

OPINION 6
WHAT THE TALIBAN
FLOGGINGS FORETELL

WORLD 8
N KOREA FIRES 2 BALLISTIC MISSILES
CAPABLE OF REACHING JAPAN

MONEY 10
GROSS DIRECT TAX MOP-UP GROWS
26% TO ₹13.63 L CR

NEW DELHI, MONDAY DECEMBER 19, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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BANGLADESH
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Argentina lift World Cup 2022 in nail biting finish

Messi finally won the biggest prize in soccer as Argentina beat France 4-2 in penalty shootout despite Mbappé scoring first hat trick in a final in 56 yrs

AP ■ LUSAIL
Lionel Messi's once-in-a-generation career is complete. The Argentina superstar is finally a World Cup champion. Messi scored two goals and then another in a shootout as Argentina beat France 4-2 on penalties on Sunday to claim a third World Cup title despite Kylian Mbappé scoring the first hat trick in a final in 56 years. Now there's no debate. Messi is definitively in the pantheon of soccer's greatest ever players, alongside Pelé - a record three-time World Cup champion from Brazil - and Diego Maradona, the late Argentine great with whom Messi was so often compared. Messi has achieved what Maradona did in

1986, dominate a World Cup for Argentina. Messi put Argentina ahead from the penalty spot and played a part in Angel Di Maria's goal that made it 2-0 after 36 minutes. Mbappé scored two goals in a 97-second span to take the game to extra time, and then Messi tapped in his second goal in the 109th minute. But there was still time for another penalty from Mbappé to take the thrilling game to a shootout. Gonzalo Montiel scored the clinching penalty kick after Kingsley Coman had an attempt saved by Emi Martínez and Aurelien Tchouameni missed for France. Soon after the well-fought historic win, Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Argentina on winning the

World Cup and said the final will be remembered as one of the most thrilling football matches. Millions of Indian fans of Argentina and Messi rejoice in the magnificent victory, he said. Modi tweeted, "This will be remembered as one of the most thrilling Football matches! Congrats to Argentina on becoming FIFA World Cup Champions! They've played brilliantly through the tournament. Millions of Indian fans of Argentina and Messi rejoice in the magnificent victory!" Argentina won the World Cup by beating France 4-2 in a penalty shootout in the final and the World Cup champions will earn \$42 million in prize money for their soccer federation. The

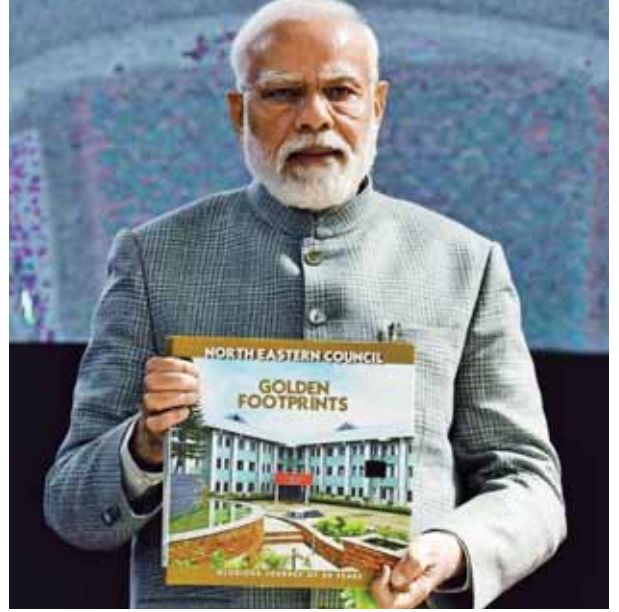
losing team France will get \$30 million from a FIFA prize fund of \$440 million. When France won the World Cup in 2018, the country's federation got \$38 million from FIFA's \$400 million prize fund. Not all the money goes to players, but they are expected to get a good chunk of it. France players such as Kylian Mbappé are in line to be paid a bonus of \$586,000 by their federation for winning the final, French sports daily L'Equipe reported. Every national soccer federation gets at least \$9 million in prize money for playing at this year's World Cup, plus \$1.5 million for each toward costs of preparing for the tournament. Third-place team Croatia earned \$27 million.



Argentina celebrate after defeating France in a well-fought match and lifting the World Cup at the Lusail Stadium in Lusail, Qatar, on Sunday. AP/PTI

PM kicks off ₹2K Cr projects in Meghalaya

Ahead of polls Modi says, Centre has shown 'Red Card' to all obstacles in North East's development



Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveils a coffee table book 'Golden Footprints' encapsulating 50 years of the glorious journey of the North Eastern Council. PNS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Ahead of Meghalaya Assembly polls four months from now, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated multiple projects worth over ₹2,450 crore in Shillong on Sunday. Modi regretted that "due to the fear of benefiting the enemy", border areas previously did not witness the "spread of connectivity" in the region. The Prime Minister said that the Government has shown the 'Red Card' to all the obstacles that come in the way

of the development of North East. "Be it corruption, discrimination, nepotism, violence or vote-bank politics to disrupt the development in the region, we are working with dedication and honesty to uproot all these evils", he said. Modi, who also laid the foundation of a slew of projects in the North-eastern State attended the meeting of the North Eastern Council (NEC) at the State Convention Centre in Shillong and took part in its golden jubilee celebrations. He also unveiled a pictorial document 'Golden Footprints' encapsulating 50 years of glorious journey of the NEC. The documentation was conceived by the NEC and brought out by CMYK, the publisher of *The Pioneer*. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had, among others, accompanied Modi on the trip. The projects that Modi

inaugurated include 320 completed and 890 under-construction 4G mobile towers, the new campus of IIM-Shillong at Umsawli, the Shillong-Diengpasoh Road which will provide better connectivity to the new Shillong satellite township, and four other roads projects across Meghalaya, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh. Modi also inaugurated a Spawn Laboratory at the Mushroom Development Centre and Integrated Beekeeping Development Centre in Meghalaya and 21 Hindi libraries in Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, and Assam. He also laid the foundation stone of six road projects across Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura and laid the foundation stone of the Integrated Hospitality and Convention Centre at Tura and Shillong Technology Park Phase-II. **Contd on Page 2**

Kangana seeks permission to shoot her film 'Emergency' in Parliament

Till now there is no precedent of nod to private parties to do filming inside Parl complex



PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut has sought permission from the Lok Sabha Secretariat for shooting her forthcoming film 'Emergency' inside Parliament premises. Sources said as of now she cannot be granted permission for shooting within the Parliament complex, but next year when the system shifts to the new Parliament — which is now under completion — then

the older one can be used for shooting. In her letter to the Lok Sabha Secretariat, Ranaut has requested that she be allowed to shoot the film based on the Emergency inside the Parliament premises. "Normally, private entities are not granted permission for shooting or doing videography inside the Parliament premises. There is no precedent of permission being given to a private party for shooting inside

Parliament for private work," sources said. Shooting for 'Emergency' commenced in June this year. The film is directed, produced and written by Ranaut. She is also playing the role of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who imposed the Emergency in the country in 1975, in the movie. 'Emergency' is billed as the story of a watershed moment in the political history of India. "It reflects one of the most important periods in Indian political history which changed the way we view power and that's why I decided to tell this story," Ranaut had said in a statement. She had said she was fascinated by the power dynamics that came into play at the time.

Kamal to join Rahul in Delhi leg of Bharat Yatra

Journey will show direction I am taking in politics: Actor



PNS ■ NEW DELHI/CHENNAI
Actor-turned-politician and founder of the Makkal Needhi Maiam political outfit Kamal Haasan will join the Bharat Jodo Yatra spearheaded by former Congress president Rahul Gandhi. Haasan is scheduled to join Rahul when the Bharat Jodo Yatra enters Delhi on December 24 after completing its Rajasthan leg. Haasan accepted the invitation of the Gandhian scion who had written a letter asking him to walk with him in Delhi. Sharing his plan with the

media, Haasan said his participation in the Yatra will indicate where his sympathies lie in politics. "The journey will indicate the direction I am taking (in politics)...," he said after a meeting of the party's office-bearers which also discussed its strategy to fight the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Haasan is the latest participant in the 3,500-km-long Kanyakumari to Kashmir padyatra now moving in Rajasthan where it completed its 100th day

on Friday. Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, actors Sushant Singh, Swara Bhaskar, filmmaker Anand Patwardhan, several civil society groups and eminent politicians from various parties have been part of the Yatra which has crossed many States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Haasan said a number of decisions were taken regarding the preparations for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in 2024. "We are expecting at least 5000 party cadres to participate in the Yatra along with our party leader," an office bearer of the party said. Haasan has urged the party's office-bearers to organise one major public event every month until the Lok Sabha elections and regular party events at the district level.

'Modi rewarding China, not punishing it'

Kejriwal slams high volume of imports from country attacking India



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Taking a dig at the Centre after Indian and Chinese troops clashed at the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh, AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday asked why the Modi Government is "rewarding" Beijing by allowing high volumes of imports from the country when that country is attacking India. The AAP convener also called for a boycott of Chinese goods.

Speaking at the National Council Meeting, Kejriwal lashed out at the Modi Government over its stand on China for continuing trade, saying while Chinese aggression is increasing at the border, the BJP-led Centre says "everything is alright". He asked the Centre to stand firm to show "some courage and respect" for the country's soldiers.

"Instead of punishing China, the Modi Government is rewarding Beijing by allowing high volumes of imports from the country even though many Indian soldiers put their lives on the line while fighting Chinese troops," he said. The AAP's National Council meeting was held on Sunday in the national Capital after the Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and MCD elections, attended by all elected representatives of the AAP including Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. "I appeal to everyone to stop buying Chinese goods. I also want to appeal to the Centre to not bow down before China. They say Chinese products are cheap. "We do not want Chinese products even if they are cheap. We are ready to buy made-in-India products even if it costs us double," Kejriwal said.

"This is a very important issue which is causing pain to every person in the country for the last few days. "For the last few years, China has been carrying out incursions. Soldiers of our country firmly fight with them and even sacrifice their lives in the line of duty. Yet, for the past few years, we keep hearing about China entering our territory," Kejriwal claimed. He said despite all this, India is increasing its trade with China. "We learn through social media that China has occupied our territories, but the Central Government is rewarding China. We are increasing our imports from China," Kejriwal said. "Don't you have any respect for our soldiers? Show some courage. China will come to its senses if India stops imports," Kejriwal said. **Continued on Page 2**

CAPSULE

PRACHANDA MEETS DEUBA, EYE ON PM POST
Kathmandu: Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', the chairman of the CPN-Maoist Centre, has met Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and reportedly expressed his desire to become the country's new premier, as the two leaders discussed how to take the ruling coalition forward and form the next Government.

IPOs' FUND MOBILISATION HALVES TO ₹57 K CR
New Delhi: Meltdown in shares of Dalal Street debutants and volatility triggered by geopolitical tensions soured the sentiments for the primary markets, with fund mobilisation through IPOs halving to nearly ₹57,000 crore in 2022 and the New Year is expected to be even quieter. The overall collection would have been much lower had it not been for the ₹20,557-crore LIC public offer.

J'khand man chops up wife; arrested

PTI ■ SAHIBGANJ (JHARKHAND)
A man was on Sunday arrested here after his wife was found chopped into pieces, with body parts dumped in different areas of the district, a police officer said on Sunday. The case, similar to the Shradha Walkar murder case in Delhi, has left the residents in shock, he said. The victim, a 22-year-old woman, was the second wife of 28-year-old Dildar Ansari, the officer said. The crime came to light when residents spotted dogs dragging the victim's body parts, in Boria area of the district, and called the police. Sahibganj Superintendent of Police, Anuranjan Kispotta, said 18 pieces of her body had been recovered so far. "The accused committed

the crime with family members, who were yet to be arrested," the SP said. Earlier, Jagannath Pan, the officer-in-charge of Boro Police Station, said, "On inspection, it was found that the parts were of a 22-year-old woman, a resident of Donda Pahar in Boria area. Residents of the area were shocked by the incident." Sub-Divisional Police Officer (Sahibganj) Rajendra Kumar Dubey said some of the body parts of the victim were found in an abandoned house in the district. After an initial probe, Ansari was arrested in connection with the murder, Dubey said, without divulging further details. Senior police officers are in the locality looking into the matter, the SDPO said.

US, Europe's woes hit Tirupur's pockets

Knitwear hub shivers as orders for clothes shrink



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ TIRUPUR (TAMIL NADU)
A sense of despondency pervades nearly eight lakh households in Tamil Nadu as the economies of Europe and the US have taken a tailspin. Tirupur, one of the twin engines (the other being Coimbatore) of Tamil Nadu's economy has borne the brunt as clients in Europe and the US have cancelled their orders for non-formal wear in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war. Tirupur was hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic during 2019-21 and was on the path of recovery when artillery shots fired in Ukraine shook this industrial township in faraway India. "Tirupur is the knitwear capital of India as it produces 55 per cent of the ready-to-wear outfits manufactured in the country. The district, which has more than 1,200 knitwear factories accounts for 13 per cent of the exports in this sector," said S Saktivel, executive secretary of Tirupur Exporters Association. With bated breath, Saktivel awaits word from his foreign customers for orders to meet the Christmas and Thanksgiving sales. "The spending power of the developed countries has eroded because of the pandemic and the war. Food, power, and equal monthly installments are

the top priorities of the people in these countries while clothing bills have taken a hit. It is no more a priority as it used to be," explained Saktivel. The demand for new clothes in western nations pick up between October-January, J Milton, an entrepreneur and one of the lead exporters in Tirupur says he has not come across such a decline in demand during the last 25 years. "Customers in Europe used to buy clothes which they wear till the fifth washing. After the fifth washing, they dump the clothes and shop for new ones. Not anymore. They want clothes that last for 30 washes. This is because their purchasing power has gone down," said Milton. Every world cup football tournament in the past saw participants and fans wearing Tirupur-made jerseys. **Continued on Page 2**



Sargam Koushal was named Mrs World 2022, besting contestants from 63 countries to bring the title back to India after 21 years. PTI

Bishnoi gang shooter held: Police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Sunday claimed to have arrested a suspected shooter of the Lawrence Bishnoi-Kala Jathedi gang from the Najafgarh-Kapashera road.



On Saturday, information was received that a shooter of the gang, named in several cases in Delhi and Haryana, would come to the Najafgarh area for extorting money from a businessman, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwah said.

Later, police in a raid arrested Arun Rana alias Dhullu after a scuffle from the Najafgarh-Kapashera main road, opposite Chopra Farms in Bannoli, along with a pistol and five cartridges, he said, adding that Rana is a resident of Gurugram in Haryana.

Rana along with Naresh Sethi and Sachin Deshwal alias Bhanja was part of a plan to help their gang's leader Sandeep Jhanjharia alias Kala Jathedi escape from the Haryana Police's custody on February 1, 2020, police said.

They said according to the

plan, first, Sethi escaped from the custody of the Haryana Police on December 30, 2019 from the Safdarjung Hospital. Thereafter, they purchased over 20 pistols, a pipe gun and three vehicles for Jathedi escape, police said. On February 1, 2020, Deshwal and Sethi got information from Bhandis Jail in Gurgaon that Jathedi will be taken to a Faridabad court along with four other criminals, they said.

They deployed their associates in the court to keep a tab on Jathedi's movement. When the police van carrying him left the court for Bhandis jail, Sethi, along with his 11 associates, positioned themselves on the Faridabad-Gurugram road near Gawal Pahari Hanuman Temple in Faridabad in three vehicles, police said.

fund the gang, they said. In February and March 2022, jailed gangster Deshwal directed Rana and Prakash to expand gang's activities in Delhi-NCR, police said.

They used to share details and mobilephone numbers of businessmen of Delhi-NCR with Deshwal and as per his directions, targeted and extorted money from them, police said. In March, they provided information about several businessmen, including that of a realtor from Mohan Garden in Delhi's Uttam Nagar, to Deshwal, they said.

Two shooters from Rajasthan and three from Delhi and Haryana were arranged to threaten the Uttam Nagar-based realtor, police said.

On March 30, these shooters fired at the realtor at his office in the Mohan Garden area, injuring him, they said, adding that as per Deshwal's orders, the shooters were harboured by Rana in Bajghera in Gurugram.

Prakash, Rana and others, on his direction, also collected "protection money" from businessmen in Delhi-NCR, a source in the police said.

TMC delegation meets families of stampede victims in Asansol

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A five-member TMC delegation on Sunday met the families of those killed in the stampede in Bengal's Asansol, and assured all possible assistance to them.

The delegation, led by state industry minister Shashi Panja, also extended financial help to the families.

Six people have been arrested for their alleged role in triggering a stampede on Wednesday during a blanket distribution programme of the BJP, which left two women and a 14-year-old girl dead and five injured.

Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, who had also attended the religious event, left before the blanket distribution initiative began.

The police had said that no permission was given for the blanket distribution programme.

The Mamata Banerjee government had earlier announced Rs 2 lakh as compensation for

each of the families of the deceased, and Rs 50,000 for the injured.

Panja, during the visit, blamed local BJP leaders, including former Asansol mayor Jitendra Tewary and his councillor wife Chaitali, for the tragedy, stating that "they had distributed tokens for blankets among 5,000 people but the venue had space to accommodate just 500 people".

She flayed Adhikari for attending a religious event.

"BJP leaders, in a bid to woo people and get votes, organised a programme with minimum concern for safety and security of human lives. Can they bring back the 14-year-old girl, and two other women whose deaths left their families shattered," she said.

The TMC team, also comprising ministers Babul Supriyo, Partha Bhowmik and Malay Ghatak, along with TMC state youth wing president Saayoni Ghosh, were seen consoling the relatives of the deceased.

IN-BRIEF

BAIL TO MLA WHO THREATENED TO BLOW UP PARL

New Delhi: A Delhi court has granted bail to former Madhya Pradesh MLA Kishore Samrite who was arrested for allegedly threatening to blow up Parliament over his "unfulfilled demands". Special Judge Vikas Dhull granted the relief to the accused noting that the threat to blow off Parliament did not result in any kind of explosion or loss of life or property and that the investigation was already complete in the case. A parcel containing a suspicious item related to explosives, besides an Indian flag and a copy of the Constitution of India was received through speed post at the Parliament House on September 16, 2022.

AMITY VARSITY ORGANISING 1ST INT'L FILM FEST

New Delhi: Amity School of Communication (ASCO) and Amity School of Film & Drama (ASFD), Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Noida Campus, in collaboration with Vignyan Prasar, are organizing the First International Film Festival - 2022, "The Promethean Space", to celebrate the art of filmmaking with special screening of the selected movies, documentaries and live sessions with renowned filmmakers and critics. Out of the total 200 movies received, around 30 movies from various countries including Spain, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, France, Italy, Egypt, Myanmar, Kuwait, Switzerland, Andorra, Netherlands, and Syria, have been showcased. A short film comprising of congratulatory messages and best wishes by eminent personalities including renowned filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri, critically acclaimed Film Actor Rajesh Tailang, Ashish Kundra, IAS, Principal Secretary, Naveen Kumar (IAS), Special Secretary Health (Govt. of Andhra Pradesh) and renowned film maker Madhur Bhandarkar, amongst others, was also screened during the Inaugural Programme.

CITY'S AIR QUALITY 'VERY POOR'; MIN TEMP 6.2

New Delhi: Delhi's air quality was recorded in the "very poor" category on Sunday and the minimum temperature settled at 6.2 degrees Celsius, two notches below the season's average. The relative humidity oscillated between 87 per cent and 63 per cent, the meteorological department said. Meanwhile, the maximum temperature was recorded at 23.7 degree Celsius, one notch above the season's average, the IMD said.

Yogi Govt inks memorandum with US varsity to develop knowledge smart city

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Team Yogi, which has succeeded in garnering foreign investment for the State through roadshows overseas, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Austin University in San Francisco, USA, to build a Knowledge Smart City at a cost of \$42 billion (about ₹35,000 crore).

To be built on 5,000 acres of land, the Knowledge Smart City will include the best universities of the world. Besides, Star Consortium will provide data centre and logistics services in the State whereas SLG will build a Capital Data Centre. With these investment proposals and MoUs, thousands of employment opportunities will be available to the people of the state.

It is notable that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has set a target of attracting investments of ₹10 lakh crore through the Global Investors'

Summit to be held in Lucknow between February 10 and 12. To fulfill this goal, Yogi has sent eight teams of ministers and officials to 18 countries to attract investment through roadshows and trade shows.

The US-based Saloni Heart Foundation has also signed a MoU in the presence of Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna and Additional Chief Secretary, (Infrastructure and Industrial Development) Arvind Kumar in San Francisco, USA.

Informing about the project, Ashraf Ali Mustafa, president of Austin University, said that the best universities would engage in this project.

This project is expected to completely change the picture of higher education in India and elsewhere.

At the same time, three MoUs were also signed with Falcon X CEO Murali Chirala, which includes establishing a centre in Noida. Along with

this, two investments of ₹20 crore each will be made in Uttar Pradesh.

FalconX is a fintech start-up company. Its entrepreneurs have shown interest in setting up incubators and accelerators units under Invest UP.

The delegation met members of the global entrepreneurship organisation TiE and Indians who contributed to the creation of Silicon Valley in San Francisco. The delegation appealed to them to make Silicon Valley in UP so that Indians could also take advantage of it.

