games.

Saini had last played for India in the famous Test in Brisbane in January 2021.

Left-arm pacer Jaydev

Unadkat, who played his only Test 12 years ago, has also been added to the India squad.

India's updated squad for Bangladesh Tests:

KL Rahul (c), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara (vc), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (wk), KS Bharat (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Mohd. Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Navdeep Saini, Saurabh Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat.

Call on Dhawan's ODI future expected after Ishan emerges strong contender

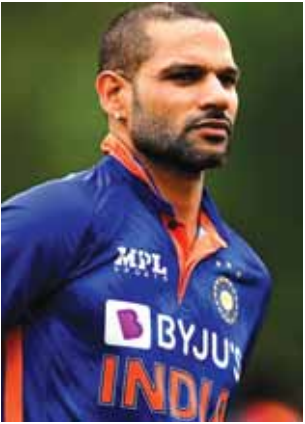
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran opener Shikhar Dhawan's ODI future is likely to be discussed by the new selection committee, which is expected to be formed soon, and a tough call will not be a surprise after Ishan Kishan emerged as a strong option with his scintillating double hundred.

Dhawan has struggled badly in eight out of his last nine ODIs. Also, the Delhi lefthander batted with a dated approach which is proving to be detrimental for the team during the Powerplay overs.

It is not always about intent but also the inability to force the pace with a limited range of strokes to choose from. Shubman Gill or a Kishan are more innovative in this day and age of T20s.

While no date has been given, the BCCI will hold a review meeting of the team's performance and discuss the roadmap with head coach



Dravid and NCA head VVS Laxman on the way ahead.

As it was reported by PTI during the T20 World Cup in Australia, a source confirmed that the process of phasing out the senior players will start from the next year.

"A call on Shikhar's future will only be taken after new selection committee is appointed. But head coach Rahul

Dravid and skipper Rohit Sharma's views can't be ignored," a senior BCCI source privy to developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity. The primary problem with Dhawan has been a sharp decline in his strike-rate from 100 plus till 2019 World Cup to a dismal 75 in 2022.

After Ishan Kishan's double hundred and more importantly, the freshness that he has brought in the approach, will certainly make the team management ponder over the sensitive selection matters.

It is not easy to discard a player who has played 167 ODIs and is currently third highest (6793) in the list of current India run-getters behind Rohit (9454) and Virat Kohli (12471).

There is a school of thought that Dhawan be given at least the last six ODIs in January against Sri Lanka and New Zealand and then take a call before the Australia ODIs at the end of March.

Warner's lifetime leadership ban is fundamentally wrong, says Steve Smith



PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Australia's stand-in skipper Steve Smith has termed David Warner's lifetime leadership ban as "fundamentally wrong" and hopes that the star opener regains his form after a week of "distraction" that saw him giving up on his captaincy ambitions for good.

Warner on Wednesday withdrew the bid to overturn his lifetime captaincy ban, saying the review panel wanted him to go through "public lynching" and he is not prepared to let his family be the "washing machine for cricket's dirty laundry".

Warner and Smith were both handed a year-long ban

after Cameron Bancroft was caught applying sandpaper to the ball during a Test match in South Africa in 2018.

While Smith was banned from holding a leadership position in Australian cricket for two years, Warner was banned for life. Bancroft was banned from captaincy for 12 months.

"From my point of view, banning for life from leadership is just fundamentally wrong," said Smith, who led Australia in the absence of an injured Pat Cummins and guided the team to a 419-run victory against West Indies here.

"David served his time like I did. For us, we know he's a leader around the group, and on and off the field he's doing

a tremendous job.

"It's been a difficult one for him, it's been a difficult week. It has been more of a distraction for Davey, no doubt, going through that himself.

"David has said he's done and dusted and get on with it. He's got our full support. Hopefully he can have a really big series for us against South Africa with the bat."

Warner is enduring a lean patch in the longest format with his last four scores, reading 21 and 28 (second Test in Adelaide) and 5 and 48 (first Test in Perth).

Over the last two years, Warner has averaged just 28.12 without a century. The lefthanded opener is due to play his 100th Test against South Africa in Melbourne at the end of the month but his lack of form has put his place in jeopardy for the upcoming tours of India and England.

"Davey's a once-in-a-generation player, he's arguably the best-ever opener for Australia. The way he's able to put pressure on bowlers from the outset helps everyone down the order as well," Smith said.

"He's been an incredible player for a long period of time, his record suggest that. There's no reason why he can't have a big series for us coming this week as well. He's batting nicely.

Australia sweeps West Indies test series with 419-run win

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Australia completed a series sweep with a lopsided 419-run victory Sunday in the day-night test at the Adelaide Oval, with pace bowlers Mitchell Starc, Scott Boland and Michael Neser snaring three wickets apiece as the West Indies were bundled out for 77 chasing an unlikely 497 to win.

West Indies resumed Day 4 at 38-4 with Devon Thomas and Jason Holder each on 8, still needing 459 for an unlikely win with six wickets in hand and six sessions remaining.

It was all over in the opening session, with the tourists losing six wickets for 39 runs. Australia won the first test in Perth by 164 runs and was even more convincing in the second test at the Adelaide Oval, where it remains unbeaten in day-night tests.

The Australians will play South Africa in a three-test series starting next Saturday at the Gabba in Brisbane.

The action was all one-sided on Sunday, with West Indies falling to their worst loss, in terms of runs, to Australia.

The West Indies had only one scoring shot before Starc got an edge behind to end the 21-run fifth-wicket partnership by having Thomas (12) caught behind on the last ball of his fourth over.

The veteran left-arm pace-



man completed another maiden over next and struck again with the first ball of the following over to bowl former skipper Jason Holder (11) with a delivery that swung late and took out off stump as the West Indies slumped to 49-6.

Neser and wicketkeeper Alex Carey combined to take two wickets in an over as the West Indies fell to 76-8.

Carey stood up at the stumps and gloved a deflected, juggling catch to remove Roston Chase (13) on the first ball of the over and was up again to catch Joshua Da Silva's (15) thin edge on the last ball of the over.

Nathan Lyon bowled Alzarri Joseph for a second-ball

duck to collect his 450th career test wicket before Neser and Carey combined again to remove No. 11 Marquino Mindley. It was Carey's sixth catch of the innings.

"A disappointing second game for sure," West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite said. "We thought in the first game we showed some fight ... But very disappointing, we didn't see the fight here at all."

Brathwaite said the West Indies had the talent to challenge top-ranked Australia, but needed to learn from the heavy loss.

"It's for us to believe in ourselves and learn from all the experiences, all the challenges you go through," he said.

"That is a key to going forward and getting better consistently as a test team. A lot of the guys, this was their first time to Australia so the experience would help."

The West Indies hasn't had a test win over Australia since 2003 and hasn't won a test series against the Australians since 1992-93.

At Adelaide, the Australians dominated immediately after stand-in captain Steve Smith won the toss, with Travis Head (175) and Marnus Labuschagne (163) posting big hundreds to help the home team to 511-7 against an injury-depleted West Indies bowling attack before declaring on the second day.