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ARE WE HEADING FOR ARMAGEDDON?

WORLD 8
FIRES SCORCH FRANCE, SPAIN; TEMPERATURE-RELATED DEATHS SOAR

MONEY 10
GULF REMITTANCES FELL IN FY21 DUE TO COVID

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LEWANDOWSKI TO JOIN BARCELONA 11 SPORT

It's kisan putra vs woman power in V-P poll contest

Former Guv Margaret Alva to take on Bengal Guv Dhankhar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It's kisan vs woman in the vice-presidential contest. After the BJP put up West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, hailed as a "kisan putra" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Opposition on Sunday pitted former Union Minister Margaret Alva against him. Incidentally, as an occupant of the Raj Bhavan in Kolkata, Dhankhar has a running feud with the Opposition's best-known woman face and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Alva (80) a, former Union Minister and former Governor of Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, was on Sunday unanimously chosen by leaders of 17 Opposition parties to be the joint Opposition candidate for the Vice-President's post which will fall vacant after incumbent Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu ends his tenure.

"It is a privilege and an honour to be nominated as the



Congress leader Margaret Alva was nominated as the candidate by the combined Opposition parties for the vice-presidential polls, on Sunday. PTI



NCP chief Sharad Pawar, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut, CPI leader D. Raja, JKNK Chief Farooq Abdullah and others after electing the combined Opposition parties' candidate for the vice-presidential elections, in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

candidate of the joint Opposition for the post of the Vice-President of India. I accept this nomination with great humility and thank the leaders of the Opposition for the faith they've put in me. Jai Hind," Alva tweeted soon after the Opposition parties announced her name.

Alva has been a four-term Rajya Sabha MP. She was also a Minister in the Governments

headed by Rajiv Gandhi and PV Narasimha Rao.

The leaders of various Opposition parties had met at the residence of NCP supremo Sharad Pawar to decide on the common candidate for the Vice-President's election. The last date for filing nominations is July 19 for the August 6 polls.

Announcing the decision, Pawar said that 17 Opposition

parties have unanimously decided on Margaret Alva's name.

The meeting was attended by all major Opposition parties including the Congress, Shiv Sena, Left Front constituents, the RJD, the SP, and others. Among the attendees were Congress' Mallikarjun Kharge and Jairam Ramesh, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury, CPI's D Raja and

Binoj Viswam, Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut, DMK's TR Bалу and Tiruchi Siva, SP's Ram Gopal Yadav, MDMK's Vaiko and TRS' K Keshava Rao.

The IMUL's ET Mohammed Basheer and Kerala Congress (M)'s Jose K. Mani were also present.

The TMC and AAP were not present in the meeting but sources said they offered support to Alva.

Govt to bring 32 Bills in Monsoon Session

Stormy House session likely as Opp set to raise inflation, Agnipath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government and Opposition are set for a bitter sparring in the Monsoon Session of Parliament beginning Monday. The Government is set to bring around 32 important Bills in both the Houses, whereas the Opposition is ready with its own wish list to corner the ruling dispensation.

In an all-party meeting on Sunday, the Government sought the Opposition's help in "smooth conduct" of the Session, while the Opposition said it would raise issues of "price-rise, inflation, the military recruitment scheme 'Agnipath', rising intolerance, the attack on federalism and Chinese incursion in Ladakh", in the upcoming session.

NDA floor leaders of the two Houses also met during the day and discussed the strategy for the conduct of the session where the Government will bring in 32 Bills.

The first day of the



Monsoon Session will see voting for the presidential election. Some of the Bills that are on the pending list include The Indian Antarctica Bill, 2022. The Bill is pending in the Lok Sabha.

The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022 was passed by the Lok Sabha and is yet to be passed by the Rajya Sabha.

The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022 is pending in Lok Sabha, The Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019, and the National Anti-Doping Bill, 2021 are also pending in the Lok Sabha.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Second Amendment) Bill, 2022 (in respect of State of UP - amendment regarding change of district name to be approved

by Cabinet) was introduced in Lok Sabha in March 2022.

New Bills to be introduced in the Parliament during the Monsoon session include The Central Universities Amendment Bill, 2022.

In the all-party meeting, the Opposition questioned the absence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which raised their hackles.

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh tweeted: "All Party Meeting to discuss forthcoming session of Parliament has just begun and the Prime Minister, as usual, is absent. Isn't this 'unparliamentary'?"

The last time the Prime Minister skipped the meeting ahead of the Budget Session.

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi defended the Government by saying "former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had given a miss to many such meets."

CAPSULE

'NOT GOT DEO'S LETTER OF RESIGNATION YET'

Raipur: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday said he was yet to receive Minister TS Singh Deo's resignation from the panchayat department. The All India Congress Committee's Chhattisgarh in-charge PL Punia, who is on a visit to the State capital Raipur said he has spoken to AICC general secretary KC Venugopal, Baghel and Deo on the issue and a decision will be taken soon.