On the other hand, during the roadshow in Japan, Yukinori Kobe, director of Seiko Advance Limited, signed an MoU worth ₹850 crore with the Uttar Pradesh Government to set up a manufacturing unit in Gautam Buddha Nagar. Through this MoU, more than 200 employment opportunities will be created for the people of the State.

Book on Malegaon blast accused Purohit launched amid protests in Maha

PTI ■ PUNE

A book on Malegaon blast accused Lieutenant Colonel Prasad Purohit was launched here on Sunday amid protests from some groups who claimed it was inappropriate to hold such an event when the trial in the case was underway.

The launch of 'Lt Colonel Purohit - The Man Betrayed' written by Smita Mishra took place in SP College in the presence of retired Indian Police Service officer Jayant Umranikar, with the programme being hosted by defence expert and television personality Major Gaurav Arya (retired).

Meanwhile, some local outfits, including the Bhimarmy Bahujan Ekta Mission and the Mulnivasi Muslim Manch, staged protests during the day after their plea to SP College authorities to cancel the book launch event



did not elicit a response.

"It is inappropriate to hold such an event to launch a book such as this when the trial in the Malegaon blast case is underway. Our protest is against Purohit," Mulnivasi Muslim Manch president Anjum Inamdar said.

Six people were killed and more than 100 injured after a bomb placed on a motorcycle went off near a mosque in Malegaon in north Maharashtra on September 29, 2008. Among the seven people who are facing trial under Indian Penal Code and stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) is Lt Colonel Prasad Purohit. He is currently out on bail.

Nine Rohingyas held in Tripura for illegally entering India: NFR

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

At least nine suspected Rohingyas from Bangladesh were apprehended from Tripura for illegally entering India, Northeast Frontier Railway said on Sunday.

The nine people, including five women, were apprehended during a special checking at Agartala railway station, NFR Chief Public Relations Officer Sabyasachi De said in a statement.

"On the incident day, RPF team of Agartala jointly with GRP Agartala conducted a special check against illegal migrants in all the incoming and outgoing trains at Agartala railway station. While checking they detected the nine Bangladeshis," the statement said.

Those people apprehended



on December 15 could not produce any valid documents during interrogation and later confessed that they were from Bangladesh and were of Myanmar origin.

"Later, all the nine Bangladeshi Rohingyas were apprehended and brought to RPF Post and handed over to Officer In-charge of Government Railway Police in Agartala for further legal action," De said in the statement.

Naxalite with ₹12 lakh bounty killed in police encounter in MP

PTI ■ BALAGHAT

A Naxalite carrying a reward of Rs 12 lakh on his head and wanted in at least three states was killed on Sunday in an encounter with police in the forests of Balaghat district in Madhya Pradesh, an official said.

The skirmish broke out between Naxalites and personnel of Hawk Force and the police conducting a search operation in Harratola forest under the Roopnar police station limits in the morning on a tip-off about the presence of Naxalites, said Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sanjay Singh.

He said the Naxalites were asked to surrender but they opened fire, which was returned. The slain Naxalite was identified as Rupesh aka Hoonga, a member of Bhoramdev Dalam. He was carrying a reward of ₹12 lakh on his head and wanted by the police in Maharashtra.

'Modi rewarding China, not...'

From page 1

Giving details, the Delhi Chief Minister said in 2020-21, 65 billion dollars worth of imports were made from China and in 2021-22 India imported goods worth 95 billion dollars from China. "The day we stop 95 billion dollars import, China will learn a lesson," he said.

"...what is the helplessness of the Centre and the BJP? Why are they doing this?" Things like toys, slippers, and clothes are imported from China. We can also manufacture these items in our country. The Centre is helpless. We do not need cheap Chinese goods. We are ready to pay a premium price for such products if they are made in India," he added.

Kejriwal also hit out at the Central Government over rising inflation and unemployment, accusing it of having no intention to bring relief to the masses.

Citing a report prepared by the Central Government,

Kejriwal said the national inflation rate has hit 7.4 per cent but the inflation rate in Delhi is 4 per cent. "It is because many things are free in the Capital. UP, MP and Gujarat have 8 per cent inflation. The inflation can be tamed if AAP is running the Government," said Kejriwal. "People fed up with rising inflation, unemployment under the BJP Government at the Centre," he added.

Hitting out at the Government at the Centre, Kejriwal claimed that 12.5 lakh high net-worth individuals have left the country in the past five years because they were not provided with a conducive business environment by the central government.

He further said that those who want to work with honesty are troubled by the center and sending ED and CBI after them.

He claimed that the AAP is the vehicle to bring change and make India a nation where nobody fights over religion and caste.



Bar-headed geese take flight at the Gharana wetland during sunset near the India-Pakistan international border at Ranbir Singh Pura, in Jammu on Sunday

PM kicks...

From Page 1

"The previous Government had a 'divide' approach for the North East but our Government has come up with 'divine' intentions," said the Prime Minister addressing the gathering. He said under the vibrant village scheme border villages were being provided with better facilities.

Modi lamented that due to the fear of benefiting the enemy, the border areas do not witness the spread of connectivity.

"Today we are boldly building new roads, new tunnels, new bridges, new railway

lines, and airstrips on the border. Desolated border villages are being turned vibrant. The speed needed for our cities is needed for our border too," he said.

He pointed out that even though such evils are deeply rooted, all have to work towards eliminating each one of them. He further added that the efforts of the government are showing positive results.

Modi said against the policies of previous regimes, "different communities or different regions, we are removing all kinds of divisions. Today, in the North East, we are laying emphasis on building corridors

of development, not borders of disputes" he said.

The Prime Minister observed that in the last 8 years, many organisations have shunned the path of violence and have taken refuge in permanent peace.

Speaking about the needlessness for AFSPA in the North East, the Prime Minister remarked that the conditions are constantly improving with the help of the state governments while boundary disputes between the states which were going on for decades are being resolved, he said.

The Prime Minister drew everyone's attention to the coincidence that the public function of today is taking place on a football field at the time when the football world cup is going on.

"On the one hand, there is football competition going on,

US, Europe's woes hit Tirupur's...

From Page 1

"This time there were no orders from anybody and I need not explain more," said Sakthivel.

Kumar Duraiswamy, a leading entrepreneur says Tirupur is the victim of an economic tsunami. "There is 64 per cent fall in sales as buyers are not ordering merchandise. Financial institutions, the main sources of funds, are not offering credit and this has put us in a major crisis. Shoppers are faced with a shortage of \$400 per month due to the tightening of the money market," said Duraiswamy, who strongly believes that a sustained effort

by the State and Central Governments could make a lot of difference.

C P Radhakrishnan, textile mill owner, and former Lok Sabha member is of the view that Central Government alone could help the industry as the DMK Government is callous and indifferent in its approach.

"The Union Government should come out with direct help to the industry as the State administration is not interested in saving this sector," said Radhakrishnan. The DMK Government's decision to hike power and water tariffs has broken the backbone of the textile industry, he said while asking the banking sector not to penalize the textile and MSME sectors for the delay in paying back the loans.

The recession has dampened the spirit of business barons Milton, Duraiswamy and small-time businessmen

like Jitender Parikh. Tirupur, known as a lively city that was energetic 24x7 has turned out to be a sleepy township. Many eateries have downed shutters and shopping centers wear a deserted look. Parikh, a Calcutta-born dealer of textile goods is literally struggling to dispose of the stocks in his shop as there are no customers. "I am tense as I have to pay salary to a dozen workers in my shop. I cannot leave them at this juncture as there are no chances of them getting any employment now. We are in for hard times," said Parikh.

Radhakrishnan says that a joint effort by the ministries of commerce, finance and industry alone could bail out Tirupur and the eight lakh households. K M Subramanian, president TEA is hoping against hope that the FTA between India and Australia may help to turn around the downfall.

"the transformation that we witness today is a result of the change in our intentions, resolutions, priorities, and our work culture," he said.

Among those who attended the function include the Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Conrad K Sangama, Governor of Meghalaya, Brig (Dr.) B D Mishra (Retd), Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy, Kiren Rijiju and Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of State, B L Verma, Chief Minister of Manipur, N Biren Singh, Chief Minister of Mizoram, Zoramthanga, Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma, Minister of Nagaland, Neiphiu Rio, Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Pema Khandu and Chief Minister of Tripura, Manik Saha were those present on occasion.

The Prime Minister said with assurance that even though we are looking at the international teams playing in the football world cup in Qatar, he firmly believes in the power of the youth and remarked that the day is not far when India will organize such a similar celebration and every Indian will also cheer for our team that will take part in it.

"Development is not limited to budget, tenders, laying foundation stones and inaugurations", the Prime Minister continued as he stated that such was the norm even before 2014.

India-China border row discussed at AAP council meet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Sunday held its national council meeting and discussed national security, inflation, and unemployment. The party discussed inflation, upcoming elections in various States, unemployment, and the recent India-China face-off along LAC in Arunachal Pradesh and the tag of its national party status in the meeting and will submit its recommendations to the Centre on these three issues. Addressing the party's national executive and national council meeting, the Delhi Chief Minister and AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday termed as "unprecedented success" his party's foray into Gujarat, a BJP bastion for years, and said winning five seats there was as difficult as "milking an ox." AAP convener asserted that the AAP is sure it will dislodge the

BJP from power in Gujarat and form its Government there in 2027, as it did in Punjab earlier this year.

The AAP had won five seats in its latest campaign in Gujarat with about 13 per cent vote share. "Recently someone told me that I have returned milking ox from Gujarat. This much difficult it was (to win seats in Gujarat). Everyone can milk the cow, but we have indeed milked the ox by winning five seats and securing 14 per cent vote share in the assembly polls," Kejriwal said, as he congratulated party workers on the achievement.

Kejriwal thanked the people of Gujarat too for reposing faith in his party's vision and ideology. The Aam Aadmi Party formed its government in Punjab in its second foray in the state. "Don't worry, we will certainly form our government in Gujarat also in 2027,"

Kejriwal added.

In 2017, the AAP had contested 29 of 182 assembly seats in Gujarat elections and 112 of 117 assembly seats in Punjab elections. While the AAP had suffered a miserable defeat in Gujarat then with all its 29 candidates losing their deposits, the party won 20 seats in Punjab to become the main opposition party in the state.

On the 2022 Gujarat assembly polls, Kejriwal said the biggest takeaway from the party's foray into the BJP stronghold was that it became eligible for getting the national party status by the Election Commission.

"Perhaps, AAP is the only party which came to power in Delhi within a year of its formation, formed the government in another state, Punjab, within 10 years, and now became a national party," he said. The AAP's spectacular rise within such a short span of



time is due to our ideology and work, he added.

"Die hard patriotism, die hard honesty, and humanity are the three pillars of our ideology," Kejriwal said, as he accused the BJP, without naming it, of following the ideology of "goondism, hooliganism, and misbehaving with women." And, corruption is the ideology of "another party," he said in veiled reference to the Congress.

Kejriwal said there are several national parties but the BJP, Congress, and the AAP are the three "national parties" which occupies a space in the mind of people. But the AAP stands out among all of the national parties due to its "ideology and

vision," he claimed.

"People of the country are pinning hopes on the AAP because we are working for the them and the country ... Unlike other parties hurling abuses on each other and calling one demon and the other Ravan, we talk about real public issues, building schools, hospitals, providing jobs," he said. Outlining his party's vision, Kejriwal said AAP wants to turn India a hub of affordable quality education, a destination for best healthcare services in the world, and a global leader in the area of science and technology. "I do not want to just eradicate poverty. I want to make every person in India rich," he said.

AIIMS server hack: Interpol help sought for IP address details

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit has written to Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) seeking details from Interpol about the IP addresses of email IDs from China and Hong Kong in connection with its probe into the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, server attack case. The CBI is India's nodal agency for Interpol matters.

According to sources, the probe into the cyber-attack on some servers at AIIMS in the national capital has found that the IP addresses of two emails, which were identified from the headers of files that were encrypted by the hackers, originated from Hong Kong and China's Henan province.

The Delhi Police have sought information about the IP address being used by the hackers. "To contact Interpol we have to write to the CBI. We need information from Interpol



in the case. CBI is the nodal agency to reach out to them. The hackers sent mails using certain IP addresses, we need details about those IP addresses. We want to know whether these IP addresses were used by any firm or individual," Delhi police sources said.

Sources said the senders used the email service Protonmail. CERT-In, the country's premier cybersecurity agency, has found that the hackers had two Protonmail addresses - "dog2398" and "mouse63209". The sources said that during the probe, the encrypted files were sent to these two Protonmail IDs through CERT-In and Interpol. "After investigation, they found that 'dog2398' and 'mouse63209' were generated

in the first week of November in Hong Kong. They also found that another encrypted file was sent from China's Henan. But as of now, they have been able to establish the first layer and are trying to find out about further layers," sources said. Sources also said that the targeted servers were infected with three ransomware: Wammacry, Mimikatz and Trojan.

As per the analysis of cyber security watchdog CERT-In and other stakeholders quoted by Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar in his written reply in Rajya Sabha, five servers of AIIMS were affected by the cyber attack which led to the encryption of approximately 1.3 terabytes of data.

"CERT-In and other stakeholder entities have advised necessary remedial measures. Based on current analysis by concerned stakeholders, 5 servers of AIIMS were affected and approximately 1.3 Tera Bytes of data was encrypted," the Minister said.

Sukesh drops another 'bombshell' letter, threatens to expose AAP leaders

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Controversial fraudster Suresh Chandra Sheker, who is currently lodged in Tihar jail in Rs 200 crore extortion case, continues to make headlines with his bombshell letters against the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and its leaders.

Sukesh has dropped yet another letter threatening to expose AAP leaders and clarifying that he is not writing under pressure. The letter comes on a day when all elected representatives of the AAP and its key office bearers from various states were discussing the party's pan-India expansion plan at its National Council meeting chaired by party convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday.



In his fresh letter, Sukesh said, "Let me tell you I will make sure I will expose all of you, and I again promise I will not back out, I will show your true colours to this country, its high time, and again I am telling you stop sending threats and offers, I am not interested even a bit, and I will not stop any of the legal process. No matter what you try or talk about me, as I will expose you will all evidence, Mr. Maha Thug Kejriwal ji, Satyendar ji." Referring to the MCD polls

and Gujarat Assembly election results, the Sukesh wrote, "This is only the start for your end of politics. You will be rejected, as all your true colours will be exposed. I will make sure to bring everything in open."

The conman further said that after he wrote these letters, there was considerable impact on MCD elections as "AAP lost all wards in Jain assembly seat and the party lost 3 out of 4 wards in Sisodia assembly seat."

He also clarified that he has written all the letters at his own will and was not under pressure by the BJP as alleged by AAP time and again.

Sukesh further reiterated that he is being threatened inside the jail and alleged that Satyendar Jain is still using phone inside Tihar.

"Why threat calls with offers from these numbers where coming to my family on your instructions? How Satyendarji is still using his mobile from jail? Or who is using his number to make these calls? First answer this Maha Thug Kejriwal ji?"

On Kejriwal's attacks on the BJP linked to the allegations, Sukesh wrote: "The BJP is not a party like yours to indulge in cheap politics like how you do on a daily basis. To my understanding BJP has no necessity to ask anyone or me to write anything against any one. So stop this cheap press statement and cheap politics of yours as no one is interested, and I am not born yesterday to be pressured by anyone, I have seen the world more than you, Mr. Immature CM."

Newly-elected AAP Councillors start cleanliness, sanitation drives, post photos

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

Newly elected Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillors have started cleanliness and sanitation drives in their wards and posted pictures on the party's social media handle following the directions of the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Kejriwal said on Friday and asserted that all councillors should get involved in sanitation activities.

The AAP in its Twitter handle has posted a picture in which the dhaloo ghar of the Fatehnagar, ward number 100, was seen cleaned in the reign of the AAP while on the other hand it was littered with garbage at the time BJP was in power. While posting the picture a caption was also written in Hindi, "With AAP coming to

MCD, cleaning of Delhi has started. #AAPCleansDelhi."

In another tweet, two picture of a particular street in Vinod Nagar was showcased, one shows garbage on the verge of it under BJP's rule in the corporation, and the other shows a clean road, while the AAP is in control of the MCD. A caption was also featured in a post in Hindi, "Delhi moving towards cleanliness! #AAPCleansDelhi."

In another picture posted from Shiv Nagar where garbage has been removed from the lane.

Prem Chauhan, AAP councillor from Dakshin Puri ward told The Pioneer that the MCD officials have already started cleaning the roads and dhaloos in the city.



BJP did not let them fulfill their duties as they did not have any vision to make Delhi clean. The swachta sainiks of the Corporation are very happy

and supporting the AAP as they trust that the Imandaar Sarkaar is coming to lead the MCD and they will get their salaries on time," said Chauhan.

Three hurt as speeding car hits children on footpath in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three children on the footpath were injured after they were hit by a speeding car near a school in Roop Nagar area, north Delhi on Sunday. The children were standing on the footpath when the car hit them.

According to the police, the incident took place at around 9 am and was caught on a CCTV camera installed across the street.

The video of the incident, which is now doing rounds on the internet, shows the out-of-control car ramming into the kids on the sidewalk before coming to a stop in the distance. Upon seeing this, locals and nearby people rushed to the spot. Later, some can even be seen beating the driver when he



exits the vehicle.

The police said that the driver of the car has been identified as Gajender, 30, a resident of Pratap Nagar who was driving his Brezza car. When he reached near the Lilawati school, he lost his control over the vehicle, and rammed into the three children who were standing on the footpath.

After receiving the PCR call, a team was immediately

sent to the crime scene. The injured children were rushed to a nearby government hospital.

The doctors told the police that two children, aged 10 and 4 years, were out of danger. The third child, aged six years, was hospitalised and was kept under observation. The police said the driver was with his family inside the car. He wasn't drunk or under the influence of drugs, said the police.

Traffic advisory issued ahead of 'Kisan Garjana' rally

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Sunday issued a traffic advisory ahead of a 'Kisan Garjana' rally at Ramlila Ground. According to the advisory, the rally will be organised by the Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), an affiliate of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), on Monday for the demand of remunerative price on the basis of cost from 11 am to 6 pm

Sharing the update on Twitter, Delhi Traffic Police wrote, "Traffic Advisory On the occasion of Kisan Garjana Rally, being organised at Ramlila Ground on 19.12.22, elaborate traffic arrangements have been made. Citizens are advised to plan their commute accordingly." In its advisory, Delhi Police gave a list of diversions, restrictions, and

instructions for the general public.

As per the organisers, around 50,000 to 55,000 people are likely to participate in the gathering through 700 to 800 buses, and 3,500 to 4,000 through private vehicles, it stated.

The diversion points are Maharaja Ranjeet Singh Marg, Mirdard Chowk, Minto Road, Ajmeri Gate, Chaman Lal Marg, Delhi Gate, JLN Marg, roundabout Kamala Market to Hamdard Chowk, Bhavbhuti Marg and Paharganj Chowk, it said.

According to the advisory, traffic restrictions, regulations or diversion may be imposed on Ranjeet Singh flyover from Barakhamba Road to Guru Nanak Chowk, from Minto Road to roundabout Kamla Market, Vivekanand Marg, JLN

Marg (Delhi gate to Guru Nanak Chowk).

Other parts that may also be subjected to similar regulations include the roundabout Kamla Market to Guru Nanak Chowk, Chaman Lal Marg, Ajmeri Gate towards Asaf Ali Road and Paharganj Chowk and roundabout Jandewalan, Desh Bandhu Gupta Road to Ajmeri Gate on Monday from 9 am onwards.

Commuters are advised to avoid the mentioned roads and stretches. The commuters going to New Delhi Railway Station, Old Delhi Railway, Nizamuddin Railway Station and ISBT should leave before time to accommodate possible delays on the route, the advisory said.

Avail public transport to help decongestion of roads. Park your vehicles only at des-



ignated parking lots. Avoid roadside parking as it causes hindrance to normal flow traffic, the advisory added. BKS said the 'Kisan Garjana' protest march is being organised in Delhi to seek various relief measures for the cultivators to improve their condition.

According to the BKS even today, the farmers are facing poverty despite providing up to 50% remunerative prices in

the minimum support price by the government.

The main reason for this is that the price policy of agricultural products is not advantageous, which means that the MSP is not compatible, adding that working capital, interest on it, rental fees for agricultural equipment, and the wage of skilled management are not included in the MSP, the BKS had earlier stated.

Kejriwal only does politics of opportunism, BJP lashes out at AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lashing out at the AAP, Delhi BJP on Sunday said that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal makes tall claims of nationalism but the truth is he only does politics of opportunism.

This statement came after the AAP supremo said that instead of "punishing" China, the Modi government is "rewarding Beijing" by allowing high volumes of imports from the country even though many Indian soldiers put their lives on the line while fighting Chinese troops.

"The Aam Aadmi Party is a sham party whose national convener Arvind Kejriwal talks about nationalism but in reality only does politics of opportunism. He boosts about nationalism but his silence on Pakistan's indecent and derogatory remarks against India in the United Nations meeting is politically motivated," said Delhi BJP Working President Virendra Sachdeva.



big about nationalism, keeps silent on Pakistan's indecent remarks towards India on the international stage in his party's national convention, then it becomes clear how hollow his nationalism is," said Delhi BJP Working President.

The working president of Delhi BJP has said that today in the national convention of AAP, Kejriwal has portrayed his party Aam Aadmi Party getting national party status as an exclusive achievement of his party, but the truth is that amongst the political parties formed after independence BJP is the only one party in the country which had become a national party on the day of its formation.