ICSE CLASS 10TH RESULTS TODAY, CLASS 12TH SOON

New Delhi: The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination on Saturday announced the ICSE class 10 results 2022 on Sunday. Four students share top rank with 99.8 per cent marks, 34 are at second spot with 99.6 per cent.

RAUT SEEKS PREZ RULE IN MAHA TILL SC DECISION

Mumbai: Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut has sought imposition of President's Rule in Maharashtra till the Supreme Court gives its verdict on its plea seeking disqualification of the rebels.

Minor fall: State logs 872 new Covid cases

123 children among infected

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State on Sunday registered a minor decline in daily Covid-19 positive cases with 872 new infections reported from 28 districts and the State pool. With this, the total tally increased to 12,99,112.

Among the newly-infected were 123 children in the age group of 0 to 18 years.

Notably, 1,065 Covid cases had been detected on Satur-



day in the State.

Out of the new cases, 512 were reported from quarantine and 360 local contacts.

Khordha district registered the day's highest 282 cases followed by Sundargarh with 144, Cuttack 96, Mayurbhanj 59, Subarnapur 26, Sambalpur 23, Puri and Nayagarh 19 each, J

agatsinghpur 16, Jharsuguda and Koraput 12 each, Boudh 11, Bargarh nine, Kendrapada, Baleswar and Ganjam eight each, Balangir and Nuapada seven each, Bhadrak and Rayagada six, Kalahandi and Kandhamal five each, Angul four, Gajapati three, Deogarh two, Dhenkanal and Keonjhar one each

Besides, 61 cases were reported from the State pool.

The State now has 5,696 active cases. So far, 12,84,235 patients have recovered from the disease in the State.

Cong to support Odisha Bandh tomorrow

For justice to Ruchika

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Pradesh Congress Committee president Sarat Pattanayak on Sunday extended support to the Odisha Bandh called by the Odisha Navnirman Yuva and Chhatra Sangathan on July 19 in protest against the

police brutality on ragging victim BJB College student Ruchika's mother.

A PCC release said that rather than giving justice to Ruchika's mother and arresting the culprits, police showed their brutality by lifting Ruchika's mother from the dharna site.

Demanding speedy justice for Ruchika, the Sangathan

on Sunday staged fast before the DG of Police office in Cuttack. The leaders of the organisation said that even after 16 days, police have failed to arrest a single culprit responsible for Ruchika's death.

The Sangathan demanded action against the college Principal and hostel Superintendent and Warden.

Mentor-Mentee system in colleges in offing

To address students' problems: Pujari

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU

■ SAMBALPUR

The State's Department of Higher Education has decided to introduce a 'Mentor-Mentee' system in all colleges that can address the entire problems of the students through direct teachers-students-parents contact.

Higher Education Minister Rohit Pujari informed this on Sunday while addressing the Govt. Women's College Sambalpur's 64th foundation day through virtual mode as he has just recovered from Covid. Narrating about this inno-

vative idea, Pujari said the number of students in a particular department in each college would be divided according to the number of teachers of that department. And each teacher would remain in charge of that particular group having all information about the students and their parents and local guardians' contact numbers, addresses and email ids. At the same time, he would frequently ask students about their problems, if any, and inform their parents and Principals. Local guardians can also intimate the problems of their children in college and hostels to the concerned teacher and ask for immediate assistance.

"Teaching apart, the teacher in charge of the group will also look into the psychological

and emotional moods of the students so that they would not commit any mistake or take any wrong decision," he said.

"This can avert many unpleasant situations in the colleges like ragging, harassment, even suicides in some cases," said Pujari. The Mentor-Mentee system could put an end to such ugly episodes that have already been witnessed in some colleges, he said.

He also highlighted different programmes of the State Government undertaken for women's empowerment that have become role models in the country.

College Principal Prof Rajashree Baral highlighted the glorious achievements of the college and its students.

All party meeting on Lanka on July 19

DMK, AIADMK have urged Govt to protect interests of Tamils in troubled nation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Government will hold an all-party meeting on the current Sri Lanka situation after Tamil Nadu-based DMK and AIADMK asked it to intervene in the neighbouring country and safeguard the interest of the country's Tamil population.

The meeting will be chaired by Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar, said Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi.

During an all-party meeting convened on Sunday ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament, DMK and AIADMK demanded that India intervene in Sri Lanka which is



The all-party meeting being held ahead of the Monsoon Session of the Parliament, at Parliament House, in New Delhi, on Sunday. PTI

facing a debilitating economic crisis. Talking to reporters after the meeting, NDA constituent DMK leader M Thambidurai said India should intervene to resolve the crisis in Sri Lanka. Party leader TR Bалу also demanded India's intervention in addressing the situation

confronting the island nation. Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis in seven decades, with a severe foreign exchange shortage hampering the import of essentials including food, fuel, and medicines. The economic crisis also sparked a political crisis in the

country after a popular uprising against the Government.