52-yr-old man suffering from acute liver ailment gets new lease of life

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 52-year-old man suffering from an acute liver ailment received a new lease of life after undergoing plasma exchange at a hospital, doctors said on Sunday.

The patient was admitted after experiencing symptoms of jaundice for two weeks, followed by altered consciousness. He had further developed ascites (accumulation of fluid in the abdomen) and decreased urine output (acute kidney injury), the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) said in a statement.

"On further investigations, he was detected hepatitis B virus positive, and a diagnosis of acute-on-chronic liver failure (ACLF) secondary to hepatitis B virus reactivation was made," it said. Dialysis was considered and the patient was given the option of liver transplant as his parameters indicated a 50 per cent chance of survival for a month, it added.



Dr Piyush Ranjan, senior consultant, Department of Gastroenterology at the SGRH, said, "As there was no donor in the family, we offered an unusual option of plasma exchange (PLEX). We did a total of five sessions of PLEX for him. After the second session, his jaundice started improving, his consciousness improved and renal functions also started improving."

"He was continued on other medical therapy of which the most important is anti-viral therapy. Patient was discharged after 20 days of hospitalisation in a stable condition and (after) one month of follow up, his ascites (water in stomach) completely resolved and jaundice had normalised," the doctor said.



People purchase decorative items ahead of Christmas in New Delhi on Sunday.

Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

Modi running away from debate in Parl on China: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

Congress on Sunday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "running away" from a debate in Parliament on the situation along the border with China and said he and not the Defence Minister must answer on this issue. The Opposition party also alleged that the Prime Minister does not utter the word "China" and asked whether the Government was "silent" due to its "close ties" with that country.

The attack on the Modi government came days after Indian Army personnel clashed with Chinese soldiers in the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

At a press conference in Dausa in Rajasthan on the

sidelines of the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Congress general secretary Jai Ram Ramesh said then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi went to China in 1988 "when we were strong at the borders and after that visit bilateral ties became stronger".

But in April 2020 all this came to an end and a new chapter was opened, he alleged. "The prime minister has given a clean chit to them (China) by saying 'no one has come and no one is inside our territory'. Due to this clean chit, our bargaining position has gone down," Ramesh claimed.

He said there should be a debate in Parliament and the prime minister should answer on the issue and discuss it with the opposition.

"Debate should take place in the Lok Sabha and Rajya

Sabha and answers have to be given by the prime minister and not the defence minister or external affairs minister. Several former prime ministers have answered in Parliament. He is the first prime minister who runs away from debate and he does not utter the word China," Ramesh said.

He also raised the slogan "Cheen Par Chuppi Todo, Bharat Jodo (Break the silence on China, unite India)."

At the press conference, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said the government must answer why the mountain strike corps was put in "cold storage" after the UPA established its first division in West Bengal.

"Prime Minister Modi refuses to answer on China and doesn't want a debate on China.

The prime minister has close ties with China since he was the Gujarat chief minister and the Chinese president was in a top post in that country. They share close ties," he alleged.

The second division of the mountain strike corps that was to come up in Pathankot, did not come up because a "China-loving" prime minister came to power, Khera alleged.

Asked about the BJP's attack on Rahul Gandhi over his remarks on the China issue at a presser in Jaipur, Khera said the former Congress chief had "only highlighted that the government had tied the hands of the armed forces who are full of valour".

"Veer Sena, kayar raja (brave army, coward king)," that is the story of the country, he alleged.

Khera also claimed that BJP leaders have travelled to China in the past for training with the Communist Party of China. He asked what relations organizations such as the Vivekananda International Foundation, with whom National Security Advisor Ajit Doval had been associated with, have with China.

He also alleged that the think tank whose one unit is headed by External Affairs minister S Jaishankar's son got donations from the Chinese Embassy thrice.

BJP has been accusing the Congress of having close ties with China. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said last week that the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation

(RGF) was cancelled as it allegedly got Rs 1.35 crore from the Chinese Embassy.

In his remarks at the presser, Khera asked whether the government was silent on the matter due to these issues and said all this was a "secret" that must be revealed.

He also listed the achievements of past Congress governments in strengthening India's security vis-a-vis China. Border Area Development Programme (BADP) was part of the seventh five-year plan in 1986-87 under Rajiv Gandhi's premiership, he said, adding under the UPA government the 2,000 km trans-Arunachal highway was started.

Congress attack also comes after Rahul Gandhi said "the government was sleeping while China was preparing for war".



Rahul Gandhi's remarks evoked sharp reactions from the BJP, which said he was lowering the morale of the armed forces. In a statement in Parliament, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had said Chinese troops tried to "unilaterally" change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Yangtse area of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang sector on December 9, but the Indian Army compelled them to retreat with its "firm and resolute" response. The face-off took place amid the over 30-month border standoff between the two sides in eastern Ladakh.

DGCA introduces new features on its e-governance platform

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has introduced new features on its e-governance platform for stakeholders, including the facility to fetch pilots' flying hours on a real-time basis which will also help in the faster processing of licence applications. Besides, the Air Operator Certificate (AOC) database has been integrated with the civil aviation ministry's heli-sewa portal which will allow speedier processing of landing requests.

According to the DGCA, operators are now issued the certificate of airworthiness with respect to newly inducted aircraft at foreign delivery locations through the regulator's eGCA portal for ferrying the planes to India.

The eGCA, a single window e-governance platform, has been enhanced to further improve the ease of doing business in the civil aviation ecosystem, a senior DGCA official said on Sunday.

The pilot e-logbook in

eGCA has been integrated with various operators' internal software through API (Application Programming Interface) whereby pilots' flying records can be directly transferred into their e-logbooks on the eGCA portal. The move will eliminate manual interventions.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) developed an API through which various airlines would channel their pilot data from their system to eGCA. "Out of eight airlines which participated in the integration process, IndiGo has already implemented this interface. Indigo pilots' flying records are now getting directly populated in e-logbook in eGCA software from IndiGo's AIMS software.

Other airlines, including Air India/Air India Charters, Air Asia, Go First, SpiceJet, Vistara and Blue Dart are in the final stages of testing and are expected to implement the same in another one to two months, the official said.

Apart from fetching pilots' flying hours on a real-time basis with accuracy, the official said the facility will help in the



timely submission of applications by the pilots for the issuance, renewal and endorsement of licences by removal of multi-layer data-validation steps.

"As the manual intervention in the process has been reduced to almost negligible, the integration will also help DGCA in faster processing of applications as the verification of flying data in submitted applications will be considerably reduced," the official

added. With the integration of operators' AOC database with heli-sewa portal, the official said the workload has considerably reduced for the applicants and helicopter operators as they can access both eGCA and the portal through the same ID. Also, their requests and intimations can be processed faster.

Further, the process related to the issuance of Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) and Airworthiness Review

Certificate (ARC) has been enhanced.

The operators are now issued C of A/ ARC at foreign delivery locations through the eGCA portal for ferrying the aircraft to India and the process has replaced the earlier system wherein these certificates (partially-filled) were prepared at the DGCA headquarters and carried to foreign locations for issuance. The eGCA handles more than 300 services related to DGCA.

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BCAS conducting study to assess holding area for global fliers at Delhi airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In view of chaos, mismanagement and overcrowding at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) is conducting a study to assess whether there is enough holding space for passengers at the immigration area of the Delhi airport. The ongoing study by the agency, which is responsible for civil aviation security, is aimed to ensure that there is no congestion at the immigration area once international air travel gains full steam after being severely hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

In recent weeks, domestic and international passengers have complained about congestion at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGA) that led to long queues and waiting hours. The situation has improved now, with the authorities putting in place various



measures, including installing additional X-ray machines for baggage checks. The government official said that the BCAS is conducting the study to understand the immigration area at the airport and whether there is enough holding area for passengers during the immigration process. As per international standards, there are specified requirements in terms of holding area and the effort is to assess the situation, including with respect to passenger throughput, so that there is no congestion at immigration once international air travel

picks up, the official said. The official added that international air traffic in the country will take some time to reach the pre-pandemic level due to various factors such as the curbs in China and longer time taken for issuance of US visas.

Once the curbs are removed and more American visas start getting issued, then there will be a surge in international air traffic and preparations need to be in place to ensure there is no congestion, the official added. Specific details about the BCAS' study could not be immediately ascertained.

Researchers find anti-inflammatory proteins, lipids in long Covid patients



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A team of researchers has found several anti-inflammatory proteins, lipids, and metabolites in long Covid patients, which, they said, could contribute to the most important long Covid syndrome symptoms.

The study is published in iScience.

Today millions of people suffer from long Covid syndrome (LCS), which significantly affects their quality of life. However, it is not easy to diagnose and treat due to a lack of understanding of the underlying disease mechanisms.

Researchers at the Joint Metabolome Facility (University of Vienna and Medical University of Vienna) turned their attention to LCS using mass spectrometry-based post-genomic analysis techniques. The strength of these methods lies in the very comprehensive mapping of actual conditions, i.e. the traceability of disease processes taking place in a patient, they say.

Together with Klaus Schmetterer from the MedUni Vienna's Department of Laboratory Medicine and Mariann Gyöngyösi, from MedUni Vienna's Department of Medicine II and Head of the Long COVID Outpatient Clinic at AKH Vienna, patient cohorts were selected and analyzed to elucidate the molecular basis of LCS.

In the course of a viral infection, there is normally a very strong activation of the immune system. But in virtually all of the Long Covid patients studied, corresponding markers such as cytokines, acute phase proteins and eicosanoids, which indicate inflammation, were in fact hardly detectable. "All important potential markers for acute inflammatory processes were below the levels of healthy donors or not detectable at all in LCS patients," says study author and head of the Joint Metabolome Facility, Christopher Gerner.

Surprisingly, the differences were more pronounced in long Covid patients compared to asymptomatic patients recovering from Covid disease than to healthy controls. "This finding shows that there was indeed some residual inflammatory response detectable in asymptomatic recovered patients, whereas Long Covid patients had the opposite finding," Gerner says.

"The molecular signature of inflammation inhibition was very clearly visible," says Gerner. "For example, the study provides evidence that increased infectivity of the virus can be explained via a deficiency of acute phase proteins (e.g. SERPINA5). In addition, the researchers were able to show that the anti-inflammatory metabolites osmolytes taurine and hypoxanthine were strongly up-reg-

ulated in LCS patients. Hypoxanthine is known to spontaneously induce sleep in animals, suggesting a direct link to fatigue syndrome.

The study said that blood plasma analyses of LCS patients allow a deep insight into the physiological processes of the patients. In the case of LCS patients, an active participation of so-called alternatively polarized macrophages became apparent. These cells are typically formed after all kinds of infections and are responsible for the coordination of regenerative processes. The molecular profile found in LCS patients, consisting of proteins, lipids and metabolites, is very characteristic for these cells.

Of course, this study did not resolve all LCS-related questions. In a study just completed with Gerhard Garhöfer, from the Department of Clinical Pharmacology, the Joint Metabolome Facility investigated the causes of increased risk of atherosclerosis and myocardial infarction after surviving infections.

"The pathology of LCS disease is crystallizing more and more clearly, which of course enables a completely new assessment of risk factors and therapy options," the study authors said. The researchers are confident that in the near future they will be able to offer significantly improved diagnostic options for LCS and, above all, monitoring methods to evaluate the effects of therapy.

Govt to amend insolvency law to reduce time taken for resolution

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is preparing a law as it looks to reduce the time taken for completion of stressed assets and prevent significant erosion of value of the assets, according to a senior official.

Amendments to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which came into force in 2016 for timely resolution of stressed assets, are likely to be introduced in the Budget session of Parliament early next year.

The corporate affairs ministry's move to amend the law also comes against the backdrop of concerns in various quarters that many of the corporate insolvency resolution processes are taking a longer time due to litigations and other issues despite a stipulated time frame in place.

The senior government official told PTI that consultations are going on with various stakeholders, including bankers and lawyers, and the changes are expected to be finalised in the coming weeks.

The focus is on how to speed up the whole resolution process by reducing the time taken.

One of the options being looked at is how fast a company undergoing the resolution process can be handed over to the winning bidder as that would help in preserving the value of the assets concerned, the official said.

As per IBC, a company's affairs are taken care of by an insolvency resolution professional till the winning bidder takes over.

To ensure that there is no significant value erosion, the amendments will look at putting in place provisions

whereby the assets can be handed over to the winning bidder at the earliest, the official said.

On the basis of data from the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) till the end of September this year, the ministry informed the Lok Sabha on December 12 that a total of 553 cases have been resolved under IBC and the average time taken for the resolution was 473 days.

In the current fiscal up to September, 57 cases were resolved under IBC and the average time taken was 679 days. The higher time taken for resolution is mainly on account of associated litigation as with time, the average number of interlocutory applications has increased, which is considered to impact realisable value of assets, the ministry told the Lower House.

As per the data, it took an



average of 560 days to resolve 143 cases in 2021-22, while the average time taken was 468 days to resolve 120 cases in 2020-21.

In 2017-18, 19 cases were resolved and the average time taken was 230 days, and in 2018-19, 78 cases were resolved at an average time of 326 days.

In 2020-21, as many as 120 cases were resolved and the average time taken was 468

days. The IBC time frame for the resolution process is 330 days, inclusive of time taken for litigation.

As per the IBBI data, the 517 cases that yielded resolution plans took an average of 460 days for conclusion till the end of June while the recovery rate for creditors against the claims made was around 31 per cent.

'India will contribute 10% to incremental growth of global petrochemical demand'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India, whose per capita consumption is significantly lower than that of developed economies, will contribute 10 per cent of the incremental growth of global petrochemical demand, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has said.

Petrochemicals, which turn oil and gas into all sorts of daily products -- such as plastics, fertilisers, packaging, clothing, digital devices, medical equipment, detergents or tyres -- are rapidly becoming the largest driver of global oil consumption. They are set to account for more than a third of the growth in oil demand by 2030, and nearly half by 2050, ahead of trucks, aviation and shipping, according to IEA.

India is poised to grow strongly from its current level of only 4 per cent of global capacity to satisfy increasing domestic demand.

"Petrochemical market size is currently in India about USD 190 billion, whereas the per capita consumption of



petrochemical segments is significantly lower, compared to that in developed economies. And this gap offers substantial space for demand growth and investment opportunities," Puri said while addressing the plenary session at the 7th Petrochemical Conclave here.

India, the world's third largest energy consumer, is also focusing on becoming a global petrochemical manufacturing hub, he said.

"One of the most important factors driving the growth of the petrochemical industry is the increasing demand for petrochemical products from a growing population and a rapidly expanding economy.

India would contribute 10 per cent to the incremental growth of global petrochemical demand," Puri stated, according to a statement issued by Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).

The government, he said, has instituted several policies to boost this sector and improve the ease of doing business, including allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment through the automatic route.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Rameswar Teli said sectors like petrochemicals have contributed a lot to the GDP success story and shall continue to add value in the future.

IOC Chairman S M Vaidya said, "Currently, petrochemical production accounts for nearly 14 per cent and 8 per cent of the global demand for oil and gas, respectively. With the evolution of new technologies, especially in crude to chemicals, petrochemical production share is expected to increase to about 30 per cent shortly."

Terrorist groups in J&K increasingly keeping tabs on Govt administrative orders

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir are increasingly keeping a tab on administrative orders of the Government and modulating their responses to build a certain narrative against minority Kashmiri Pandits besides ramping up propaganda and violence in the Valley.

Citing a December 14 order of the Jammu and Kashmir administration assigning additional look after roles to six Chief Education Officers, a poster of kashmirflight.com is viral on the social media threatening the so called sympathisers of "Migrant Kashmiri Pandits".

"This list should serve as an eye opener for all those who try to be sympathisers of Migrant Kashmiri Pandits PM Package Stoooges," reads the poster tagging the December 14 order. "They (Kashmiri Pandits) have always played the victim card to gain benefits from all



sides. These PM Package stoooges are doing their jobs as per the agreement they have signed to serve Delhi and Indianise all departments they serve," it said.

It further said, "In early 1990s they used to be pawns of IB (Intelligence Bureau) and now they serve Sangi (Sanghi) agenda. They are being assigned duties irrespective of their posts....Is not just a single department but all departments where these Delhi sponsored agents are being posted. And it is not only about these Migrant PM Package stoooges but also all those Non-Local/Foreigners who are in the Valley such jobs. The list is very big and soon the blood of these traitors will spill," it warned.

Desi INS Mormugao commissioned

2nd of 4 'Made in India' warships equipped to fight in Nuclear, biological warfare conditions

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that marked the formal induction of the second of the four indigenously designed 'Visakhapatnam' class destroyers, INS Mormugao (D67), second warship of the P15B class of stealth guided-missile destroyers, was commissioned in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the Naval Dockyard here on Sunday.

Designed by the Indian Navy's in-house organisation warship Design Bureau and constructed by Mumbai-based Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), INS Mormugao is christened after the historic port city of Goa on the west coast.

Equipped to fight under Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare conditions, the ship is propelled by four powerful Gas Turbines, in a Combined Gas and Gas configuration, capable of achieving speeds in excess of 30 knots, the ship has enhanced stealth features resulting in a reduced Radar Cross Section. INS Mormugao has a complement of about 300 personnel.

Measuring 163m in length and 17m in breadth with a displacement of 7,400 tonnes, INS Mormugao is packed with sophisticated state-of-the-art weapons and sensors such as Surface-to-Surface Missile and Surface-to-Air Missiles. The ship is fitted with a modern Surveillance Radar which provides target data to the gunnery weapon systems. Its Anti-Submarine Warfare capabilities are provided by the indigenously-developed Rocket Launchers, Torpedo Launchers and the ASW helicopters.

Speaking on the occasion,



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Goa Governor PS Sreedharan Pillai, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, CDS Gen Anil Chauhan, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R. Hari Kumar and other Navy officials during the commissioning ceremony of INS Mormugao at the naval dockyard in Mumbai on Sunday

the Defence Minister described INS Mormugao as one of the most powerful indigenously-built warships which will significantly enhance the country's maritime capabilities and secure national interests.

"INS Mormugao is one of the world's most technologically-advanced missile carriers. With over 75% indigenous content, it is a testimony to India's excellence in design and development of warships and a shining example of our growing indigenous defence production capabilities. The warship will meet the present and future needs of our country as well as of our friendly countries across the globe," he said.

Complimenting the Indian Navy for safeguarding India's interests in the Indian Ocean Region, Singh said: "Our growing economy is directly connected to the increasing trade, most of which is through sea routes. Our interest is directly linked to the Indian Ocean. Being an important country in this region, the role of Indian Navy becomes more important in its security. It is heartening to see that they are discharging their duties successfully".

Commending the Indian Navy and MDL for the commissioning of INS Mormugao, which he said was the result of their hard work, dedication and aspirations of the engineers, technicians, designers

and scientists. It is a matter of great pride for India, the Defence Minister congratulated to the Indian Navy on behalf of the entire nation for not only safeguarding maritime interests, but also contributing significantly to the socio-economic progress.

He also lauded the Armed Forces for protecting the borders and coasts with unmatched courage and dedication, terming them as the backbone of India's unprecedented growth, he said.

"Our G-20 presidency is another landmark achievement. This has been successful due to the aspirations, hard work and determination of every Indian. But, the most

important reason behind our success is our secure borders and coasts. It is due to the readiness and promptness of our Armed Forces that we have a fool-proof security apparatus," he said.

Reiterating the Government's resolve to prepare the nation to deal with any situation arising out of the rapidly changing global scenario, the Defence Minister said: "It is the Government's top priority to continue strengthening the security infrastructure by equipping the military with state-of-the-art indigenous weapons/equipment".

Mormugao was launched on September 17, 2016 and commenced sea trials on December 19, 2021, coinciding with 60 years of Goa Liberation.

During the ceremony, the Defence Minister was presented with a guard of honour upon his arrival. The Commanding Officer Captain Kapil Bhatia then read out the Ship's Commissioning Warrant. Subsequently, the Naval Ensign was hoisted onboard for the first time and the Commissioning Pennant broken (unfurled) on the main mast to the time of the national anthem played by the Naval Band. Before his address, the Raksha Mantri unveiled the Commissioning Plaque, dedicating the ship to the service of the nation.

Governor of Goa Shri PS Sreedharan Pillai, Chief Minister of Goa Dr Pramod Sawant, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh and CMD, MDL Vice Admiral Narayan Prasad (Retd) also attended the event.

Shah summons Adhikari to Delhi for meeting

Bengal BJP Opp leader had given three dates to topple TMC Govt

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



Three days after holding a closed door meeting with top 14 saffron leadership in Kolkata, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has summoned Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari to Delhi on Tuesday.

Adhikari is likely to meet Shah along with State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar, party sources said.

The Tuesday's meeting assumes importance against the backdrop of Adhikari's three-day deadlines for Bengal Government.

Speaking to media men early this month he had asked people to "watch out" for three dates — December 12, 14 and 21. Earlier senior BJP leaders

like him, Majumdar and party national vice president Dilip Ghosh had said that the Mamata Banerjee Government would not last beyond December.

"There will be a big explosion in December... This government will not last beyond December... For them the game is over," Adhikari had said.

Majumdar had however said that though the TMC had lost all its rights to continue in power the BJP never believed in toppling governments.

"This government will go on its own... We will not have to pull it down... Nor do we plan to engineer defection in their party," he said adding, the BJP would oust the TMC con-

stitutionally and with popular support.

When asked about the contents of the half-an-hour meeting that Shah held with senior saffron leaders on Friday evening in Kolkata — where he had come to chair the eastern zonal council meeting — Adhikari said, "I won't say much but one person in the meeting whose name I will not mention said 'time ho gaya' (time is up)".

None of the BJP leaders would dwell much on the "time ho gaya" riddle and it's connection with Tuesday's meeting in Delhi, some of them reminded how a number of TMC legislators were keeping in touch with senior BJP functionaries including Mumbai star Mithun Chakraborty.

Meanwhile the Left leadership attacked both TMC and BJP for giving out false narratives in order to turn the attention from the real fight going on in the villages against what they called a "corrupt and lumpen regime".

Rahul sharpening ideological basis of Cong: Jairam



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot interacts with the representatives of civil society during the party's Bharat Jodo Yatra, in Dausa district on Sunday

PTI ■ DAUSA

Senior Congress leader Sajairam Ramesh on Sunday said the Bharat Jodo Yatra has ensured that the Congress is now setting the political narrative in the country and the BJP has been made to play on a pitch prepared by his party.

In an interview with PTI on the yatra completing 100 days, Ramesh also said that Rahul Gandhi is trying to sharpen the ideological basis of the Congress and is working along with the party's elected president, Mallikarjun Kharge, as a 'jugabandi' (together).

Asked whether the party could undertake another such yatra next year, Ramesh said, "I would certainly love to participate in a Porbandar (Gujarat) to Parshuram Kund (Arunachal Pradesh) Yatra but

whether we can do it next year and how we can do it next year, it has to be discussed and debated in appropriate party forums."

The Congress general secretary in-charge communications asserted that through the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Gandhi has given a new direction to the political discourse and the Congress has set the narrative for the last 100 days.

"The Congress has been applauded, criticised, praised, reviled. What it means is that we were on the defensive, we were always reacting to what the BJP was saying or what it was doing but through the Bharat Jodo Yatra I think we have succeeded to a very large extent in being able to set the terms of debate and the narrative in the political discourse," Ramesh said.

T'gana Cong infighting up, 13 PCC members quit posts

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

The intra-party wrangling in Telangana Congress appears to have intensified with as many as 13 PCC members submitting their resignations on Sunday, protesting the remarks of some senior leaders that those who "migrated" to Congress from other parties got prominence.

The 13 members include, sitting Congress MLA Danasari Anasuya (Seethakka) and former legislator Vem Narendar Reddy.

Former deputy chief minister in undivided Andhra Pradesh Damodar Rajanarasimha on Saturday, in an apparent reference to some of the former TDP leaders who joined the Congress, sought to know what message would it give to "original Congress activists" if those who "migrated" to the Congress from other parties got prominence.

He was flanked by CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Congress Lok Sabha member N Uttam Kumar Reddy, former MP Madhu Yashki Goud and party MLA T Jayaprakash Reddy (known as Jagga Reddy) when he made the comments.

The dissatisfaction of these leaders is seen as directed towards State Congress president and MP A Revanth Reddy.

Addressing reporters here today, Former MLA E Anil made an appeal to 'senior leaders' to work together.

NHRC being misused like ED, CBI: Cong after commission's notice to Bihar Govt over Saran hooch tragedy

PTI ■ PATNA

A senior Congress leader in Bihar, where the party is an alliance partner of the ruling 'Mahagathbandhan', on Sunday alleged that the National Human Rights Commission was being "misused" like ED, CBI and other central agencies.

Congress MLC Prem Chandra Mishra made the allegation taking exception to the recent NHRC notice slapped on the Nitish Kumar government in the state over the Saran hooch tragedy.

"Does the NHRC really hold the view that hooch deaths amount to human rights violation? If it is so, why has the Commission not acted when similar incidents have happened in BJP-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana?" asked

Mishra. The Congress leader pointed out "Sale and consumption of alcohol are illegal in Bihar. Hence those who have died, lost their lives committing an illegal act, no matter how tragic their deaths were. The government in Bihar has been making efforts to implement prohibition like crackdowns on illegal distilleries".

Bihar went dry in April 2016. The Saran hooch tragedy has been the biggest in the state since then. As per officials, 30 people have died though unconfirmed reports put the death over 50.

"In this backdrop, the NHRC should have refrained from acting as if it too has become an instrument in the hands of political power like CBI and ED", alleged Mishra.

BJP seeks ex-gratia for Saran hooch victims, JD(U) calls demand 'very irresponsible'



Former Bihar deputy chief minister and BJP MP Sushil Kumar Modi addresses a press conference regarding the recent hooch tragedy in Saran district, in Patna on Sunday

PTI ■ PATNA

JD(U) parliamentary board chief Upendra Kushwaha on Sunday termed as "irresponsible", the BJP's demand for ex-gratia to family members of Saran hooch tragedy in Bihar.

Kushwaha, a key political aide of Chief Minister Nitish

Kumar, also drew the analogy of the manufacture of bombs to underscore that a Government cannot stand for those engaging in illegal activities.

"If somebody is manufacturing a bomb, illegally, and gets killed in the process, does it make a case for government compensation?" asked the for-

mer Union minister, when approached by journalists with queries.

At least 30 people have died in the Saran hooch tragedy, the biggest in the state since prohibition was clamped on it in April 2016. Many unconfirmed reports, however, put the death toll in excess of 50. Kushwaha said, "An opposition party must not raise demands mindlessly. The way the BJP has been behaving is irresponsible (gair zimmedarana)".

The BJP, which is in the opposition since August, has been stalling the ongoing winter session of the assembly and hitting the streets demanding compensation for the victims of the hooch tragedy.

The Chief Minister has, however, been adamant in his refusal, pointing out that compensation would defeat the very purpose of prohibition.

UP tourism to increase ten times after Ram Mandir: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh is a State with infinite possibilities in terms of tourism. All major centres of religious, spiritual, eco-tourism are present here. Today Uttar Pradesh is number one in terms of domestic tourism. In 2024, when the Shri Ram temple will be ready in Ayodhya, tourism will increase 10 times.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said this while addressing tour operators from all over the country at the 37th annual convention of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) on Sunday.

Yogi said that tourists were



two and a half decades by the IATO.

"You must be seeing a lot of difference in the state since the programme was organised 26 years ago. UP has immense possibilities in the tourism sector," he remarked.

The chief minister said that there were infinite possibilities in the field of religious-spiritual tourism in UP. "We have Kashi as the oldest city in the world and the cultural and spiritual capital of India. Only one year has completed since the inauguration of Shrikashi Vishwanath Dham and Varanasi received 1 crore tourists in the month of Sawan alone which earlier came in a year altogether", he said.

Kadi town in the district have been sent to a laboratory in Ahmedabad for further testing and a report of the same is awaited, Epidemic Medical Officer of Mehsana district Vinod Patel said.

Attributing resistance to vaccination in the region as a reason behind the likely upsurge in suspected measles cases in the region, Patel said

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the victory of Samajwadi Party candidate Dimple Yadav in the Mainpuri Lok Sabha bypoll with a huge margin of 2.88 lakh votes and unity in the SP first family with the joining of hands by Akhilesh Yadav and his uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav, small political parties are likely to come closer to the Samajwadi Party.

There are speculations that some small parties may rally behind the SP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls if the SP does well in the urban local bodies elections in UP.

While former Budaun MLA Abid Raza re-joined the party on Friday, Suheldev

Small parties to come closer to SP post Akhilesh, Shivpal union

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) president and former Uttar Pradesh minister Om Prakash Rajbhar has indicated that he would meet SP president Akhilesh Yadav soon.

Sources in the SP said the party was confident that positive results of the coming together of Akhilesh Yadav and Shivpal Yadav would be visible after the elections to urban local bodies.

In the 2022 assembly elections, smaller parties like SBSP, Mahan Dal, Apna Dal (Kameravadi) and Janwadi Party (Socialist) contested under the SP-led alliance. Except Apna Dal (Kameravadi), all these parties distanced themselves from the SP after the Assembly elections.

According to a school official, the bus was carrying 62 passengers from Deoria to Gorakhpur. The school bus

1 killed, 9 injured as school bus falls in pit in Gorakhpur

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man was killed and nine others were injured when a school bus overturned and plummeted into a 10-foot-deep pit in Gorakhpur on Sunday after the driver lost control over the wheel while attempting to avoid hitting a cyclist, police said.

According to the authorities, the cyclist, Tilakdhari (50), died and bus driver Dharmendra Yadav (28) was critically injured in the accident in Bhainsa Dhoda village under Khorabar police station.

The bus driver and two children were referred to BRD Medical College hospital for treatment.

The body of the cyclist was sent for a post-mortem.

driver lost control over the vehicle while trying to avoid colliding with a cyclist.

According to police, the bus overturned and plummeted into a 10-foot-deep crater.

The bus driver and eight children were hurt, while the cyclist died on the spot.

After getting information about the mishap, officers from Khorabar station and Ramnagar Karjaha outpost arrived on the scene and rushed the injured to hospital.

The bus driver and two children were referred to BRD Medical College hospital for treatment.

The body of the cyclist was sent for a post-mortem.

Two students shot at in Deoband

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ten teenage students were shot at by three unidentified masked youths in Deoband town of Saharanpur district.

The injured students were admitted to a hospital where their condition was said to be stable.

Vinay Kumar, 17, and Siddhartha Kumar, 15, students of classes 12 and 9 respectively, were on their way to their school when they were shot at. Senior Superintendent of Police, Saharanpur, Vipin Tada, said,

"Preliminary investigation has revealed that both the injured and those who attacked are students of an intermediate college in Bhayana. They fought over the rivalry between them to prove their supremacy," he added.

Siddharth suffered injuries in his leg while Vinay was hit in the back, the official said.

A case has been registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code against three youths on the basis of a complaint filed by the victims' kin.

The SSP said that four teams had been constituted to nab the assailants.

91 suspected measles cases detected in parts of Mehsana

PTI ■ MEHSANA

A total of 91 suspected cases of measles were detected in parts of Mehsana district in Gujarat during a surveillance carried out in the last one month, a health department official said on Sunday.

Samples of the suspected cases from Molipur village in Vadnagar taluka and part of

that treatment and preventive measures were being taken. "Between November and December, 91 suspected cases of measles were found in Molipur and Kadi.

We have carried out a vaccination exercise and distributed vitamin A tablets as treatment and preventive measures," Patel told PTI.

He said that additional

surveillance was carried out after some suspected cases emerged during the routine surveillance. "We carried out an active search in the areas where five suspected cases were detected. Vaccination helps prevent the cases.

In this region, however, resistance to vaccines is high. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, vaccination against measles



slowled down further," he said. In the affected village, the rate of vaccination remains as low as 60-70 per cent.

The authorities are trying to create awareness among locals regarding the benefit of vaccination, Patel said. There has been an uptick of measles cases from certain districts and cities of Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Kerala,

Union Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar said in the Lok Sabha on Friday this week.

The Union Health Ministry has deployed multidisciplinary teams comprising public health specialists, paediatricians and microbiologists to assess the situation and provide technical support to the states, she said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Enough is enough

Politicians should focus on governance instead of worrying about Deepika Padukone's attire

A kind of me-too movement has begun—against freedom of expression. Apparently worried that they are being overtaken by their sanskari counterparts, Muslim fundamentalists have also started firing salvos at Pathaan, which stars Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone, and John Abraham. The Ulema Board of Madhya Pradesh is angry because, according to the Muslim scholars, it disrespects Islam. The board wants the film to be boycotted on grounds of obscenity. The list of complaints is typical: Islam has not been shown correctly, it promotes vulgarity, blah, blah, blah. The Muslim clergy are trying to tell everyone that they are no less concerned about the morals of their community than their Hindu counterparts. We too are moral guardians—this is the message. However, it is Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra who really revels in birthing and nurturing such phony controversies. The tilak-wearing Minister is a rising star in the sanskari universe, a great champion of the Hindu cause, a wannabe Guardian of Morals. Padukone's costume and its colour in a song of the film incensed him. He wants "rectification." If certain scenes in the song which he doesn't like are not "corrected," the state Government will consider what to do about the screening of the film. A year ago, the MP Minister had forced music company Saregama to "change" the lyrics and name of the song "Madhuban mein Radhika." If Madhuban mein Radhika is not sanskari enough, one wonders what is. It seems that Mishra's concern for sanskari is as great as his disdain for the norms of our democracy. A state in the Union of India is expected to respect the constitutional imperatives; its ministers

are bound to follow the laid-down rules and regulations, the processes and procedures. There is the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), a statutory body under the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, regulating the public exhibition of films. The CBFC has been mandated to, among other things, "ensure healthy entertainment, recreation and education to the public." Some Maoist outfit in some remote jungle of Dantewada banning a movie is understandable, for the Maoists don't believe in the Indian Republic anyway. But how can a Minister, who has sworn to uphold the Constitution, threaten to violate democratic norms so brazenly? Unfortunately, Mishra is not the only politician holding a high office who is guilty of such unconstitutional actions; there are many others in his own Party who have undermined free speech in the past. Our political masters are more concerned about hurt sentiments than governance. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan recorded the two highest crime rates against Dalits in 2021, which was more than twice the national average. Mishra should focus on making his state safer for Dalits instead of worrying about Padukone's attire.

PICTALK



A shepherd guides his sheep during a cold winter day on the outskirts of Srinagar

-PTI

Ambiguity on food security

The procurement of foodgrains has declined which raises doubts about food security in the country

As per the official statement, there are enough food grain reserves in the country and there is no such thing as food insecurity in the country. If the official report is to be believed the Government of India has sufficient food grain stocks under the central pool to meet the requirement of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and its other welfare schemes as well as for the additional allocation of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). According to the official statement released recently, as of December 15, the central pool has about 180 lakh tonnes of wheat and 111 lakh tonnes of rice. On January 1, 2023, about 159 lakh tonnes of wheat and 104 lakh tonnes of rice would be available. Interestingly enough this report comes after Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar's statement in the parliament, which pointed in the opposite direction. The minister in the parliament stated that the current wheat stocks in India had fallen below the mandatory threshold limit known as buffer norms for the first time in nearly a decade. Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar stated that the country's total stocks of centrally-held food grains (rice and wheat combined) as on December 1, stood at 30.5 million tonnes. "Of this, wheat reserves were at 19 million tonnes while rice stock stood at 11.5 million tonnes", he said. This discrepancy between the Minister's version and the

official statement only confuses and raises doubts about the government's preparedness to deal with hunger and malnourishment in the country.

According to the UN, there are nearly 195 million undernourished people in India. Also, roughly 43% of children in India are chronically undernourished. India ranks 68 out of 113 major countries in terms of the food security index 2022. Contrary to the official claims, the procurement of wheat during last season was on the lower side due to lesser production. Besides, farmers sold their foodgrains in the open market at prices higher than MSP which worsened the situation and resulted in lesser foodgrains in the government godowns. The allocations under the NFSA and PMGKAY have been changed in favor of rice in order to guarantee adequate wheat stock in the central pool. The number of people in the nation that experiences extreme food insecurity has increased from 20.3 per cent in 2018-20 to 22.3 per cent in 2019-21. The govt should clarify the actual position rather than throwing numbers around.

What the Taliban floggings foretell

The flogging incidents in Afghanistan show that the Taliban hasn't changed. It is as ruthless as it was two decades back.

Those who denied that the Taliban were savages or claimed that they had left behind the savagery that characterized their first innings in power in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, now face acute embarrassment. The recent merciless flogging of men—and even women—once again indicates that they are medieval barbarians. The flogging of a woman for going shopping without a male escort, showed that they were also horrible misogynists.

Besides imposing a nightmarish existence on the country's people, the Taliban's forcible capture of power in Afghanistan, conveys sinister messages to fundamentalist Islamic terrorists globally, giving a massive thrust to their strikes the world over. According to a report by Joe Wallen in The Telegraph (UK) of December 8, 2022, the Islamic State—Khorasan Province (IS-KP), an affiliate of the Islamic State of Syria and the Levant (ISIL), has perpetrated at least 220 attacks since the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan (in August 2021) and that the Pentagon has warned that it will be ready to launch attacks internationally by 2023.

The Taliban, who have totally failed to arrest the rapid expansion of the IS-KP's influence in Afghanistan despite a prolonged and bloody campaign, will launch their own global jihad when they are ready in the course of the next couple of years. Any argument that they have no intention of doing so will be as laughable as the one that they are either not, or have ceased to be, savages.

The Taliban believe in the doctrinal and strategic imperative of a global jihad but claim that its waging has to be calibrated according to circumstances, and that both Hanafi and Shafi'i schools of Islamic jurisprudence legitimize truces with infidels to serve broader strategic jihadi goals. The IS-KP, however, accuses them of abandoning jihad by signing the Doha agreement of February 29, 2020, with the United States. It has dubbed the Taliban as apostates, which justifies the latter's killing.



As the conflict with the IS-KP rages, the Taliban will be under growing pressure to pursue increasingly fanatical policies and intensify their global jihad to prove that they have not sold out to the US. This will be besides the actions of the other jihadi groups fired by the message their ascent to power has sent around—that it was possible for a lightly-armed militia without air support, but armed with a jihadi zeal and ideology, to defeat a mighty super power like the United States.

Support from Pakistan was, doubtless, a decisive factor in the Taliban's victory. It was, however, covert as Islamabad had to keep up with the façade of cooperating with Washington's war on the Taliban. Even otherwise, Pakistan was in no position to even remotely match the kind of assistance and combat support the US and its NATO allies provided to the Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani governments.

The Taliban's enforcement of savage punishments under Sharia law in the teeth of sharp criticism by an overwhelming majority of countries of the world, will further spur global jihad by showing to fundamentalist Islamist terrorists worldwide that they too



SUPPORT FROM PAKISTAN WAS, DOUBTLESS, A DECISIVE FACTOR IN THE TALIBAN'S VICTORY. IT WAS, HOWEVER, COVERT AS ISLAMABAD HAD TO KEEP UP WITH THE FAÇADE OF COOPERATING WITH WASHINGTON'S WAR ON THE TALIBAN

could implement Islamic jurisprudence by establishing Islamic emirates in their own countries and, eventually, one over the whole world.

To construct a rational sequence for the progression of the global jihad, it is likely to begin with the neighbouring countries of central Asia besides Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Initially, the main weapon will be terrorism unleashed with the help of local fifth columns charged up by the developments in Afghanistan. A process of escalation in the manner of the Taliban in Afghanistan, would follow leading, in the expectation of the jihadis, to the same kind of denouement that one saw in Afghanistan.

The massively powerful US and its allies may, of course, crush the jihadi surge. The world, already battered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the fall-out of the Ukraine war, will, however, have to pay, in the process. Terrorism cannot be crushed by sticking to the cannons of libertarian Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence. As experience shows, fear of retaliation prevents many witnesses from testifying against terrorists, lawyers from appearing against them, and some judges from convicting them.

The threat of violence can close down courts. Draconian anti-terrorism laws which severely restrict individual freedom and democratic rights, are already on the statute books of many countries, including India. Harsher legislation may follow, leading to authoritarian transformations of democracies, as statutes, however dangerous, have a way of staying in the books even after they are no longer needed.

The hope that aid and friendship can moderate and win over the Taliban, rests on shifting sand. No country has helped the Taliban more than Pakistan, which is now at the receiving end of border clashes with Afghanistan and Kabul's support to the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has persisted with a violent campaign against Islamabad. The Taliban will have to be ousted from power for the world to be spared its scourge. New Delhi needs to bear this in mind. The Taliban continues to shelter the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, both vicious terror groups primarily targeting India.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DRUG MENACE IN PUNJAB

Sir — According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCEB) report, Drug smuggling in Punjab remains a much-debated social, criminal and political issue. The state was even termed 'Udta Punjab'. The state once topped the list in drug use. Despite the Punjab government forming a Special Task Force (STF) to curb the menace, it however still manages to haunt the state. The report revealed that Uttar Pradesh has now occupied the top spot with 10,432 FIRs registered under the NDPS Act, followed by Maharashtra (10,078) and Punjab (9,972). The book, Roadmap for Prevention and Control of Substance Abuse in Punjab, released by the community medicine department of Chandigarh's Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) this year stated that more than 3 million people, or around 15.4 per cent of the population of Punjab, are currently consuming drugs. Amid rising concern, the Supreme Court this month had directed the state government to keep a check and be serious about the drug menace.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

JOKE OF ASIA

Sir — Joke of Asia is that the Asian trio India, China, Pakistan ... have same or common weapons sellers in ... USA and Europe, they are making triple-profit. Asian trio have great economic pull downs from 3 pitfalls of: overpopulation, weather extremities and unpredictable weather (spoiling agriculture, the main occupation of the trio).

China and Pakistan are wasting time in negative activities causing tension and pyrrhic wars i.e. all parties involved are losers, cross border firing and terrorism. Thus Asian trio should stick to peaceful negotiations and strengthen the economy via productive goods, constructive

Plight of senior citizens



The case of elderly persons seeking asylum in old-age homes is on rise despite their children being economically sound. Joint family system has already passed into history. The government department's staff are not lagging behind in neglecting the elderly persons. The Railways has usurped the senior citizenship concessions given to elderly persons. Now the talk of restoring the benefits has been doing rounds. Visibly it is high on promise and short on delivery. There are exceptionally good families where daughters-in-law are treated like daughters by parents-in-law and parents-in-law

are treated like parents by daughters-in-law. This Indian culture has been fast diminishing. Ram was in exile in fulfillment of the wishes of his step mother Kaikeyi. But today's children leave their parents in search of fortune. Nothing is more agonizing than this in their ripe age. The government has been evolving various schemes to protect the interest of senior citizens. But many senior citizens, especially uneducated ones, are either unaware of the schemes. In such cases the really needy citizens are deprived of the benefits offered by the government. In buses, seats are reserved for senior citizens but such seats are often occupied by the youngsters. But there is some silver lining where youngsters seated in unreserved seats offer their seats to the elderly. The world is a blend of both good and bad. Society needs to be resurrected.