In response to the concerns on the alarming situation in the island nation, Joshi said the Government will hold an all-party meeting on the current Sri Lanka economic crisis on Tuesday.

BJD backs NDA VP candidate



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha ruling BJD on Sunday announced to support the NDA's Vice-Presidential candidate Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Party supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this regard as it was learnt that Modi had sought Nuveen's support for the NDA candidate.

BJD representatives would be present during the filing of nomination papers by Dhankhar.

K'pada girl suicide: Complaint filed with NHRC

Direction to State Govt for Rs 20L aid to deceased's kin sought

RAJESH BEHERA

■ KENDRAPADA

A rights activist knocked the door of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) seeking its intervention in the suicide case of a 22-year-old girl in Kendrapada over alleged harassment by the supporters of a local Sarapanch.

The petitioner alleged that if the police had taken action against the accused, such an unfortunate incident could have been avoided. He alleged that encouraged by police inaction, although FIR had been lodged against them before, the accused harassed the girl



and attempted for her character assassination which drove her to commit suicide.

The petitioner also cited it as an irreparable loss to the bereaved family who lost a

family member, besides violation of human rights of the deceased's family.

The petitioner requested the NHRC to direct the Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha, to provide compensation of Rs 20 lakh to the deceased's family and also direct the Superintendent of Police, Kendrapada, to take stringent action against the culprits and submit Action Taken Report and other relevant documents soon.

Notably, Subha Subhradarshini Swain of Mohammuda village under Patkura police limit had committed suicide on Friday by hanging herself after she failed to bear humiliation and character assassination by a few fellow villagers over a past grudge.

'Exempt 47 items like flattened, puffed rice from GST'

BJD must clear its stand, demands Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ BHUBANESWAR

The Congress on Sunday demanded that the 47 goods and items which were exempted from VAT during the UPA Government led by Manmohan Singh, need to be kept out of the GST regime as they are produced, used and sold by common people, mostly the poor.

Addressing a Press conference here, Pradesh Congress Committee

(PCC) president Sarat Pattanayak said the move to levy tax on commonly-used food items, staple foods of the State is neither the interest of the State nor of people as have been propagated by both BJP and BJD.

The decision of the Central Government is against the interest of poor people as its poor and common people who make and consume flattened or beaten rice, puffed rice and parched rice.

Pattanayak questioned why the State Government has approved the decision.

Former Minister of State for Finance Panchanan Kanungo



demanding that both State and Central Governments immediately keep out of the GST the items like Chuda, Mudhi, Jhai, Ukhuda, Muan, handicraft goods including handmade coir products, Bhoga meant for deity (Prasad, Mahaprasad, Abadha), hnadmade soap, betel leaves, pencil, brass and bell metal wares,, cotton and silk yarn, garlic and ginger, meat, fish, dry fish, human blood, blood plasma,,papad, bread, etc.

The people who are already battling with the burden of price rise, tax on petroleum products and ever-increasing prices of essential commodities, would be further

burdened with the proposed GST cover, he said. He wanted to know the stand of Naveen Patnaik-led BJD on this proposal.

"With this attempt to bring these food and essential commodities under GST, a day would come when everything would be part of GST and the current slab would go up to 12-18%, Kanaungo said.

The State Government is unable to bring Rs 8,000 crore of GST dues from the Centre and has forgotten to demand Odisha's share on coal and other items. It is to be seen how BJD MPs raise voice in the interest of the State, Kanungo stated.

Over 250 new teachers join KISS



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Over 250 teachers have been appointed at the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) here. They will be posted at five different KISS campuses in Odisha.

The newly-recruited teachers were handed over appointment letters by KIIT & KISS founder Dr Achyuta Samanta at a function on Sunday. They will be entitled to the same benefits as Government school teachers such as EPF, Medicaclaim, ESI, etc.

The teachers are all trained; and most of them are from the rural

tribal districts of Odisha. A committee had been constituted with various subject experts to guide through their entire selection process. Applications were invited through a media advertisement. In response, over 18,000 candidates applied. Of them, 11,000 were shortlisted for written tests. A total of 4,000 candidates qualified in the written test and demonstrated their skills in a demo class. Total 1100 candidates were called for personal interviews before more than 250 were selected. The KISS has been consistently achieving cent percent results in the 10th and 12th boards.

3 arrested for killing youth in city

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police on Sunday arrested three persons in connection with the murder of a youth at Munda Sahi under the Mancheswar police station in the city on March 4.

The miscreants had killed one Mukesh Chaudhury and dumped his body at a secluded place in Mancheswar. During preliminary investigation, police ascertained that one Chandan Padhi was the main accused. On Saturday, police received inputs that Chandan was hiding in a broiler farm at Nihar

Prasad. After arresting him, police arrested the other two accused identified as Ranjan Sahu and Rajesh Mohanty.