K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

welfare activities. This is possible via pacts of no-buying-of weapons, no wars, no-negative-tactics.

Hence the Asian trio must wisely focus on strengthening the economy via constructive activities and productive goods, clean energy production. Big savings can be done by nullifying weapons, E-ballot, and E-transactions.

However the reality of conscience is, border issues are so complex to resolve, as earth was created as one nation planet of joint family... without borders and walls and all humans as 1-red-blood-family. We created all these imaginary words nations and states, for efficient administration via nuclear families.

P Vasudeva Rao Sreelekha | Secunderabad

POLITICAL TURMOIL IN BANGLADESH

Sir — In our close vicinity, Bangladesh is these days going through a political upheaval with its Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina of the Awami League facing the heat of the protests the Bangladesh National Party's workers with significant public support are staging for a week now, demanding her resignation. Human Rights observers have also taken Hasina to task for showing a lower tolerance threshold and the majoritarian approach by crushing her political adversaries. The editorial view carries weight that Sheikh Hasina who was voted to power with a good deal of goodwill and promises has turned back on her very own votaries themselves. Perhaps, that's why not only the BNP workers but common men also harbour grievances against the Awami League government. Therefore, aam aadmi in Bangladesh is also standing with BNP.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

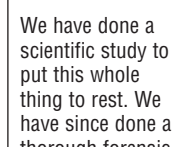
More than 200 people have died. Truth is being suppressed. The last rites were performed without a postmortem. They are threatening the victims.

Lok Janshakti Party chief —Chirag Paswan



China is feeling insecure, because in order to divert attention from the problems back home, China is now trying to provoke India.

Exiled Tibetan President —Penpa Tsering



We have done a scientific study to put this whole thing to rest. We have since done a thorough forensic analysis with a hypothermia expert who reproduced the raft from the movie.

Filmmaker —James Cameron



Kuldeep was brought in when Bangladesh had lost 3 wickets and they failed to read him. People think that chinaman or leg-spin bowlers need pace, but that's not true. Kuldeep Yadav is the prime example for that.

Pakistan cricketer — Rashid Latif



Nitish Kumar should make Tejashwi Yadav CM, JDU can't win elections on Kumar's face'.

Political strategist — Prashant Kishor



FIRST COLUMN

FROM ONLINE GAMING TO EDUCATION GAMING

It is time to ensure regulation of online gaming industry



DR AMAR PATNAIK

One of the founding fathers of the United States of America, Benjamin Franklin, famously remarked, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." While the history of learning in India can be traced back to Vedic times when Shruti (which may be translated as 'what is spoken') was the medium for knowledge transfer, the usage of games has always been viewed as an important alternative mode of learning.

With the IT revolution in full swing, the online gaming sector (particularly in India) has seen remarkable expansion in recent years. According to estimates, there are currently over 300 million gamers in India. According to a Boston Consulting Group (BCG) research issued in 2021, India's mobile gaming market would increase from \$1.5 billion in revenue in 2020 to \$5 billion by 2025.

Further, there are currently around 900 gaming firms in India, including Infosys Limited, Hyperlink InfoSystem, Fgfactory, and Zensar Technologies. The online gaming environment is appealing to individuals, particularly youngsters, since it immerses them in a parallel universe in which they may exercise control and enjoy themselves without leaving their homes. The gaming industry has seen another uptick with the emergence of metaverse and augmented reality.

However, it is important to remember that this expanded digital accessibility will provide its own set of challenges to the population. With the increased access and limited parental supervision, there is always a high chance of children falling prey to addiction in the online gaming space which may impact the mental health of children, especially when it crosses the mark of moderation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) had, in this regard, announced a plan to include "gaming disorder" as a mental health condition.



The access to tablets/laptops/smartphones as a part of online education, invariably increases the screen time which may lead to poor social skills and academics. Lack of a uniform regulatory framework, that distinguishes games of skill from games of chance, has allowed domestic and offshore betting and gambling platforms to operate with complete impunity.

Proliferation of such betting and gambling platforms has resulted in financial losses for users who have no recourse available to seek action due to absence of a national regulatory framework. The online presence exposes users' identity, whereabouts and even financial details which raises serious concerns over privacy and data protection.

At the individual level creating separate emails for gaming, using VPN, having a strong alphanumeric password, using an alias name and using firewall protection or HTTPS protocols are ways to ensure privacy.

However, the online gaming industry within India lacks regulatory oversight. Well-regulated online gaming, in this respect, has its own advantages, such as economic growth and additional benefits. Further pertaining to the National Education Policy, its set of recommendations encourages online education in which the teaching experience could be made more enriching and interesting for students by adding quizzes, competitions, games, online trivia, and assessments to keep the motivation levels high amongst the students and ensuring their higher participation.

A task force set up by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has prepared a draft report of its recommendations to regulate the online gaming industry in India. Among others, it has also recommended creating a regulatory body for the online gaming industry.

Therefore, it is time for India to take lead in ensuring effective regulation of the online gaming industry while remembering the famous words of Sheryl Sandberg, as per which 'Done is better than Perfect'.

(The author is BJD Rajya Sabha MP)

Learn from Trump to slash Chinese imports

If India curbs imports from China by increasing the import duty, it will reduce trade deficit and burden on forex



ASHWINI MAHAJAN

In the first nine months of the year 2022, imports from China have reached \$89.66 billion. In the corresponding period in 2021, Chinese imports were only \$68.46 billion. Imports from China were \$97.5 billion in the whole year 2021 and if this pace continues, Chinese imports may surpass \$120 billion in 2022.

Increasing imports from China are becoming a serious concern because it increases the trade deficit and, therefore, foreign exchange liability of the country. If we see, in the first nine months of this year, the total exports to China from India were only \$13.97 billion, which means a trade deficit of \$75.69 billion.

It is believed that by the end of this year, the trade deficit with China could reach \$100 billion, which will be a record. Significantly, in view of increasing imports from China and due to this increasing dependence of India on China, the government adopted various measures under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' scheme. At first, 14 industries were identified, which included electronics, medical equipment, Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), telecom products, food products, ACs, LEDs, high efficiency solar PV modules, automobiles and auto accessories, textile products, special steel, drones, etc. These were industries that have either faced closure or are at the verge of closure, after lagging in competition in the face of increasing imports from China.

Dumping by China at predatory prices, export subsidies by the Chinese government and the insensitive policy of the then government and continuous reduction of import duties helped Chinese to capture Indian markets.

Why are imports from China increasing? Today, when the Government of India is trying to provide new life to closed or on the verge of closure industries through PLI scheme, technical support and various other measures under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) programme, then what is the reason that despite that rise in Chinese imports is continuing unabated. It is notable that the imports of Chinese electronic and electrical machinery and its components, active pharmaceutical ingredients, that is APIs and other intermediates, are increasing rapidly.

The government's argument is that since imports from China consist mostly of intermediate goods, it is a good sign and indicates increased manufacturing in the country. It is also argued that value addition on the import of Chinese intermediate goods in the country also creates employment in the country. It is also said that since the intermediate goods come from China at cheaper prices, the cost of production also comes down, making Indian industry more competitive.

On the basis of this argument, pro-



IN 2018, US PRESIDENT TRUMP RAISED IMPORT TARIFFS IN SEVERAL PARTS; AND IN TOTAL, TARIFFS ON \$250 BILLION IMPORTS FROM CHINA WERE INCREASED TO 25 PER CENT. THE OBVIOUS RESULT WAS HUGE REDUCTION IN CHINESE IMPORTS

(The author is Professor, PGDAV College, University of Delhi)



globalisation economists do not mind increasing import, and rather advocate further reduction in import duties. Significantly, despite the strong opposition to Chinese goods in the country, the Chinese imports are increasing continuously, because a large part of the imports coming from China are not of finished consumer goods, but of capital and intermediate goods, including machinery and chemicals.

The big question is whether India lacks the capability to make these intermediate goods? Perhaps it's not correct. It is beyond comprehension that a country which is a superpower in many fields, including space, software, automobile, missiles, cannot manufacture intermediate goods of zero technology. It has to be understood that capacity building in India has been obstructed by China by dumping cheap goods and adopting many other unfair trade practices; and this conspiracy is not ending. It is said that business is a war and has to be fought as such.

Active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) is a vivid example in this regard. Twenty years back India used to provide for 90 per cent of its API requirements, while dumping from China and other countries destroyed our API industry and today 90 per cent of APIs requirements are met from imports. Such a huge dependence on our pharmaceutical industry is proving to be a big threat not only to the economy, but also to health security. Not only APIs, the government has to adopt several other supplementary measures as

well, so that in future Chinese imports do not destroy the upcoming Indian industry again.

The question here is not only about direct imports from China. A large amount of Chinese imports into the country are also coming through various ASEAN countries. Significantly, India has a free trade agreement with ASEAN countries, under which most of imports from ASEAN countries come at zero import duty. When Indian authorities started stopping Chinese imports imposing a country of origin condition, Chinese companies started setting up their factories in ASEAN countries only, due to which now Chinese imports cannot be stopped by tagging them as Chinese. This calls for revisiting India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Apart from this, many foreign automobile and other companies working in India, are also getting spare parts from abroad. When India increased the import duty on mobile phones, many foreign companies started their manufacturing in India. But still large quantities of components are still being imported from other countries, including China. India has sufficient potential in the field of raw materials and intermediates for textiles and apparel, but unfortunately, we see a huge import from abroad, resulting into huge under-utilised capacity in the sector. For instance, textiles imports from China were higher by 46.2 per cent in 2021-22, as compared to 2020-21, which is causing huge under-utilisation of capacity in the textile sector.

It is noteworthy that in the last one year, most of the imports from China, be it chemicals, plastic goods, textiles, machinery, have all increased much more than before. On the one hand, the government is trying to revive those industries which were either destroyed or greatly affected due to not being able to compete with China, by spending hugely under the PLI scheme. Although the results of the PLI scheme and other measures are yet to come, in addition to these measures some additional efforts would be required. We can learn from the USA in this regard.

In 2018, the then US President Donald Trump raised import tariffs in several parts; and in total, tariffs on \$250 billion imports from China were increased to 25 per cent. The obvious result was a huge reduction in Chinese imports. In 2017, the total imports of these goods were \$231.7 billion, which declined to only \$147.5 billion in 2021.

On the similar lines, if India also curbs the imports coming from China by increasing the import duty, it will have two benefits. One, the country's trade deficit will reduce and the burden on foreign exchange can also be reduced.

Secondly, promotion of these industries will help manufacturing GDP and employment to increase. It is important to mention here that while even today our import duty is around 10 per cent on an average, India can increase import duty significantly, even up to 40 per cent as per bound rates committed under WTO rules.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

NO SERIAL OR FILM THAT INSULTS HINDUTVA WOULD BE ALLOWED TO RUN IN MAHARASHTRA. JNU SUPPORTERS ARE DELIBERATELY INSULTING OUR RELIGION.

—MAHARASHTRA BJP MLA RAM KADAM



FEMINISTS SHOULD WEAR SAFFRON-COLORED BRAS AND BIKINIS TO RESPOND TO 'BHAKTS'.

—CONGRESS LEADER DR UDIT RAJ

Shradha case reminds us about risks women face

To make homes a safe haven for women, not just legal protection but a strong social support system is also needed



ARCHANA DATTA

Media churns out every day shocking details of Aftab Poonawala's murder of his live-in partner Shradha Walker. It raises serious concerns about women's safety in urban private space and also about countless untold stories of violence against women in India's vast rural hinterlands, where patriarchy and misogyny are still deep rooted.

In India, gender-based violence is a dark and bitter reality. In 2021, the National Crime Research Bureau (NCRB) recorded the highest number of crimes against women in six years. 'Cruelty by husband or his relatives' remained consistently the most reported violent crime against women, almost one in every four minutes.

National Family Health Survey (NHFS)-5, however,

indicated a marginal decline in cases of domestic violence against women from 31.2 per cent to 29.3 per cent, and specified that greater proportion of rural women experienced spousal violence than their urban counterparts, barring a few States like Bihar, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Sikkim. One of the progressive States, Karnataka, recorded the highest number of domestic violence cases, with 44 per cent of married women reporting physical and sexual violence, while the national capital Delhi had the highest percentage of crime against women (47.6 per cent) in 2021.

A research study (IIPS, 2017) categorically stipulated that 'spousal violence cuts across class, caste and community' and women in rural areas

(36 per cent) are more likely to experience one or more forms of spousal violence than those in urban areas (28 per cent). While, in 2020, an analytical study on the status of rural women's rights in socio-political space mooted that 'women suffer from a cycle of invisibility, which begins at home, more particularly, when they enter into marriages, sometimes forcibly before the legal age of 18 years, and regarded as an important 'capital-bearing' object, a 'subordinate' confined to domestic and caring roles, and also in a 'sexual' form through popular culture.

Not surprising that the NHFS-5 revealed that 'more than 40 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men justified a man beating his wife, on grounds such as if she dis-

spects her in-laws, neglects household work or children, leaves house without informing the husband, refuses to have sex with him or doesn't cook properly', and the percentage goes up to more than 75 per cent in States like Telangana (84 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (84 per cent) and Karnataka (77 per cent).

A gender justice expert explained that such an internalised and inherent patriarchal mindset, has its origin in 'harmful gender social norms, which define how women should behave in society'. Many social researchers expounded that 'rural women being less educated and having lesser chances of being employed encounter higher degrees of domestic violence and that urbanisation is likely to lead to

modernisation, erosion of harmful social norms and promote values of gender equality.'

But some recent research studies also argued that 'the transition from rural to urban way of living has not been successful in eradicating patriarchal norms and that rural to urban transition has not been found to be linearly related to spousal violence'.

Women in urban slums are particularly found to be more vulnerable to intimate partner violence (IPV), while being deprived of family support and life-sustaining basic facilities, studies have revealed.

Now, the gruesome murder of Shradha in the national capital exposes the vulnerability of educated young urban women trapped in a toxic relationship, which many divisive social elements tried to paint in the colour of 'Love Jihad', whereas, the moral guardians of society played the role of victim bashers by saying that 'educated girls are paying the price for indulging in the wrong practice of live-in relationship, which leads to such crimes'.

While a criminal psychologist explicated Aftab's criminal behaviour to his being a type of a classic narcissistic and sadistic personality, who is genetically and mentally predisposed to such behaviour, and the external factor like the influence of the on screen violence only acted as an aggravator. On the other hand, Shradha failed to red flag Aftab's increasing aggression, emotional abuse and gaslight-

ing, said a mental health and behavioural science expert.

Looking at the global scenario, on an average, more than five women or girls have been killed every hour by a family member in 2021, and almost one in four (24 per cent) adolescent girls (15-19 years) experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner (WHO). Amid such a grim situation, the goal of eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030 (SDG-5) remains a far cry.

Now, to make homes a safe haven for women, not legal protection alone, but a strong social support system is needed, apart from leveraging education as a tool for removing gender bias against women and fostering a gender-equal ecosystem.

Key Ukrainian city's rapid fall leaves unanswered questions

AP ■ KHERSON

When about 100 Russian troops rolled into Kherson's Lilac Park on the morning of March 1, Oleh Shornik was one of about 20 lightly armed Ukrainian volunteers who didn't stand a chance against them.

Ukraine's military was nowhere to be seen, and Russian troops in armored vehicles had easily entered the Shumensky neighbourhood, opening fire and sending shrapnel flying everywhere, witnesses said.

Civilians walking to work were hit in the short, fierce battle. The volunteers, hiding among the trees in the park, were cut down so rapidly that they weren't even able to throw the Molotov cocktails they had prepared.

"They did not have time to do anything," said Anatoli Hudzenko, who was inside his home next to the park during the attack, in an interview with *The Associated Press*.

Left seemingly on their own, the civilian volunteers fell quickly. A day later, so did Kherson. Thousands of Russian troops, sweeping up from the Crimean Peninsula on February 24, captured the city on the Dnieper River so rapidly that many residents say they felt abandoned by the Ukrainian military and its quick withdrawal, leaving the city without an adequate defense. But was the doomed stand in Lilac Park a futile, early



Svetlana Shornik stands next to the grave of her 53-year-old ex-husband, Oleh Shornik, on the outskirts of Kherson, Ukraine, on Sunday. Oleh Shornik was among 20 civilian volunteers of Ukraine's Territorial Defense Forces killed by Russian troops in March in the southern city before it fell to Moscow. Russia held it for eight months before retreating in November. AP Photo

act of resistance to what became a bloody Russian occupation of Kherson? Was it due to the hasty retreat by Ukraine's military so it could regroup to fight another day - indeed later retaking the city in November? Or was it the result of a betrayal by high-level Ukrainian

security officials collaborating with Moscow? It's possible it was a combination of all of those. Now that Russia has retreated from Kherson following Ukraine's counteroffensive in the south, residents want to know why Moscow's forces were able to overrun the

city so easily. "There are more questions than answers to this story," said Svetlana Shornik, standing at her ex-husband's grave for the first time because the Russians had blocked access to the cemetery while they had occupied the city. Besides the volunteers killed in

the park, about five others were slain that day at a roundabout nearby. Families of the dead say they have been trying in vain for months to get information from the military and the government so they can have some closure about the deaths of their loved ones.

"I know very little," said Nadiia Khandusenko, recounting what few facts she knows about the death of her husband, Serhii, who also was killed in Lilac Park. Wiping away tears, Shornik told the AP that she believes her ex-husband probably suffered in his final minutes because an autopsy revealed the 53-year-old retired policeman was shot in the lung.

The bodies lay on the bloodstained grounds of the park for three days because the Russians would not allow them to be buried, residents said.

"They are heroes," Shornik said. "They were practically defending (the city) with their bare hands," she said.

Ukraine's Territorial Defense Force began operating just before the Russian invasion. A volunteer militia under the command of the Defense Ministry, it was made up of civilians, part-time reservists and former troops to fight alongside the regular military.

Despite their lack of training and equipment, the volunteers have played a crucial role in the war and were a key reason Kyiv wasn't occupied, said Mykhailo Samus, founder of New Geopolitics Research Network, a Ukrainian think tank.

"When a (Russian) sabotage group gets into a city, they expect to see civilians, but they found a lot of people with Kalashnikov guns and it was a disaster for Russians," Samus said. Civilian volunteers were

unable to hold back the Russian forces from Kherson, a port city with a prewar population of 280,000 that is home to a shipbuilding industry.

Kherson is just north of Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014. When Ukraine controlled the city, it was able to cut off fresh water to the peninsula, and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke of the need to restore water supplies as one reason to invade.

Flat and marshy, the Kherson region has few forests or other natural barriers to halt the tanks and troops from nearby Crimea that hosts Russia's Black Sea fleet and air bases.

In addition, Ukrainian officials such as Kherson Mayor Ihor Kolykhaev told the newspaper *Ukrainska Pravda* in May that the failure to destroy key bridges leading to the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions was a mistake that helped the Russians, although he stressed he was not a military man.

Ukraine's outnumbered military, meanwhile, had withdrawn from Kherson for the southern city of Mykolaiv, said Maj. Oleksandr Fedynin, a military spokesman.

That withdrawal "ensured the survivability of troops and did not allow the enemy to gain fire superiority in the air," said Bohdan Senyk, chief spokesman for the army. Kherson's swift capture has raised questions about whether

Ukrainian collaborators aided the Russian invasion.

"Russia had its agents infiltrated into the Ukrainian security forces, and the cleanup by Kyiv was slow and inefficient," said Orysia Lutsevych, head of the Ukraine forum at the London-based Chatham House think tank. "The cost of that betrayal was high human loss."

On April 1, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed two senior officials of Ukraine's SBU domestic security agency, including the head of the Kherson regional branch, stripping their rank as generals for violating their military oath of allegiance. He called them "anti-heroes" and said they "had trouble determining where their Fatherland is."

He added: "I don't have time now to deal with all the traitors, but they will all face punishment."

In addition, an aide to one of those SBU officials was arrested and faces prosecution for allegedly handing over maps of minefields and helping coordinate Russian airstrikes that aided Moscow's forces, said Oleksandr Samoilenko, head of Kherson's regional legislature.

The Russian takeover of Kherson - the only regional capital to fall in the war - ushered in a harsh, eight-month occupation that saw fierce resistance from its remaining civilians, including attacks against Moscow-installed officials, planted bombs and other threats.

Russian shelling targets heart of city of Kherson

AP ■ KYIV

Russian military forces on Sunday shelled the centre of Kherson, the major city that Russian soldiers retreated from last month in one of Moscow's biggest battlefield setbacks in Ukraine.

Three people were wounded in the attacks, said presidential deputy chief of staff Kyrylo Tymoshenko. The southern city and its surrounding region have come under frequent attack since the Russian pullback. Ukraine's governor Yaroslav Yanushevych said on Sunday



that Russia had carried out 54 attacks with rocket, mortar and tank fire over the previous day, killing three people and wounding six. Meanwhile, in Russia, the governor of the Belgorod region, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said Sunday that one person was killed and eight wounded in Ukrainian shelling of the region, which lies along Ukraine's northern border.

In the latest phase of the war that Russia began nearly 10 months ago, Moscow's forces have been heavily targeting infrastructure serving civilians, such as water and

electricity supply lines, compounding Ukrainians' suffering as winter sets in. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy used the final of the soccer World Cup to decry war.

"This World Cup proved time and again that different countries and different nationalities can decide who is the strongest in fair play but not in the playing with fire - on the green playing field, not on the red battlefield," Zelenskyy said in an English video statement released hours before the final in Qatar between Argentina and France.

Vote counting finishes in Fiji election with no clear winner



AP ■ WELLINGTON

People's Alliance Party leader Sitiveni Rabuka gestures during a press conference while counting resumes after the Fiji election in Suva, Fiji. Vote counting finished in Fiji's general election on Sunday with Rabuka, who led a coup back in 1987 and later served as an elected prime minister in the 1990s, emerged as the main challenger to Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, who has held power for the past 16 years. (Mick Tsikas/AAP Image via AP)

Vote counting finished in Fiji's general election on Sunday but there was no clear winner, and various political parties are now negotiating to form a coalition government.

The election had pitted two former coup leaders against each other.

Sitiveni Rabuka, who led a coup back in 1987 and later served as an elected prime minister in the 1990s, emerged as the main challenger to Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, who has held power for the past 16 years.

Rabuka's People's Alliance Party and allies the National Federation Party won about 45 per cent of the vote combined. Bainimarama's Fiji's First Party, meanwhile, won about 43 per cent.

That has left both sides seeking to form a coalition with the Social Democrat Liberal Party. The liberal party's general secretary Lenaitasi Duru told media they were having meetings with both sides.

"The first round of negotiations was done yesterday," Duru said. "We are expecting more negotiations later this afternoon."

He said the party's priorities included Indigenous affairs and education. "Right now we're sitting in the middle," Duru said. "We're watching and waiting for what is on offer,

then we'll make the decision based on what's best for the nation." Earlier, on Friday, Rabuka's party and four others had said they were launching a nationwide petition because they had no faith in the integrity of election officials.

But an international group that monitored the election said Friday it did not observe any voting irregularities and the process was transparent and credible.

The dispute had threatened to destabilise the Pacific nation's fragile democracy, which has been marred by four military coups in the past 35 years.

Rebekha Sharkie, an Australian lawmaker and co-chair of the 90-strong Multinational Observer Group, told reporters in Fiji they had unrestricted access to the election process and didn't observe any irregularities. She said the group had assessed that Fijians were able to vote freely.

Explosion in northern Iraq killed 9 cops, say Iraq officials



AP ■ IRBIL

An explosive device went off in northern Iraq on Sunday, killing at least nine members of the Iraqi federal police force who were on patrol, Iraqi security officials said.

Among the fatalities was an officer with the rank of major, according to a tweet from a military spokesman, Yahya Rasool. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in the village of Ali Sultan in the Riyadh district of the province of Kirkuk.

Rasool added that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani had been briefed about the attack. An investigation was underway.

Two Iraqi security officials said nine were killed and clarified that the explosive device was a bomb. They said another three policemen were wounded in altercations with militants that broke out following the explosion, without elaborating.

The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media. On Wednesday, three Iraqi soldiers were killed when a bomb exploded during a security

operation in the Tarmiyah district, north of Baghdad. Among those killed was the commander of the 59th Infantry Brigade.

No one claimed responsibility for that attack either, but remnants of the militant Islamic State group are active in the area and have claimed similar attacks in Iraq in the past.

IS was defeated and lost all territory it once controlled in Syria and Iraq, with its last stronghold in Syria falling to the US-backed campaign in 2019. However, sleeper cells remain and have carried out attacks that have killed scores of Iraqis and Syrians.

In Iraq, the militants have successfully exploited security gaps across a patch of territory in the north because of an ongoing dispute between Baghdad and Irbil, the capital of the Kurdish-run semi-autonomous region of Iraq.

Rural areas of Kirkuk, Diyala, Ninevah and Salahaddin provinces in particular have been difficult to police, with Iraqi security forces spread thin and IS militants routinely terrorizing local residents.

At times they have managed to overrun towns overnight due to security gaps.

N Korea fires 2 ballistic missiles capable of reaching Japan



AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea test-fired a pair of ballistic missiles with a potential range of striking Japan on Sunday, in a possible protest of Tokyo's adoption of a new security strategy to push for more offensive footing against North Korea and China.

The launches came two days after the North claimed to have performed a key test needed to build a more mobile, powerful intercontinental ballistic missile designed to strike the U.S. Mainland.

The two missiles traveled from the country's northwest Tongchangri area about 500 kilometers (310 miles) at a maximum altitude of 550 kilometers (340 miles) before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, according to the South Korean and Japanese governments.

South Korea's military described both missiles as medium-range weapons that were launched at a steep angle, suggesting they could have traveled

farther if fired at a standard trajectory. North Korea usually tests medium- and longer-range missiles at a high angle to avoid neighboring countries, though it fired an intermediate-range missile over Japan in October, forcing Tokyo to issue evacuation alerts and halt trains.

In an emergency meeting, top South Korean security officials deplored North Korea's continued provocations that they said came despite "the plight of its citizens moaning in hunger and cold due to a serious food shortage." They said South Korea will boost a trilateral security cooperation with U.S. And Japan, according to South Korea's presidential office.

Japanese Vice Defense Minister Toshiro Ino separately criticized North Korea for threatening safety of Japan, region and international community. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said launches highlight destabilizing impact of North Korea's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs.

China's cities battle first wave of Covid surge as wider spread looms

BEIJING: Streets in major Chinese cities were eerily quiet on Sunday as people stayed home to protect themselves from a surge in COVID-19 cases that has hit urban centres from north to south.

China is currently in the first of an expected three waves of COVID cases this winter, according to the country's chief epidemiologist, Wu Zunyou. Cases could multiply across the country if people follow typical travel patterns of returning to their home areas in a mass transit movement for the Lunar New Year holiday next month.

China is also yet to officially report any COVID deaths since Dec. 7, when the country abruptly ended most restrictions key to a zero-COVID tolerance policy following unprecedented public protests against the protocol. The strategy had been championed by President Xi Jinping. As part of the easing of the zero-COVID curbs, mass testing for the virus has ended, casting doubt on whether officially reported case numbers can capture the full scale of the outbreak. China reported some 2,097 new symptomatic COVID infections on Dec. 17.

In Beijing, the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant has already hit services from catering to parcel deliveries. Funeral homes and crematoriums across the city of 22 million are also struggling to keep up with demand. Social media posts also showed empty



streets in the city of Xian in China's northwest, while internet users complained of delays to deliveries. In Chengdu,

streets were deserted but food delivery times were improving, said a resident surnamed Zhang, after services began to

adapt to recent surge in cases. Getting hold of antigen test kits was still difficult however, she said. Her recent order had

been redirected to hospitals, she said, citing the provider. In Shanghai, authorities said schools should move most classes online from Monday, and in nearby Hangzhou most school grades were encouraged to finish the winter semester early. In Guangzhou, those already doing online class as well as pre-schoolers should not prepare for a return to school, said education bureau.

Speaking at a conference in Beijing on Saturday, chief epidemiologist Wu of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention said current outbreak would peak this winter and run in three waves for about three months, according to a state media report of his speech.

'Prachanda' meets Deuba, desires to be Nepal's next Prime Minister: Report

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', the chairman of the CPN-Maoist Centre, has met Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and reportedly expressed his desire to become the country's new premier, as the two leaders discussed how to take the ruling coalition forward and form the next government.

The meeting on Saturday assumes significance as President Bidya Devi Bhandari is considering calling the political parties to put forward their claims to form the next government.

"The President has not yet decided on a specific day. However, she will very soon call the parties to stake their claim," Tika Dhakal, press expert to President Bhandari, told The Kathmandu Post newspaper.

No party in the 275-member House of Representatives has 138 seats required to form the new government.

The ruling alliance which together has numbers close to the majority mark in the House is still undecided on who leads the new Cabinet. The Nepali Congress (NC) led by Deuba has emerged as the single largest party in the November



election with 89 seats. The other partners of the ruling alliance have together secured 47 seats - CPN-Maoist Centre (32), CPN-Unified Socialist (10), Loktantrik Samajwadi Party (4), and Rashtriya Janamorchha (1).

The newly-formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) has also offered to extend support to the five-party alliance headed by the Nepali Congress in government formation. The RSP has emerged as the fourth-largest party in the elections held on November 20, securing 20 seats.

Nepali Congress spokesperson Prakash Sharan Mahat said Prachanda in his meeting with Prime Minister Prachanda has formally sought the support of the Nepali



Congress to become prime minister in the first half of the five-year term, the newspaper said. While forging an electoral alliance ahead of the November 20 polls, Deuba and Prachanda had reportedly struck a 'gentleman's agreement' on leading the government by turns.

Mahat said while Prachanda's proposal was to be expected, it would be more natural for Nepali Congress, as the largest party to emerge from the elections, to lead the government.

Asked if Prachanda sought Deuba's support to become the new prime minister, CPN-MC leader Narayan Kaji Shrestha said he asked Deuba how he wanted to proceed, to which he replied all coalition partners should decide within

their respective outfits, the Himalayan Times newspaper reported. Prachanda has been projecting himself as a claimant for the executive head since much before the elections in public forums.

Deuba, who is the front-runner to become the prime minister for the sixth time, has not given any definite answer to Prachanda, a source close to the prime minister told The Kathmandu Post newspaper. The ruling coalition, which

has decided to remain intact to form the next government, has multiple prime ministerial aspirants, especially from the Nepali Congress.

During the election campaign, at least half a dozen senior Nepali Congress leaders had disclosed their intent to fight for the prime ministerial position should they win the election. The Congress is struggling to elect its parliamentary party leader as per the party statute.

Nepal Prez calls political parties to form new Govt within 7 days

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Sunday called on all the political parties of Nepal to form a new government within seven days, as Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba discussed power sharing deal with the coalition partner Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.

The President's call comes following the submission of a report by the Election Commission of the final results of the election of members of

the House of Representatives (HoR) and Provincial Assembly held on November 20. As no single party got a majority in the HoR election, the President has called for submitting a claim by a member of the HoR who can garner a majority with support from two or more parties, as stipulated in the Article 76 clause 2 of the Constitution.

The deadline for submission of the claim is 5 pm on December 25, according to a statement issued by the Office of the President.

Iran authorities arrest actress of Oscar-winning movie

AP ■ CAIRO

Iranian authorities arrested one of the country's most renowned actresses on charges of spreading falsehoods about nationwide protests that grip the country, state media said.

The report by IRNA said Taraneh Aidoosti, star of the Oscar-winning movie "The Salesman," was detained on Saturday, a week after she made a post on Instagram expressing solidarity with the first man recently executed for crimes allegedly committed during the protests.

The announcement is the latest in a series of celebrity arrests, that have included footballers, actors and influencers, in response to their open display of support for anti-government demonstrations now in their third month.

According to the report published on the state media's official Telegram channel, Aidoosti was arrested because she did not provide "any documents in line with her claims."

It said that several other Iranian celebrities had also been summoned by the judiciary body over publishing provocative content, and that some had been arrested. It provided no further details.

In her post, the 38-year-old actress said: "His name was Mohsen Shekari. Every international organization who is watching this bloodshed and not taking action, is a disgrace to humanity." Shekari was executed Dec. 9 after being charged by an Iranian court with blocking a street in Tehran and attacking a member of the country's security forces with a machete.

In November, Hengameh Ghaziani and Katayoun Riahii, two other famous Iranian actresses, were arrested by authorities for expressing solidarity with protesters on social media. Voria Ghafouri, an Iranian soccer player, was also arrested last month for "insulting the national soccer team and propagandizing



Bahram Dehghani, from left, Hooman Behmanesh, Navid Mohammadzadeh, director Saeed Roustayi, Taraneh Aidoosti, and Payman Maadi pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'Leila's Brothers' at the 75th international film festival, Cannes, southern France. Iranian authorities arrested Aidoosti, one of the country's most famous actresses on charges of spreading falsehoods about nationwide protests that grip the country, state media said AP Photo

against the government." All three have been released. Since September, Aidoosti has openly expressed solidarity with protesters in at least three posts on Instagram. Her account, which had some 8 million followers, has been suspended.

Last Week, Iran executed a second prisoner, Majidreza Rahnavard, in connection with the protests. Rahnavard's body was left hanging from a construction crane as a gruesome warning to others. Iranian authorities alleged Rahnavard stabbed two members of its paramilitary force.

Both Shekari and Rahnavard were executed less than a month after they were charged, underscoring the speed at which Iran now carries out death sentences imposed for alleged crimes related to the demonstrations.

PTI Governments in Punjab and KPK provinces to dissolve Assemblies on Dec 23 to pave way for fresh elections: Imran

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday warned that his "country is sinking" as he announced that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces will dissolve their assemblies on December 23 to pave the way for fresh polls. "Till the time free and fair elections are not held, we are all afraid that the country (Pakistan) is sinking," PTI chairman Khan said in a video address with Punjab Chief Minister Parvez Elahi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan by his side. Imran Khan also reiterated his demand for free and fair elections, warning the country might sink otherwise. He said free and fair elections were the only solution to

Pakistan's problems and said the government was "afraid" of new elections due to the fear of losing, Dawn reported. "Once we dissolve both the assemblies, we will hold elections in the provinces.

Also, our 123-125 National Assembly members -- whose resignations have not been accepted -- will ask the speaker inside the assembly to accept their resignations," he said.

Elaborating on the PTI's plan of action after dissolving the assemblies, he said, "Then we will prepare for elections after that and with our around 130 seats in the National Assembly, we will go to the NA speaker and demand him to accept our resignations instead of picking a few." Addressing the people of Pakistan, the PTI chief asked the nation to refrain from being disappointed, saying it was akin to "run-



ning away from our duty to society", the Dawn newspaper reported. He said a "lesson should be taught through elections" to the government and deal it "such a defeat that the names of these thieves are wiped out forever". Imran Khan said the country would

"stand up" when "tough decisions" are taken for "restructuring institutions and establishing justice in the country". At the beginning of his address, Imran Khan bemoaned about the country's current economic situation under the Shehbaz Sharif government.

Low turnout in Tunisia Parliament vote amid cost-of-living crisis

Tunis: Tunisians voted to elect a new parliament, to the backdrop of a soaring cost-of-living crisis and concerns of democracy backsliding in North African country - the cradle of Arab Spring protests a decade ago. Opposition parties - including the Salvation Front coalition that the popular Ennahda party is part of - boycotted the polls on Saturday because they say the vote is part of President Kais Saied's efforts to consolidate power.

The decision to boycott will likely lead to the next legislature being subservient to president, whom critics accuse of authoritarian drift. After the polls closed at 6 p.m. (1700 GMT), the voter turnout appeared lower than in previous legislative elections in 2014 and 2019. AP

Fuel tanker tunnel blast kills at least 19 in Afghanistan

AP ■ KABUL

At least 19 people were killed and 32 injured when a fuel tanker exploded in a tunnel north of the Afghan capital Kabul, a local official said on

Sunday. The Salang Tunnel, which is around 80 miles north of the 1960s to assist the Soviet invasion. It is a key link between the country's north and south. According to Said

Himatullah Shamim, a spokesman for Parwan province, Saturday night's tunnel explosion killed at least 19 people, including women and children.

He said survivors remain trapped under rubble and that the number of casualties could rise. It was not immediately clear what caused the incident, which happened at around 8.30 pm. Parwan's health department has received 14 dead and 24 injured so far, according to local official Dr. Abdullah Afghan.

There are five women and two children among the dead, he said, and the rest are men who are severely burnt and cannot be recognised. Molvi Hamidullah Misbah, a spokesman for the Ministry of Public Works, said earlier on Sunday that the fire was extinguished and that teams were still working to clear tunnel.

Space crew using robotic arm to inspect damaged capsule

AP ■ MOSCOW

The crew of the International Space Station on Sunday was inspecting an attached Russian space capsule that may have been damaged by a micrometeorite, while ground controllers considered whether to send up a replacement spaceship to ferry some of them home.

Russia's space corporation, Roscosmos, said the crew was using a camera on a Canadian-built robotic arm to capture images of the Soyuz MS-22 where a coolant leak was detected last Wednesday night, U.S. Time. After the images are transmitted to the ground on Monday, space officials will analyze them — along with other data about the problem — by month's end and decide on next steps.

One option, Roscosmos said, is to expedite the delivery of another Soyuz capsule to the space station. Workers



at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan are preparing to launch Soyuz MS-23 to the space station next March with three crew members but could send it up sooner without a crew. That would allow some of the seven crew now on the space station to return home.

A Russian space official said last Thursday a micrometeorite could have caused the leak. Roscosmos said the damage was to the outer skin of an instrument and equipment compartment.

Ex-drug offenders get first marijuana licences in US

New York: Naiomy Guerrero's brother was stopped by police often and was once convicted on drug charges when marijuana was illegal in New York. Now, she is setting up a legal cannabis business, a promising new market fraught with pitfalls.

New York state is offering its first 150 licenses for the legal sale of cannabis to people -- and their relatives -- who have been convicted of offenses related to the drug, including selling. The policy, implemented by the state's Democratic leaders, seeks to compensate African-American and Hispanic communities

whose members were disproportionately arrested and convicted during the decades weed was illegal. "It's such an exciting moment for my family," said 31-year-old Guerrero, a PhD art history student whose parents are from the Dominican Republic. "Especially given where we come from and everything we have been through, with the discriminatory policies that the city has had, like stop and frisk," she told AFP. Last month, Guerrero was one of the first 28 successful applicants who received their license to open an official store and sell locally-grown cannabis. The licenses come

more than a year after New York state, home to 20 million people, legalized cannabis use. In New York city, the smell of weed is now about as ubiquitous as yellow taxis and shiny skyscrapers.

The city government expects the legal cannabis industry to generate \$1.3 billion in sales as early as next year and between 19,000 and 24,000 jobs in three years. That represents much-needed tax revenues. Racial disparities Jeremy Rivera, is another New Yorker looking to profit. He was convicted of a "non-violent drug offense including cannabis" in 2016. He was released from

prison in 2018 and has vowed never to go back. The 36-year-old wants to put his knowledge of cannabis and business acumen to use by opening a weed shop east of the city on Long

Island. The heavily tattooed Rivera, who grew up surrounded by crime in the borough of Queens, hopes to be among the next group of licensees.



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Branch Address: Dhiraaj Baug, Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Beside Axis Bank, Opp. Monalisa Building, Agra Road, Hari Niwas Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) - 400 602.