According to police, Mukesh was involved in some theft cases. He was also a drug addict. The trio who killed him were his associates. A dispute over sharing of the booty had led to Mukesh's killing. Ranjan and Rajesh Mohanty, had been misleading police in the course of investigation by insisting on justice for Mukesh. Later police found out about their involvement and arrested them, said city DCP Prateek Singh.

Gender-specific programmes Rs 8,301.37 cr more allocated in State Budget this yr

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In order to promote development and empowerment of girls and women ensuring gender equitable distribution of resources and by contributing to equal opportunities for all, more funds are pumped in to address their needs.

Accordingly, more than Rs 8,300 crore more has been allocated in 2022-23 Annual Budget exclusively for gender specific and gender sensitive programmes, for which the Gender Budgeting in Odisha has gone a long way, thanks to overdrive of the State Government, which aims at achieving a more gender transformative governance and administration.

The total amount for gender budget has gone up from Rs 48,545.44 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 56,846.24 crore during 2022-23 as more schemes and programmes have been included in gender specific programmes, official

sources said, adding it was Rs 8,301.37 crore more than last Fiscal.

The State Government is implementing 85 schemes and programmes in gender specific components and 420 schemes in gender sensitive components during 2022-23.

While Department of Women and Child Development has 49 percent of share of the gender specific budget, Mission Shakti will be having nearly 34 percent share and Health and Family Welfare sector will have 9 percent share.

So far as gender sensitive schemes are concerned, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water has 16.60 percent, followed by Health and Family Welfare, 14.07 percent and Works, 10.04 percent.

Officials said that gender responsive fiscal policy had turned out to be an effective tool to improve the allocation of existing resources in more gender equitable ways.

As per Budget Estimate 2022-23,

the share of gender specific allocation is 4.78 percent, gender sensitive programme is 39.88 percent and total gender budget to State's total expenditure accounts for 44.65 percent.

So far as State Gross Domestic Product (GSDP) is concerned, gender specific allocation is 1.12 percent, gender sensitive allocation is 9.35 percent and total gender budget to GSDP is 10.47 percent.

In the meantime, the State Government in order to strengthen gender responsive budgeting, has constituted a Gender Budget Cell within several departments for overseeing their respective gender budgeting process and to make it more transparent and accountable the State Government has made the budgetary process digital.

Despite such positive outputs, the gender gap that still exists in terms of various development indicators needs coordinated interventions from all the stakeholders.

Average power tariff up 50 paise a unit a yr

Govt spent Rs 12,000 cr to strengthen infra

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

During the last five years, the average increase in power tariff was 50 paise per unit, but for Kutir Jyoti and agriculture, it has not increased, said Energy Minister Pratap Keshari Deb.

Replying to a question of Congress MLA Suresh Kumar Routray, the Minister said the electricity tariff is being fixed through public hearing conducted by the Odisha Electricity

Regulatory Commission (OERC) under Electricity Rules, 2003 Para 61 and 65. Deb highlighted that during the last 10 years the State Government has spent Rs 12,000 crore for strengthening the power infrastructure in the State.

He further outlined that after Tata company's takeover of distribution networks, total technical and commercial loss has come down from 29% to 26%. Only in last five years, to develop distribution networks an investment of Rs 5,000 crore has been made, he stated. In DISCOMS, Tata Power has recruited 70% local people on a priority basis, Deb told.

Heavy rains continue to pound State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Heavy and intense spells of rain continued to batter several places in Odisha on Sunday. It is now for the past couple of days that the State is experiencing enhanced rainfall activities under the influence of an active monsoon and low pressure system.

At least three places in Odisha recorded extremely heavy showers with over 200 mm rainfall in the past 24 hours.

As per the data shared by the IMD Regional Centre in Bhubaneswar, Nuagad in Gajapati district recorded the highest 237 mm of rainfall in the past 24 hours.

Other places, which recorded



200-mm or above rainfall, included R Udayagiri (233.4 mm), Tangi (Khordha) 210 mm and Banpur (Khordha) 200 mm. Similarly, Sainatala in Bolangir district recorded 195 mm of rainfall and Puri recorded 158.5 mm rainfall in the past 24 hours.

The rain fury has compounded the miseries of people in several

parts of the State. Several villages in Motu in Malkangiri district are submerged in backwaters from river Godavari in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

There are also reports of landslides in Gajapati district due to heavy rains continuing since Friday. However, no casualty has been reported in the landslide.

In Cuttack Swiggy boy's death shrouded in mystery

PNS ■ CUTTACK

A Swiggy delivery boy was found dead under mysterious circumstances near the National Law University, Odisha (NLUO) campus in Cuttack on Sunday morning. The deceased was identified as Nirakar Betal, he was residing in the CDA Sector-7 area.

The body of the victim was spotted by some passersby who then informed CDA Phase -II police station. His bike was lying on the

spot in a damaged condition.

On getting information, senior officials of Commissionerate police reached the spot and sent the body to SCB medical college and hospital for postmortem. It is suspected from the circumstantial evidence that Nirakar died after meeting with an accident. However, the exact reason behind the death of the delivery boy was yet to be ascertained. Further investigation in connection with the incident was underway.

CONTEMPORARIES SC refusal to consolidate all FIRs against Nupur worrisome

The multiple FIRs filed in several States against former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma for her remarks against the Prophet were refused to be clubbed together by the Supreme Court. In Sharma's case, the FIRs were filed subsequent to the FIR by the Delhi Police's Special Cell which referred to the same date and time of occurrence of the alleged offence of remarks against the Prophet in the same television debate and the provisions of IPC invoked in all the FIRs were also almost the same. Subsequently, Sharma had also joined investigation before the Delhi Police and recorded her statement. It is pertinent to mention that she is facing death and rape threats from radical groups; and if she is subjected to investigation and trial in various States, it would only further escalate her threat to life.

Therefore, such refusal by the Supreme Court to consolidate the FIRs is against the principle of predictability in administration of



S JYOTIRANJANA

criminal justice system and the judicial precedents like TT Antony vs. State of Kerala (2001) where it was held that only the earliest information with regard to the commission of an offence is to be investigated and tried and none other and in the subsequent case of Babubhai vs. State of Gujarat (2010), the court elucidated the sameness of the offence could be determined from the fact whether "the subject matter of the FIRs is the same incident, same occurrence or are in regard to incidents which

are two or more parts of the same transaction".

However, in a recent case involving journalist Arnab Goswami and Amish Devgn, the SC extensively relied upon TT Antony while granting similar relief like the one prayed by Nupur Sharma. But in Nupur's case, the petition was finally withdrawn by her counsel; and according to media reports, there were two reasons why the benefit under TT Antony wasn't extended to Nupur.

First, the SC Bench refused to treat party spokespersons and journalists identically. According to reports, the Bench said, "The case of a journalist on expressing rights on a particular issue is on a different pedestal from a spokesperson who is lambasting others with irresponsible statements without thinking of the consequences."

However, there is a fundamental error in such a view. In fact, the Constitution provides for no such distinction between journalists and ordinary citizens or political party

spokespersons while considering their case for applicability and enforcement of the fundamental rights. Interestingly, the right to approach the SC under Article 32 is in itself a fundamental right and nowhere including in the TT Antony case any distinction is prescribed between different individuals vis-à-vis fundamental rights.

The second palpable reason which appears to be behind the Bench not extending the benefit of TT Antony to the Sharma case is manifest in the reported remarks of the Bench which said there was no unconditional apology tendered from Nupur's side for her alleged remarks on the Prophet and that her political clout is apparent because she has not been arrested despite an FIR being lodged against her by Delhi Police. This view is again not correct and suffers from inherent infirmities. The tendering of unconditional apology by Sharma is irrelevant in the context of a petition for consolidating the multiple FIRs as this is something

which at best might be a mitigating factor to be considered at the time of deciding on punishment once guilt is established. On the other hand, if the Bench was not satisfied with the conduct of the Delhi Police in handling the case, it could have at best transferred the investigation of the case to a non-BJP ruled State or constituted an SIT to impartially investigate the case.

Such a decision of the SC to disallow consolidation of multiple FIRs in this case is against the longstanding judicial precedents and the spirit of the Constitution to not allow the state to abuse the statutory power of investigation by filing of successive FIR on the same issue and waste the resources of the state and judicial time.

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

forums in the form of State Commission for Women, National Commission for Women and Mahila Police Stations, to name a few, to render necessary assistance in solving the problems faced by women of all categories. No young woman should feel that there is no agency and no individual to help her in solving her problems.

Ruchika Mohanty, a student of BJB Autonomous College, committed suicide on July 2 as she was too much harassed and tortured because of ragging done to her allegedly by three senior students of her hostel. She should have picked up the courage to fight out the menace. She should have brought the matter to the notice of the Principal of the college and sought cooperation of her parents to take the matter to the Bhubaneswar Mahila Police Station. She could have taken her problem to the doors of the State Mahila Commission, too. However, she did nothing of the sort and instead, chose the extreme path.

First and foremost, every young woman must know that her life is precious. It should not be ended when confronted with the menace of ragging or betrayal in love affairs. The teachers and parents and all seniors should educate all women to face the problems of whatever nature. Suicide is the act of a timid

evidence of ragging leading to the death of Ruchika. It seems that the three senior students are having powerful connections.

Students who derive the sadistic pleasure by torturing junior students should be made ineligible for any Government or private job in future. No compassion should ever be shown to such elements who don't hesitate to commit acts of barbarity.