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) (formerly known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. (DHFL)) under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PCHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to PCHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Date and Amount with NPA date	Property address
(LC No.: 1300000119 of Gurgaon Branch) Sanjay Bhanu (Borrower) Deepa Bhanu (Co Borrower 1)	14-11-2022 / ₹ 6889353 /- ₹ Sixty Five lakh Eighty Nine Thousand Three Hundred Fifty Three Only NPA (30-04-2021)	Pvt No 08, (know As Flat No-e-104) Third Floor (I) Shikhar, E. F. Old Lal Dora village, Kakrola New Delhi New Delhi Delhi 110059
(LC No.: 09200001462 of Rohini Branch) Love Kumar (Borrower) Sharmistha (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 2112038 /- ₹ Twenty One lakh Twelve Thousand Eighteen Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Plot No. P-36, Third Floor Gali No-5, Bihari Colony Bihari Colony, Shadara Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110032
(LC No.: 25500000970 of Netaji Subhash Place Branch) Abhishek Dubey (Borrower) Ajitesh Dubey (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 6175172 /- ₹ Sixty One lakh Seventy Five Thousand One Hundred Seventy Two Only NPA (09-09-2022)	Plot No. C-3, Municipal No. 27-A, Third Floor Ward Roof, Western Side Portion, Plot No. B-13, Sharda Puri Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110015
(LC No.: 09600001428 of New Delhi-west Branch) Roop Chandra (Borrower) Suman Devi (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 1653382 /- ₹ Sixteen lakh Fifty Three Thousand Three Hundred Eighty Two Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Property No. Rz-17/258, First Floor Kharsa No. 258, West Sagarpur, Village Nasirpur, New Delhi New Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110046
(LC No.: 25500001833 of Netaji Subhash Place Branch) Shaurya Kumar Pataik (Borrower) Triveni Devi (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 1918644 /- ₹ Nineteen lakh Eighteen Thousand Six Hundred Forty Only NPA (09-08-2022)	H. No. F-14 B, Rear Rhs Third Floor With Roof, Block-F, Kharsa No. 655, Sudarshan Park Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110015
(LC No.: 13300001066 of Cannanught Place Branch) Manoj Mittal (Borrower) Vanita (Co Borrower 1) Tamanna Mittal (Co Borrower 2)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 1952083 /- ₹ Nineteen lakh Fifty Two Thousand Eighty Three Only NPA (09-09-2022)	Plot No.1, First Floor Back Side, Kh.No.79/15,VIII, Hastal, Om Vihar Ph-1, Uttam Nagar New Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110059
(LC No.: 07700001415 of Ghaziabad Branch) Swapna Mishra (Borrower)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 883276 /- ₹ Eight lakh Eighty Three Thousand Two Hundred Eighty Eight Only NPA (30-09-2021)	Flat No. M-607, 6th Floor, Block-M Grand Savana, K D P Group N H -58, Nooragar, Ghaziabad Ghaziabad Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh :- 201011
(LC No.: 07700001415 of Ghaziabad Branch) Swapna Mishra (Borrower)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 6208 /- ₹ Six Thousand Two Hundred Eight Only NPA (30-09-2021)	Flat No. M-607, 6th Floor, Block-M Grand Savana, K D P Group N H -58, Nooragar, Ghaziabad Ghaziabad Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh :- 201011
(LC No.: 09600000636 of New Delhi-west Branch) Shishir Jaiswal (Borrower) Akansha Jaiswal (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 1309159 /- ₹ Thirteen lakh Nine Thousand One Hundred Fifty Nine Only NPA (03-09-2014)	Kh. No-217/1, Flat No-S-305 3Rd Floor Village Kandoli Pargana Pachwadon Dehradun Dehradun Uttarakhand :- 248001
(LC No.: 09600000637 of New Delhi-west Branch) Shishir Jaiswal (Borrower) Akansha Jaiswal (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 1309159 /- ₹ Thirteen lakh Nine Thousand One Hundred Fifty Nine Only NPA (03-09-2014)	Kh. No-217/1, Flat No-s-306 3rd Floor Village Kandoli Pargana Pachwadon Dehradun Dehradun Uttarakhand :- 248001
(LC No.: 13100001261 of Noida 1 Rajendra Place Branch) Shashi Kant Mishra (Borrower) Kavita Mishra (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 357356 /- ₹ Three lakh Fifty Seven Thousand Three Hundred Fifty Six Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Property No-271, Second Floor Bhai Parmanand Colony Dr. Mukherjee Nagar Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110009
(LC No.: 13100001306 of Noida 1 Rajendra Place Branch) Shashi Kant Mishra (Borrower) Kavita Mishra (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 391454 /- ₹ Three lakh Ninety One Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Four Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Property No-271, Second Floor Bhai Parmanand Colony Dr. Mukherjee Nagar Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110009
(LC No.: 25500001814 of Netaji Subhash Place Branch) Mukesh Kumar (Borrower) Reena Sharma (Co Borrower 1) Real Imagine And Research Centre Up (Co Borrower 2)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 2599731 /- ₹ Twenty Five lakh Ninety Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty One Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Prop No-267, Kharsa No-648, Village Saboli, Block-B, Main Shukar Chowk, Ashok Nagar, Shadara Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110093
(LC No.: 19600042715 of Delhi - Safdurganj Branch) Mukesh Kumar (Borrower) Reema Sharma (Co Borrower 1) Real Imaging & Research Centre (Co Borrower 2)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 1521591 /- ₹ Fifteen lakh Twenty One Thousand Five Hundred Ninety One Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Prop No-267, Kharsa No-648, Village Saboli, Block-B, Main Shukar Chowk, Ashok Nagar, Shadara Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110093
(LC No.: 19600042666 of Delhi - Safdurganj Branch) Dharam Pal Bagga (Borrower) Jyoti Chauhan (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 5501403 /- ₹ Fifty Five lakh One Thousand Four Hundred Three Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Property No. C30, 1St 2Nd 3Rd Floor, Block-C Plot No- 30, New Goidwarpura, Khureji Khas, Shadara, Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110051
(LC No.: 19600043030 of Delhi - Safdurganj Branch) Dharam Pal Bagga (Borrower) Jyoti Chauhan (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 1465133 /- ₹ Fourteen lakh Sixty Five Thousand One Hundred Thirty Three Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Property No. C30, 1St 2Nd 3Rd Floor, Block-C Plot No- 30, New Goidwarpura, Khureji Khas, Shadara, Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110051
(LC No.: 09600001578 of New Delhi-west Branch) Atul Gupta (Borrower) Deepali Gupta (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 2011277 /- ₹ Twenty lakh Eleven Thousand Two Hundred Seventy Seven Only NPA (09-09-2022)	Plot No-G-1/4, Flat No-F-6 Tf Without Roof Near Icti Bank Block-G-1, Model Town Dethi New Delhi Delhi :- 110007
(LC No.: 09600001605 of New Delhi-west Branch) Atul Gupta (Borrower) Deepali Gupta (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 897268 /- ₹ Eight lakh Ninety Seven Thousand Two Hundred Fifty Nine Only NPA (09-09-2022)	Plot N-G-1/4, Flat No-T-6 Tf Without Roof Near Icti Bank Block-G-1, Model Town Dethi New Delhi Delhi :- 110007
(LC No.: 09200001597 of Rohini Branch) Amar Singh (Borrower) Ram Devi (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 1674298 /- ₹ Sixteen lakh Seventy Four Thousand Two Hundred Ninety Eight Only NPA (04-01-2021)	Plot No- 14/4577, Kharsa No-478/153 Gali No-1, Aji Nagar, Village Seelampur Gandhi Nagar, Delhi Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110031
(LC No.: 11900002038 of Noida Branch) Swami Laboratories Pvt Ltd (Borrower) Vinod Bajaj (Co Borrower 1) Samog Bajaj (Co Borrower 2) Kanchan Bajaj (Guarantor 1) Paras Bajaj (Guarantor 2) Pooja Bajaj (Guarantor 3)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 742041 /- ₹ Seven lakh Forty Two Thousand Four Only NPA (03-02-2021)	Plot No:- 1/28 Sector-11 Near Mother Diary Sec-11 Noida Gautambudh Nagar Uttar Pradesh :- 201301
(LC No.: 13000002701 of Gurgaon Branch) Sidhartha Educational And Welfare Society (Borrower) Amit Rana (Co Borrower 1) Sheetal Rana (Co Borrower 2) Saakkar Educational Trust (Guarantor 1) Nature Cure And Yoga Trust (Guarantor 2) Raghavan Muralaeeharan Nair (Guarantor 3)	04-11-2022 / ₹ 9256971 /- ₹ Nine Crore Twenty Nine lakh Twenty Two Thousand Seven Hundred Eleven Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Babu Nature & Yoga Ashram Gandhi Samarak Nidhi Patpar Ganj Delhi New Delhi Delhi :- 110091
(LC No.: 11900001710 of Noida Branch) Ankur Goyal (Borrower) Vijay Prakash (Co Borrower 1) Meeta Goyal (Co Borrower 2) Vijay Cotswin Private Limited (Guarantor 1) Raj Kumari (Guarantor 2)	04-11-2022 / ₹ 29180899 /- ₹ Two Crore Ninety One lakh Eighty Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety Nine Only NPA (04-12-2019)	Bungalow No. 5, 5th Floor Tower-Vs-11 Rise Sky Bungalows Sec-41 Faridabad Faridabad Haryana :- 121001
(LC No.: 13000000612 of Gurgaon Branch) Pawan Kumar (Borrower) Babita (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 2567250 /- ₹ Twenty Five lakh Sixty Seven Thousand Two Hundred Fifty Only NPA (09-08-2022)	Flat No K 1 1003 1007 Floor Kingsburry Tower Tdi City Sector 61 Kundli Sonapat Sonapat Haryana :- 131028
(LC No.: 19700042296 of Gurgaon - Sohna Road Branch) Bhasker Neogi (Borrower) Chandrani Bandyopadhyay Neogi (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 2858480 /- ₹ Twenty Eighty lakh Fifty Eight Thousand Four Hundred Eighty Only NPA (03-11-2019)	Flat No 2001 2016 Floor Tower G Mangalya Ophira Plot No 16 F Sector 1 Greater Noida West Gautambudh Nagar Uttar Pradesh :- 201310
(LC No.: 19700042294 of Gurgaon - Sohna Road Branch) Bhasker Neogi (Borrower) Chandrani Bandyopadhyay Neogi (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 2879871 /- ₹ Twenty Eight lakh Seventy Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy One Only NPA (04-10-2019)	Flat No 2004 20th Floor Tower G Mangalya Ophira Plot No 16 F Sector 1 Greater Noida Gautambudh Nagar Uttar Pradesh :- 201310
(LC No.: 2490000282 of Delhi Janakpuri Branch) Abdul Hamid (Borrower) Naushina Hamid (Co Borrower 1)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 4296742 /- ₹ Forty Two lakh Ninety Six Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Two Only NPA (04-01-2019)	The Alien Court No 18101, Tower Jupiter 8th Floor, Tronica City Ghaziabad Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh :- 201001
(LC No.: 09200001393 of Rohini Branch) Ranjit Singh (Borrower) Inderjit Kaur (Co Borrower 1) Singh Hydraulics Pvt Ltd (Co Borrower 2)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 6127742 /- ₹ Sixty One lakh Twenty Seven Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Two Only NPA (04-10-2017)	Unit No B-1/706, 17th Floor Tower B-1, Jkg Palm Court Plot Gh/1D, Sector 16C Greater Noida Gautambudh Nagar Uttar Pradesh :- 201301
(LC No.: 09200001392 of Rohini Branch) Ranjit Singh (Borrower) Inderjit Kaur (Co Borrower 1) Singh Hydraulics Pvt Ltd (Co Borrower 2)	08-11-2022 / ₹ 6082355 /- ₹ Sixty lakh Eighty Two Thousand Three Hundred Fifty Five Only NPA (03-11-2017)	Unit No B-1/806, 18th Floor Tower B-1, Jkg Palm Court Plot Gh/1D, Sector 16C Greater Noida Gautambudh Nagar Uttar Pradesh :- 201301

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Date : 19-12-2022
Place: Delhi

Sd/
(Authorised Officer)
Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited

Gross direct tax mop-up grows 26% to ₹13.63 L cr

Net collections near 80% of Budget target for FY-2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The gross direct tax collections have grown 26 per cent to over ₹13.63 lakh crore so far this fiscal, aided by TDS deductions and healthy corporate advance tax mop-up, as per an official statement.

After adjusting for refunds, the net direct tax collection so far this fiscal stands at ₹11.35 lakh crore, which is about 80 per cent of the full-year gross Budget target.

The Budget had estimated gross direct tax collection of ₹14.20 lakh crore this financial year. Tax on corporate and individual income makes up for direct taxes.

Refunds worth about ₹2.28 lakh crore have been issued till December 17, 2022, a growth of 68 per cent over the year-ago period.

The gross collection of ₹13.63,649 crore includes Corporation Tax (CIT) at ₹7.25 lakh crore and Personal Income Tax (PIT) including Securities Transaction Tax (STT) at ₹6.35 lakh crore, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement.



The robust tax mop-up shows the economy rebounded from pandemic lows with rise in earnings of both companies and individuals.

The mop-up includes advance tax collection of ₹5.21 lakh crore, Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) of ₹6.44 lakh crore, and self-assessment tax of ₹1.40 lakh crore.

The advance tax collection for the first, second and third quarters of the current fiscal at ₹5.21 lakh crore showed a growth of 12.83 per cent. This includes CIT at ₹3.97 lakh crore and PIT at ₹1.23 lakh crore.

As per the CBDT statement, so far this fiscal, the net collections from income and corporate taxes are at ₹11.35

lakh crore, 19.81 per cent higher than the ₹9,47,959 crore collected in the corresponding period of the preceding financial year (2021-22).

This includes ₹6.06 lakh crore and ₹5.26 lakh crore of CIT and PIT collections, respectively.

The CBDT further said there has been a remarkable increase in the speed of processing of income tax returns filed during the current fiscal, with almost 96.5 per cent of the duly verified ITRs having been processed till December 17.

"This has resulted in faster issue of refunds with almost a 109 per cent increase in the number of refunds issued in the current financial year," it said.

Comm Ministry to rework draft Bills on tea, coffee, tobacco

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry is likely to engage with Niti Aayog to rework the five draft bills pertaining to cash crops tea, coffee, spices, rubber, and tobacco, an official said.

Earlier this year, the ministry proposed the repeal and updation of decades-old laws on these sectors and to introduce new legislation with a view to promoting their growth and creating a conducive environment for businesses.

"Niti Aayog has raised certain objections with the ministry on these five bills. The issues were recently discussed in a meeting between senior officials. Niti Aayog suggested



a relook and the ministry has sought its help on that," the official said.

Niti Aayog has given its views on the drafts of Spices (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022; Rubber (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022; Coffee (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022; Tea (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022 and Tobacco Board (Amendment) Bill, 2022.

IPOs in 2022: Fund mobilisation halved to ₹57k cr; 2023 quieter likely

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Meltdown in shares of Dalal Street debutants and volatility triggered by geopolitical tensions soured the sentiments for the primary markets, with fund mobilisation through IPOs halving to nearly ₹57,000 crore in 2022 and the New Year is expected to be even quieter.

The overall collection would have been much lower had it not been for the ₹20,557-crore LIC public offer, which constitutes as much as 35 per cent of the total amount raised during the year.

Investors remained jittery throughout 2022 on recessionary fears and rising interest rates amid soaring inflation.

"The year 2023 will be tough, with growth slowing down globally, we are bound to



see some repercussions in India. I expect a slower or quieter market in 2023, and I suspect money garnered through IPOs next year will be lower than or on the same level as 2022," said Nikhil Kamath, co-founder of True Beacon and Zerodha.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, also believes that the total size of IPOs in 2023 will be muted in anticipation of a volatile stock market.

"There is a plausibility that the level of premium valuation

India used to garner can reduce in 2023, affecting the pricing of IPOs. The weak performance of recent IPOs will also have a hindsight effect on the investors, reflecting weak response in the near-term," he added.

According to data provided by Prime Database, as many as 36 companies have floated their initial public offerings (IPOs) to raise ₹56,940 crore in 2022 (till December 16).

This figure would increase as the initial share sales of two companies — KFin Technologies and Elin Electronics — are set to kick-off next week to cumulatively raise ₹1,975 crore. The fund mobilisation in 2022 was way lower than the ₹1.2 lakh crore raised by 63 companies in 2021, which was the best IPO year in two decades.

Mcap of 9 of top-10 most valued firms faces erosion of ₹1.22 L cr

Reliance biggest laggard

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nine of the top-10 most valued firms faced a combined erosion of ₹1,22,092.9 crore in market valuation last week amid weak trend in equities, with Reliance Industries

emerging as the biggest laggard. Last week, the 30-share BSE benchmark declined 843.86 points or 1.36 per cent.

Barring HDFC Bank, rest nine companies, including Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, ICICI Bank and Hindustan Unilever, witnessed decline in their market valuation. The valuation of Reliance Industries tanked ₹29,767.66 crore to ₹17,35,405.81 crore.

TCS faced an erosion of ₹19,960.12 crore to ₹11,84,837.43 crore in its market valuation. The valuation of ICICI Bank plunged ₹19,722.3 crore to ₹6,29,380.54 crore and that of Infosys tumbled ₹19,567.57 crore to ₹6,40,617.19 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Hindustan Unilever went lower by ₹11,935.92 crore to ₹6,27,434.85 crore.

JSPL to invest ₹7,930 crore under PLI scheme for specialty steel: MD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL) will spend ₹7,930 crore under the PLI scheme for specialty steel to manufacture eight types of high-end alloy in the country, its Managing Director Bimlendra Jha said. JSPL is one of the qualifiers of the government's production linked incentive (PLI) scheme which aims to increase the output of value-added steel using new age technologies in the domestic steel sector. On December 9, the government announced the selection of 67 entries with an investment potential of ₹42,500 crore under the scheme. The proposed investments are likely to generate 70,000 jobs and add 26 million tonnes of specialty steel capacity in the country.

Microfinance loans up 11% to ₹71,916 cr in Q2 FY23: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Microfinance loans in the country grew by nearly 11 per cent to ₹71,916 crore during the second quarter of the current fiscal, industry data showed.

Microfinance loans worth ₹64,899 crore were disbursed during the same period a year ago.

In terms of volume, a total of 1.81 crore loans were disbursed during Q2 FY2022-23, as against 1.85 crore loans in Q2 FY2021-22, as per the latest report by Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN).

According to the MFIN Micrometer Q2 FY2022-23 report, the country's microfinance loan portfolio stood at over ₹3 lakh crore at end-September 2022, serving 6.2 crore unique borrowers with 12 crore loan accounts.

"The overall microfinance industry currently has a total gross loan portfolio (GLP) of



₹3,00,974 crore as on September 30, 2022... An increase of 23.5 per cent year-on-year over ₹2,43,737 crore as on September 30, 2021," the report said.

Of the total micro loans outstanding, the largest share of 37.7 per cent is held by 13 banks, amounting to ₹1,13,565 crore.

NBFC-MFIs are the second largest provider of microcredit with a loan amount outstanding of ₹1,10,418 crore, accounting for 36.7 per cent of total industry portfolio.

The average loan disbursed per account during the quarter stood at ₹40,571, up by around 12 per cent against the same quarter of FY21.

Sebi enhances vigil on MCX technology transition, High Court issues notices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As top commodity exchange AMCX races against time to move its trading technology from erstwhile promoter 63 Moons, regulator Sebi is keeping a close vigil on mock trading sessions and the transition process.

In the meantime, the matter has reached Madras High Court with an investors group seeking a detailed probe by Sebi (Securities and Exchange Board of India) into the exchange with regard to the "integrity and competence of the market software technology" to be adopted by MCX.

While Sebi has sought for weeks' time to file a counter affidavit, the court on December 8 also issued notices to MCX, MCX Clearing Corporation as well as their CEOs and Chief Technology Officers.

On condition of anonymi-



ty due to the matter being sub-judice and under regulatory scanner, top officials said some mock trading sessions have serious issues, but MCX did not reply to queries from PTI in this regard.

Top officials further said the regulator is closely watching the results of every mock trading session and also on the new technology transition plan, which has already gone through multiple changes.

MCX did not reply to queries on regulatory intervention as well.

364 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.52 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 364 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of ₹150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than ₹4.52 lakh crore, as per an official report.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which monitors infrastructure projects of ₹150 crore and above, out of 1,476 projects, 364 reported cost overruns and as many as 756 projects were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1476 projects was ₹20,84,124.75 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹25,36,179.03 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,52,054.28 crore (21.69% of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for November 2022 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till November 2022 was ₹13,67,245.45 crore.

FPIs invest ₹10,555 cr in equities in Dec so far on moderating US inflation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After investing over ₹36,200 crore last month, foreign investors continued their positive momentum and have injected a net ₹10,555 crore in Indian equities so far in December amid stabilisation in oil prices and moderating US inflation.

Going forward, FPI flows are expected to be volatile amid equity markets worldwide witnessing increase in volatility as global central banks reiterate their intent to keep policies high for an extended period to curb elevated inflation in their respective economies, said Shrikant Chouhan, head of equity research, (retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

Further, capital flows will be dictated by the global developments, particularly the trends in the dollar index and US bond yields. This, in turn, will be determined by the tra-



jectory of US inflation, said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

According to data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) invested a net sum of ₹10,555 crore in equities during December 1-16.

This comes following a net investment of over ₹36,200 crore in entire November, primarily due to weakening of the US dollar index and positivity about overall macroeconomic trends.

Prior to this, foreign investors pulled out ₹8 crore in October and ₹7,624 crore in September, data with the depositories showed.

High taxation rates crippling liquor trade: ISWAI

PTI ■ KOLKATA

High rates of taxation are crippling the alcoholic beverages (alcobev) sector and threatening the future of the liquor industry in the country, the International Spirits & Wines Association of India (ISWAI) said.

ISWAI, the apex body of the premium alcobev industry in the country, said that taxes account for 67 to 80 per cent of the product prices, leaving little for the trade to sustain and manage operations.

"The Indian alcobev industry is in deep crisis due to inflation on one hand and high taxation rates. In this context, it is needed to decrease taxes and raise product prices for the sector to sustain," ISWAI CEO Nita Kapoor said.

Unlike other industries, the liquor industry does not have the freedom to price the products, Kapoor said.

IIFCL has sanctioned ₹8,244 cr loans to develop 20 ports: MD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned IIFCL has sanctioned ₹8,244 crore loans to about 20 projects to help add 836 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of ports capacity, which is one-fourth of India's total cargo volumes, a top company official said.

India's total port capacity is about 2,600 MTPA. Of this, 12 major ports' cargo handling capacity stood at 1,598 MTPA as of March 2022.

India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL) has been extending its financial support to many strategic port projects, including the Paradip Port, Essar Vizag port, Tuticorin,



Bhavanapadu, he said, the capacity would touch 1,000 MTPA with these ports going on stream in a couple of years.

Ramayapatnam Port in Andhra Pradesh is expected to commence operations next year in December with four berths with 34 MTPA capacity.

"IIFCL, till date, has provided financial assistance of ₹8,244 crore to the port sector. Of this, ₹787 crore was sanctioned to various terminals in 5 major ports and ₹7,465 crore was sanctioned to 15 minor port projects. Most of the projects are operational and presently 3 non major ports are under construction," he said.

With investment in three upcoming ports including Ramyapatnam and

Ambani to take on ITC, Patanjali, Tata, Adani with FMCG brand 'Independence'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance will rival FMCG food businesses of ITC, Tata Consumer Products Ltd and Adani Wilmar with launch of brand 'Independence' for staples, processed foods, beverages and other daily essentials, analysts said.

Reliance Consumer Products Ltd (RCPL), the newly set up FMCG arm of Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL) last week made a foray into staples with launch of brand Independence in line with announcement Ambani had made at the company's annual shareholder meeting earlier this year.