The FPI holds the view that there should not be any "betrayal" in love affairs. Love affairs once initiated should culminate in formal marriage by exchange of garlands as soon as the lovers attain the requisite "age qualifications". They should do their marriage independent of their parents as the Supreme Court has on March 8, 2018 ordered that a young woman of 18+ age "enjoys absolute autonomy over her person". The SC ordered so while deciding the Kerala Hadiya Case involving the marriage between a Muslim youth and a young Hindu woman. Suicide notes are of no use in a clumsy world in which we live. So the road to love marriage should be the simplest one free from the shackles of caste, creed, religion and status.

(The writer is general secretary, FPI, Bhubaneswar-751030; Mob: 9238878280)

Nuapada man missing in UP NHRC seeks report from Sultanpur SP

AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought a report from the Superintendent of Police of Sultanpur district in Uttar Pradesh regarding the missing of a labourer from a brick kiln in the district. The NHRC sought a report within four weeks taking cognisance of a petition filed by Bhawanipatna-based human rights activist Dilip Kumar Dash.



Dash in his petition stated that Bednath Keut (29), a resident of Saradhapur village of Beltukri PS area under Nuapada district, was working in a brick kiln in Arjanipur village under the Akbarpur police station of Sultanpur district in Uttar Pradesh. A middleman named Santosh Agrawal of Amodi village of Nuapada district had sent him, his wife and three children to the brick kiln in December 2021. Bednath suddenly disappeared from the kiln on March 7, 2022. His family stayed there for some days with the hope that he would return but in vain. When filing an FIR in the Akbarpur police station didn't yield any result, his wife Lalita returned with her children to her native place and lodged an FIR at the Beltukri police station in Nuapada. She suspected that the brick kiln owner, Akhilesh Verma might have kidnapped Bednath or had killed him for some reason.

In Dhenkanal Woman hacks father-in-law to death

PNS ■ DHENKANAL A woman allegedly hacked her father-in-law to death over some domestic feud at Katuria village under the Parjang police station in Dhenkanal district on Saturday night. The deceased was identified as Benudhar Pradhan. As per reports, there was heated argument between the deceased and his daughter-in-law Yashoda over some matter. Soon it took a violent turn and both father-in-law and daughter-in-law scuffled with each other. But Benudhar died on the spot when Yashoda attacked him with an axe. She also sustained injuries in the brawl and was admitted to a hospital. "Due to some family dispute, the woman hacked to death her father-in-law last night. A formal complaint is yet to be registered. The woman has been detained and undergoing treatment at hospital," said Parjang PS IIC Prashant Patra. According to Patra, the body was sent for postmortem to the Parjang hospital and further investigation was on.

INBRIEF FORUM OBSERVES VAN MAHOTSAV AT GADAKANA

Bhubaneswar: The Citizens' Forum Greater Gadakana observed Van Mahotsav at the Guru Kelucharan Park at Gadakana here on Sunday. At a meeting presided over by forum president Surendra Mohan Mishra, Bhubaneswar North MLA Susanta Kumar Rout, Mayor Sulochana Das and Ward-9 Corporator Sushama Sahu, joining as guests, emphasised on plantation besides discussing local civic issues. Forum vice-president Pradip Kumar Jena, joint secretary Jagabandhu Nayak, media cell convenor Dilip Dashasharma, Amulya Das, Ramesh Chandra Sahu and Pramod Satpathy coordinated, while Sanjay Mishra, Santosh Prusti, Sarada Prasad Panda, Keshav Patra and Santosh Acharya were present.



WORLD SNAKE DAY OBSERVED AT BRAHMAMUR

Brahmapur: The Snake Helpline observed the World Snake Day in the premises of the Conservator of Forests Office in Aska Road here on Saturday. Additional Conservator Forests Dr Rudraprasad Rath was chief guest and Forest Officer Rajat Kumar Mishra and known environmentalist Chandan Jani were guests of honour. The objective of this event was to remove the wrong and unfair perception about snakes from the minds of the common people. The members discussed about the different species of snakes and their security and more particularly about the new species of snakes found in the sea. Over 20 snake helpline members from different parts of Ganjam and forest officials joined the event.



B'PUR KID DISPLAYS FAMILY PIX AT B'LORE SCHOOL

Brahmapur: A three-year-old smart child, Shreya Panda, a resident of Gandhinagar of Brahmapur and a student of Nursery Class at the Holy Cross School, Whitefield, Bangalore, enthusiastically displayed the photographs of her family members as per the rich traditions of her school during the initial first fortnight of her schooling.



G'PATI LANDSLIDE DESTROYS HOUSES, CORNFIELDS

Paralakhemundi: Due to continuous rainfall, landslide occurred at Jangiratulu village under Bkalkote panchayat in Gumma block of Gajapati district, destroying houses and cornfields on Sunday. It also disrupted road communication. Gumma Tehsildar Bhaskar Chandra Sahu reached at spot and started an enquiry.



PATIENT FERRIED ON SHOULDER IN G'PATI

Paralakhemundi: Due to lack of regular road communication to Hueri village under Mohana block in Gajapati district, a patient was carried on shoulders by villagers as a 108 ambulance could not reach at the village. Jengera Mallick had fallen ill with sores in his legs. His son Mitu tried to call a 108 ambulance but in vain. Finally, villagers brought Jenguru up to Gandapadar main road through a hilly terrain. From there they picked up an auto rickshaw to the Mohana CHC.



CURIOUS CUBS PRE-SCHOOL OPENS CENTRE IN J'SUGUDA

Jharsuguda: The Curious Cubs Pre-School, which is an initiative to bridge the towering gap in the standard and quality of early childhood education between eastern India and rest of the developed parts of the country, opened a new centre at Jharsuguda on Sunday. The centre was inaugurated by Vedanta CEO Sunil Gupta in the presence of guest of honour Deepali Das, official representative of Health Minister Naba Kishore Das.



In Kalahandi 100-yr-old village gets first matriculate

While Sandeep's mother is a housewife, his father Raju Majhi and elder brother both are migrant labourers and go to Gujarat to earn bread and butter for the family. "We are labour class people. Many times, I migrate to earn and sometimes, I work locally so that my family survives," Raju said. Jarengpata is situated 70 km from the district headquarters Bhawanipatna and comes under Lanjigarh block. Sandeep studied in the Pokharibandh High School, one km from his village. Most of the 19 tribal families in Jarengpata are migrant labourers. Most of the village students drop out from school after Classes-V and VII. And those who appeared for Class-X exam previously did not pass, said village Sarpanch Sasmita Majhi. "I myself studied up to Class-III and we are happy over Sandeep's achievement." Sandeep, who belongs to a tribal family and wants to be an engineer, will take admission in the nearest college. But he is worried because of poor financial condition of the family. He told the media that he would study science in the college to be an engineer.



BIKASH KHEMKA ■ BHAWANIPATNA

SOA: A melting pot of quality academics, research

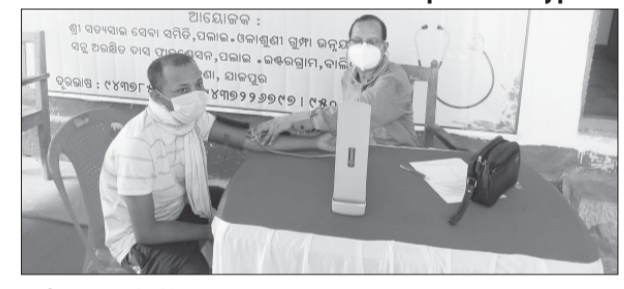
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR Coming into existence on July 17, 2007 when the Government conferred on it the status of a Deemed to be University, the Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA) is considered as a centre of superlative professional education today. The university is home to nearly 15,000 students including 15 from foreign countries. It has a faculty-student ratio of 1:10.75 with the number of faculty with PhD or equivalent degrees accounting for more than 75% of the teachers. The SOA has been continuously listed among the top 25 universities in the country by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) for seven consecutive years. It has been ranked 16th in the country by NIRF in the just-released rankings for 2022 making it the third best university in eastern region. Its vision is to become a leading institution of higher learning in its chosen areas to prepare future generations through quality teaching and innovative research. The SOA reached a big milestone recently when the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accredited it with the highest Grade A++ with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 3.88 out of 4. The recent decision of the University Grants Commission (UGC) to grade SOA as Category-1 Deemed to be University has come as the newest feather in the university's already glowing cap. The SOA was globally ranked in the 801-1000 bracket by the prestigious QS World University Ranking for 2022 after being placed in the 401-450 bracket in the QS Asia University Ranking in 2021. It was awarded Diamond University rating by QS I-GAUGE for outstanding performance in 2020. SOA was also the only institute in eastern India to get QS I-GAUGE E-LEAD (E-Learning Excellence for Academic Digitisation) for conducting online teaching-learning during the Covid-19 lockdown. The SOA found place in the Times Higher Education (THE) World Ranking, being listed in the 1201 plus category in university rankings, while it got ranked in the 601-800 bracket in engineering and technology and computer science in 2021. SOA was ranked in 601 plus category in health sciences and was placed in 401 plus bracket in THE Asia University Rankings in the same year. It was ranked in the 401 plus bracket in THE Young University Ranking and listed in 501 plus category in THE Emerging Economies University rankings in 2021. Significantly, 13 researchers in SOA found place in the Stanford University's prestigious world ranking of 2% scientists which was drawn up on the basis of a subject-wise analysis in 2021. The SOA offers 24 UG and 67 PG, 15 Post Masters, PhD and Post Doctoral programs in engineering and technology, management, medical sciences, dental sciences, nursing, pharmaceutical sciences, biotechnology, hospital management, hospitality and tourism management, law and agricultural sciences. The university follows a teaching-learning process grounded on outcome and project-based learning which has been paying rich dividends as students have been receiving lucrative placement offers every year. About 91% of SOA's engineering students graduating in 2021 have received job offers in topnotch companies staving off the huge worldwide impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Five of SOA engineering programs have been accredited by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) while three have been accredited by Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) of USA. Focused on research, the university has 9,324 Scopus indexed publications to its credit so far with h-Index of 85 while Web of Science publications contained 5287 papers with h-Index of 77. The university has set up 16 research centres to promote research work in 26 thrust areas. The SOA runs the Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital with 1,600 beds. The teaching hospital has 250 MBBS seats. The SOA was in the forefront in Odisha's battle against Covid-19 when the first wave swept in 2020. It set up four standalone Covid Hospitals and ran two Covid Care Centres accounting for 2,341 beds. When the second wave struck early in 2021, SOA operated as many as five Covid Hospitals (besides a Covid Care Centre) having more than 2200 beds with around 500 doctors.