RRVL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance



Industries Ltd (RIL).

The launch is only in Gujarat, possibly on a pilot testing basis, and has indicated that products would be affordably priced. Post development of the brand, it will be rolled out nationally. It will be "competing with Adani Wilmar in edible oil, grains and pulses; Patanjali Foods in biscuits, edible oil, packaged atta; Parle and Britannia in biscuits; Tata Consumer in pulses, packaged water; and ITC in packaged

atta, biscuits," brokerage Nomura said.

Independence line of products will be available on the Jio Mart app and Reliance retail stores currently. In coming months, the distribution is to be extended to FMCG retailers (kirana stores).

The categories include biscuits, packaged water, edible oil, packaged atta (wheat flour), besan (gram flour), pulses, grains and sugar.

"RCPL is a newly-incorporated company despite RRVL already having a range of private-label brands which are sold across its 2,460 brick and mortar grocery stores and Jio Mart app which reaches 2 million merchant partners/kirana stores across 260 cities," Nomura said.

Coal to stay despite India's ambitious renewable energy goals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coal is dirty — it makes up for 40 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels, its mining wreaks havoc on the environment and burning it produces pollutants like mercury which are linked to acid rain and particulate matter that causes respiratory illnesses. But the war in Ukraine has caused a mini-energy crisis globally, pushing its use to record levels this year.

largest energy consumer, was at the forefront of the global rise in coal usage as it fell back on the easiest available fossil fuel in the face of a surge in oil and gas prices that threatened to derail the economic recovery from the pandemic.

The trends of coal consumption and production this year indicate that the dirty fuel is here to stay despite the nation's ambitious target of meeting 50 per cent of energy requirements from renewable energy and non-fossil fuel

capacity of 500 GW by 2030.

India's coal consumption has doubled since 2007 at an annual growth rate of 6 per cent and the International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that the largest increase in the fuel's demand globally this year was from India (7 per cent or an addition of 70 million tonnes). This on top of a 14 per cent rebound in 2021, and 1,033 million tonnes consumption in 2022.

And this demand is led by its electricity generation which



is overly reliant on coal. Coal-fired electricity generation accounts for about 73 per cent

of India's overall power needs and is likely to remain the most important source of electricity in the foreseeable future. Coal-fired power plants make up 50 per cent of the overall installed capacity of 404 GW connected to grids, with another 25 GW currently under construction.

The IEA expects India's coal demand to rise steadily to 1,220 million tonnes in 2025, with 92 per cent of this going into electricity generation. Electricity demand too is seen growing at 7 per cent.

Govt plans to auction 6 mineral blocks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government plans to put on sale next month six mineral blocks in the states of Odisha and Rajasthan.

Of these six blocks to be auctioned, three are bauxite mines and three are limestone blocks. The three bauxite blocks -- Ballada, Kutrumali and Sijimali — and two limestone mines — Garramura and Uskalabgu — in Odisha are virgin blocks, according to a latest report by the mines ministry. The remaining mine is Nimana-Duniya limestone block in Kota, Rajasthan.

The notice inviting tender for all the six blocks was floated in the month of November. Since the amendment to MMDR Act, 1957

in 2015, a total of 216 mineral blocks have been auctioned till November 30 across 10 states.

Three mineral blocks — two limestone and one iron ore — in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh were successfully auctioned last month.

The government started the process of allocating mineral blocks through auctions in 2015-16. The ministry has expressed hope of auctioning 500 mines by the end of 2024. The Centre is aiming to increase the mining sector's contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 5 per cent from 2.5 per cent at present. During last few years, the government has introduced important reforms to open up the mineral sector to ensure its contribution in achieving the national policy goals.

A FAIRY-TALE ENDING FOR ONE OF THE GREATEST EVER



AP ■ BEIRUT

Argentina triumphed on penalties in the most dramatic World Cup final of all time after initially squandering a 2-0 lead to France.

That special side is Argentina, and they were led there by their extraordinary number 10, Lionel Messi.

It's been 36 years since they have won the World Cup, when

back in 1986 Diego Maradona was the man to spearhead that charge and now, two years after his death, his country have repeated that feat.

Until 2022, Messi had not scored a goal in the knockout stages of a World Cup, but he rectified that record with a goal at every single stage of the competition.

On another day, Kylian Mbappé would have earned this Man of the Match award, but it always felt like

this was Lionel Messi's tournament as the stars aligned to result in one of the greatest players the game has ever seen adding the World Cup to his long list of trophies.

Messi just would not be beaten despite suffering setback after setback, a tenacity that seems to have become greater as Father Time became his biggest adversary.

To reduce his contribution to

two goals in normal time plus a converted penalty in the shootout seems somehow inadequate, such was the impact of his leadership, his drive and his desire to win.

At only 23 years old, Mbappé will have many more opportunities and may - in time - even overtake Messi.

But right now, there is only one Lionel Messi, and what he has achieved is truly magnificent.



Kylian Mbappe wins the World Cup golden boot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It looked for all the world like Sunday's final was going to be all about Lionel Messi ... but his Paris Saint-Germain team-mate had other ideas.

Messi's first half penalty put him on six goals at this tournament, which would have been enough to secure the Golden Boot.

But Kylian Mbappé's 80th minute penalty then drew him level with Messi on six goals, before a stunning finish from the 23-year-old just 97 seconds later completed a stunning comeback and snatched the Golden Boot away from Messi.

Messi scored again in extra-time to draw level with Mbappé, only for the Frenchman to score a second penalty to complete his hat-trick and claim the Golden Boot outright.

Mbappé became the first player since Brazil's Vavá in 1958 and 1962 to score in back-to-back World Cup finals.

He is the first player to score a brace in a World Cup final since Brazilian Ronaldo in 2002.

And the first to score a hat-trick in a World Cup final since England's Geoff Hurst in 1966.

The PSG striker is now on 12 World Cup goals in his career, and he has so much time ahead of him.



World Cup champions to get \$42 million in prize money

AP ■ DOHA

The World Cup champions will earn \$42 million in prize money for their soccer federation.

The losing team in Sunday's final between France and Argentina will get \$30 million from a FIFA prize fund of \$440 million.

When France won the World Cup in 2018, the country's federation got \$38 million from FIFA's \$400 million prize fund.

Not all the money goes to players, but they are expected to get a good chunk of it. France players such as Kylian Mbappé are in line to be paid a bonus of 554,000 euros (\$586,000) by their federation for winning the final, French sports daily L'Equipe reported.

Every national soccer federation gets at least \$9 million in prize money for playing at this year's World Cup, plus \$1.5 million for each toward costs of preparing for the tournament.

Third-place team Croatia earned \$27 million in prize money. Morocco, which ended up in fourth, will be paid \$25 million.

FIFA's total revenue for the past four years was \$7.5 billion, with most from broadcast and sponsorship deals, plus ticket and hospitality sales.

Morocco's World Cup finish is bittersweet for Arab fans

AP ■ BEIRUT

Morocco's fans in the Arab world took the North African team's 2-1 loss to Croatia in World Cup third-place playoff philosophically. The team had already made history, becoming the first Arab and first African team to reach the semifinals in the international soccer tournament.

Its loss to France on Wednesday dashed fans' hopes that Morocco would become an underdog champion, but many had hoped that it would at least take third place in facing off against Croatia on Saturday.

In the Moroccan capital, national team's fans were disappointed by Saturday's loss, but pointed with pride to the team's historic performance.

"They remain champions in our eyes," said Soukaina Makkaoui, a fan in Rabat.

"They are now among the four top teams in the world."

Ali Hachimi, another Moroccan fan, was both proud and sad.

"We would have liked to finish third because the players deserved it after giving their all," he said.

Along the way, the Moroccan team charmed many Arab soccer fans who saw in the team a reflection of themselves, with players waving the Palestinian flag after their wins and celebrating on the field with their mothers and children.

Seeing Palestinian flags



fluttering in the stadium "was an indescribable feeling," said Ibrahim al-Lilli, who was among thousands of fans in the Gaza Strip who gathered to cheer for Morocco on Saturday.

The games affirmed that the Arab street "supports the Palestinian cause regardless of what their governments do," he said, referring to the Abraham Accord normalization agree-

ments that four Arab countries - including Morocco - signed with Israel in 2020.

Fans in the besieged Gaza enclave found a bitter solace in the fact that the northern Africa Arab country got as far as it did.

"It's a defeat, albeit with a taste of victory and joy," said Ahmed al-Najjar, another fan in Gaza.

In Beirut's Tarik al-Jdideh neighborhood, where fans were also rooting for Morocco, Muhammad Shaalan said the team's fourth-place finish is still a point of pride for the Arab world.

"They arrived to the final games and they defeated three of the best big European teams (Belgium, Spain and Portugal)," he said.

KULDEEP RETURNS CAREER-BEST FIGURES IN INDIA'S MASSIVE 188-RUN WIN



PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

Wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav registered his career-best match figures as India quickly wrapped up Bangladesh's second innings for a comprehensive 188-run win in the opening Test, here Sunday.

Needing four wickets to pocket the win, India finished the job in 11.2 overs, bowling the hosts out for 324 after the hosts began at overnight score of 276 for six.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep scalped two of the remaining four batters while Mohammed Siraj and Axar Patel took one wicket each.

Kuldeep, who cherished an impressive five-wicket haul in the first innings, added three more wickets in the second Bangladesh innings to finish with match figures of 8 for 113.

"I love bowling with Kookaburra balls, it gives me better grip and control, compared to the SG ball," said Kuldeep after the win.

"If I were not playing cricket, it would have been very challenging but I have played a lot of white-ball matches. I have played IPL and with red ball India A matched, so my rhythm was set.

"I could bowl with aggressive approach and in this rhythm, you need to make extra effort and it takes a toll on body," he said.

"I like playing all formats of cricket for India, nothing matches that pride. When I don't play I keep training so that the confidence remains intact in matched but I stay relaxed," he added.

Kuldeep was ably supported by left-arm spinner Patel, who finished with figures of 4 for 77 in the second innings.

With this win, India have climbed to the third place in the World Test Championship points table, pushing Sri Lanka to the fourth position.

India now have 87 points with 55.77 per-

centage (PCT) while Sri Lanka have 64 points and 53.33 PCT.

Australia lead the table with 75 PCT and are followed by South Africa (60 PCT)

Resuming at the overnight score of 276 for 6, Bangladesh skipper Shakib-Al-Hasan came all out attacking, knowing very well it would not be easy to just survive the whole day.

He went for his shots to score 84, studied with six fours and as many hits over the fence in his 108-ball stay.

But the Indians played the patient game. KL Rahul, who registered his first Test win as skipper, started with pace-spin combination of Siraj (1/67) and Patel.

Bangladesh batters started aggressively as Mehidy Hasan Miraz delightfully drove Siraj through the covers in his first over for the day's first boundary.

At the other end, Shakib made his intentions clear, clobbering Patel over square leg.

But Siraj had his man in his next over as Mehidy fell to a loose shot.

Siraj sprayed the ball outside the off-stump again and Mehidy only managed to slash the delivery straight to Umesh Yadav at backward point.

Shakib brought up his 30th Test fifty with a straight six off Patel.

Shakib took his chances but the asking was too tall as Rahul introduced Kuldeep as the first change and the left-arm spinner picked up two wickets in consecutive overs, while Patel picked another as India ended Bangladesh's dogged resistance.

Kuldeep first cleaned up Shakib as the batter went for another slog sweep over extra cover and then had Ebadat Hossain caught by Shreyas Iyer.

Axar completed the formalities by going through the defence of Taijul Islam.

The second Test will begin from December 22 in Mirpur.

Rohit's availability for second Test will be known: KL Rahul

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

Injured Rohit Sharma's availability for the second Test against Bangladesh starting December 22 in Mirpur will be known in a day or two, stand-in India captain KL Rahul said on Sunday.

Rohit, who led India in two ODIs in the preceding series, was ruled out of the first Test, which India won by 188 runs on Sunday under Rahul's captaincy.

Rohit had gone back to India after hurting his left thumb while fielding in the second ODI against Bangladesh in Mirpur on December 7. Abhimanyu Easwaran has come in as his replacement.

"About Rohit, we may be able to know (his status) in the next day or two, even I am not aware of it," Rahul said at the post-match press conference.

Rahul termed the first Test win against Bangladesh as a complete performance, saying the team did well in all departments and played as a unit.

"Everything stood out. We batted really well, bowled really well. In fielding also, we took most of the catches that came our way. That is the way you win Test matches. Only one or two people cannot win



matches, this is for all formats," he said.

"Kuldeep (Yadav), (Mohammed) Siraj bowled really well in the first innings (of Bangladesh) but others supported them well. In the second innings, Axar (Patel) bowled really well but Kuldeep and Ash (R Ashwin) kept the pressure on. Umesh (Yadav) and Siraj bowled some really good spells, kept it tight and beat the bat many times but were unlucky.

"Everybody did well and this

was what we wanted to do as a team. The guys who performed well in particular also got support from others. Those who are supporting are also important."

Rahul said the culture of the team is about collective needs and not individuals.

"Whether you have played 50 Test matches or you are playing your first or second match, it is the same. They don't matter," he said.

He said bundling Bangladesh out for 150 in their first innings set up the match for India.

Shakib could play as pure batter in second Test: Domingo

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

Bangladesh head coach Russel Domingo has hinted that skipper Shakib Al Hasan could play as a pure batter in the second and final Test against India next week.

The spin all-rounder bowled only 12 overs during India's first innings and didn't roll his arms in the second essay due to rib and shoulder problems.

His 84 in Bangladesh's second innings was one of the positives in an otherwise insipid performance, which led to the home team's 188-run loss.

"He could play as a batter (only). Obviously he didn't bowl enough overs. He is still struggling with his shoulder and bruising. It left us with four bowlers - a big blow for us," Domingo said.

Right arm medium pacer Ebadot Hossain was also unable



to bowl in the second innings due to back injury.

"Ebadot broke down, so we were stuck with three bowlers. It is very difficult to balance the side at the moment.

"I am not 100% sure if Shakib would be able to bowl. He is definitely available to play as a batter, which is an issue for us. We need an allrounder," Domingo added.

Fielded a question regarding Shakib's dedication to the side, Domingo said despite the skipper's laidback demeanour, "he is competing 100%."

"It is a tricky question. It is

a good question. He comes across as very laidback, but when he is in the contest, he has pride in performance. Looking from the outside, you may think, 'Does he really care?'

"But I know that he has a lot of pride in performances. He doesn't want to be embarrassed out there. He is competing 100%."

Bangladesh have included uncapped left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed in the 15-member squad for the second Test, scheduled to start from December 22 in Dhaka.

One bad session with the bat destroyed our chances

Bangladesh folded their first innings for 150 and the Indian team, which had scored 404 in the first innings went on to set a stiff 513-run target.

"We wanted to compete. India is a good side, but once again, one bad session with the

bat destroyed our chance in the match," Domingo said.

"Four-hundred is a good score, but it is manageable in Chittagong. We shouldn't have been bowled out for 150 in the first innings. The most disappointing thing is the poor decision making from the batters.

The South African claimed that the top order is lacking confidence.

"There's a lack of confidence in the top order. They are not managing to find a way to get out of the slump. There's a whole host of players in the top five or six that haven't played well or been as consistent as I had hoped.

He lavished praise on debutant Zakir Hasan who scored a century in the second innings.

"The young player who hasn't played Tests with us is confident at the moment. He has shown us how to do it. He played really well."



Aus crush SA inside 2 days in wild 1st Test

AP ■ BRISBANE

Australia's bowlers ripped through South Africa's brittle batting lineup for the second consecutive day as the hosts stormed to a six-wicket victory in the first Test in a wild opening to the three-Test series that saw 34 wickets fall inside two days.

On a green, grassy pitch offering plenty of assistance for bowlers, wickets again tumbled at the Gabba on Sunday as Australia was bowled out for 218 shortly before lunch on the second day, to take a 66-run lead after the first innings, before skittling South Africa's batting lineup again in the second innings for 99.

Pat Cummins took five wickets to lead the hosts' attack, with Scott Boland and Mitchell Starc claiming two each, with the latter taking his 300th test wicket just before lunch.

In keeping with the pattern of the match, Australia made heavy work in chasing the modest 34-runs needed for victory, losing four wickets before Marnus Labuschagne and Cameron Green completed the job on the final ball of the 8th over.

Kagiso Rabada (4-13) took all four wickets to fall in Australia's second innings as the hosts top-order stumbled, including David Warner, who was caught at slip for three which will further the speculation on his place in the team heading into the Boxing Day Test at Melbourne.

Earlier Sunday, Rabada took three wickets, despite some wayward bowling, to finish with 4-76, while Marco Jansen (3-32) took the key wickets of Travis Head and Cameron Green within three balls to end a dangerous-looking counterattack by the hosts

and keep the tourists firmly in the game after the first innings.

Jansen first had Green (18) edging through a sharp chance to Maharaj at third slip, who could only parry the ball up for Sarel Erwee to complete the catch running around from his first slip position.

Two balls later Jansen got the big-wicket of Head, who fell in the nineties for the second time in three tests this summer, when he was caught behind down the leg side after the merest of touches off his glove.

Head made 92 off 96 balls, with 13 boundaries and a six, in his usual counter-punching style and appeared to be the only batsman to appear comfortable with the tricky Gabba pitch conditions.

Lungi Ngidi (1-35) removed Starc with a sharp catch and bowled chance for 14, before Rabada removed Cummins and Nathan Lyon for ducks to ensure there was no wag in Australia's tail.

The hosts would have been disappointed to have not built a bigger lead but Cummins ensured that the final 20 minutes of the session were fruitful by trapping Dean Elgar (2) leg before in the second over.

Australia doubled-down on its breakthrough with Starc (2-26) taking his 300th Test wicket in trademark style by bowling van der Dussen for a duck through the gate with an inswinging delivery.

Starc is the seventh Australian to achieve the 300-wicket milestone.

After lunch, Khaya Zondo (36 not out) and Temba Bavuma showed some brief resistance to whittle away Australia's lead but Nathan Lyon struck having Bavuma trapped lbw to trigger a collapse of 6 wickets for just 22 runs.

Bangladesh call up Nasum for second Test

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

Bangladesh handed a maiden Test call-up to left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed on Sunday while leaving out injured pacer Ebadot Hossain for the second red-ball fixture against India next week.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board posted the squad for second Test, scheduled to start from December 22 in Dhaka, on its Twitter handle.

Nasum, who has played four ODIs and 28 T20Is for Bangladesh, has been brought in as cover for skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who is unlikely to bowl in the second Test.

Bangladesh were two bowlers short in the 188-run loss to India in the first Test as Shakib and Hossain didn't bowl in the second innings.

While Shakib is struggling with shoulder and rib issues, Hossain has a back injury.

"He is still struggling with his shoulder and [ribcage] bruising. It left us with four bowlers - a big blow for us," head coach Russel Domingo said at the post match press conference on Sunday.

"Ebadot broke down, so we were stuck with three bowlers. It is very difficult to balance the side at the moment," he added.

Pacer Shoriful Islam, who sustained a hamstring injury, and opener Tamim Iqbal, who is yet to recover from a groin injury, also failed to make it to the squad for the second Test

Brook's 111 nudges England ahead in 3rd test

PTI ■ KARACHI

Harry Brook smashed his third successive test century before England's tailenders frustrated Pakistan and grafted a 50-run first innings lead in the third and final test on Sunday.

Brook followed his centuries in England's victories at Rawalpindi and Multan with 111 off 150 balls in the dead rubber as the visitors were bowled out for 354 in the final session on the second day.

Wicketkeeper-batter Ben Foakes, playing his first test on tour, made a resilient 64 while Mark Wood (35) and Ollie Robinson (29) played cameos to edge England ahead of Pakistan's total of 304.

Pakistan opening pair of Abdullah Shafique (14 not out) and Shan Masood (3 not out) played out nine overs of spin to reach 21-0 at stumps.

Leftarm spinner Nauman Ali (4-120), one of the four changes Pakistan made for the final test, and spinner Abrar Ahmed (4-150) picked up the bulk of the wickets but Brook and Foakes blunted both spinners with a splendid 117-run stand.

Abrar had grabbed an 11-wicket haul in his debut test at Multan before England recorded a stunning 26-run win inside four days. England won the first test at Rawalpindi by 74 runs in dimming light on the last day.

Pakistan had made inroads and reduced England to 145-5 soon after lunch



when Ben Stokes (26) was run-out while going for a needless third run. But Brook and Foakes showed plenty of grit on a slow turning wicket with a century-stand before Wood and Robinson added meaningful runs.

Stokes and Brook both ended up at the striker's end when Stokes called for a third run after Brook drove through midwicket.

The 23-year-old Brook raised his runs tally in England's first test tour to Pakistan in 17 years to 468 and bettered his countryman David Gower's record of 449

Brook, a 23-year-old Yorkshireman, raised his century off 133 balls before tea with a backfoot driven boundary through covers against spinner Abrar

runs in Pakistan during the 1983-84 tour.

Brook, a 23-year-old Yorkshireman, raised his century off 133 balls before tea with a backfoot driven boundary through covers against spinner Abrar before debutant Mohammad Wasim had him pinned leg before wicket after tea for his first test wicket.

Foakes was unable to play in the first test due to a viral infection but combined well with Brook. He successfully overturned on-field umpire Joel Wilson's decision when he was ruled out caught close to the wicket on 9 and went on to