Disaster mgmt training to NCC girl cadets



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR During the period, the NCC girls will be oriented on military training like map reading, field craft, battle craft, service shooting etc under supervision of Sebedar PI Staff, GCI and ANOs. The main motto of the annual training is to prepare the NCC girls cadet for NCC B' and C' certificate, Republic Day Camp-2023 at Delhi and All India Thal Sena Camp-2022 at Delhi for Odisha State Contingent. Subedar Major Ajinath Naraware, Sr GCI Jeenish Mahapatra, Sr GCI Laxmipriya Prusty, GCI Nivedita Das, GCI Soniya Yadav Dash, Associate NCC Officer Capt Pushpalata Dutta, ANO Lt Bindulata Sandha, ANO First Officer Baijyantimala Panda, ANO Third Officer Anupama Panda, CTOs, JCOs and all permanent instructors and civil staff were present.

PPA holds health camp in Jajpur



PNS ■ PARADIP Paradip Port Chairman PL Haranadh inaugurated the camp. PPA Hospital CMO Dr P Panda along with doctors and support staffs of the hospital treated 1,000 patients, conducting ECG and rapid glucose test. The PPA Chairman expressed his concern about the health of people and stressed on the role of industries under the PPA CSR wing and assured more such camps in the surrounding areas in future.

UAIL helps to control diarrhoea in Kashipur

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR/RAYAGADA As a responsible corporate, the Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL) is committed towards the health and wellbeing of its periphery villagers. Since last one week, there is an outbreak of diarrhoea in Kashipur block, especially in Tikiri and Dudukabahal. The UAIL's medical team along with the CSR team have visited the affected villages. Doctors from Utkal Hospital treated a patient, Krushna Gouda, and supplied medicines along with halogen tablets. Four more patients were also treated and supplied with medicines out of which three are children within the age range between 1 to 1.5 years. The Utkal Alumina has supplied 25 kg of bleaching powders to the local Anganwadi Worker. Then, the team moved to an affected hamlet, JhodiaSahi, of Tikiri. The company's Utkal Hospital is equipped with necessary facilities to deal with such a crisis. Total 122 patients were registered who are suffering from diarrhoea and lose motion and 74 of them were given medicines and doctors' advice and 48 were admitted for adequate treatment. All the patients were discharged after successful recovery. A special medical team has been formed for doorstep medical support to the patients. District Collector Swadha Dev Singh visited the Utkal Hospital on Saturday along with CDMO Dr Lalmohan Routroy and discussed the matter with the doctors. She asked the company to keep 30 beds ready to treat diarrhoea patients if required. UAIL Unit Head Mazhar Being said, "We are prepared to safeguard our community from such a health crisis and other health-related services. I believe with the joint effort of Government Health Department and Utkal Alumina, we would definitely control the outbreak"



64,671 km rural roads built in State in 22 yrs

16,905 unconnected habitations provided all-weather roads PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR Rural Development Minister Pritranjan Ghadai said on Friday that as many as 16,323 roads of 64,671.60 km length and 516 long span bridges have been constructed across the State in last 22 years at a cost of Rs 28,642.25 crore. Replying to a debate on Department of Rural Development Budget proposals in the State Assembly, Ghadai said 16,905 unconnected habitations have been connected with all-weather roads during the time. During the last five years - from 2017-18 to 2021-22, a total 24,893.50 km roads and 317 bridges have been constructed by utilising Rs 11,696 crore, thereby providing all-weather connectivity to 4,182 habitations, he informed. During 2017-18, the State has provided connectivity to 1,778 habitations by constructing 7,141 km road against the target of 7,000 km and the State achieved first position in terms of completion of length of roads. Besides, the State has been awarded with 2nd prize in terms of coverage of habitation by providing connectivity to 1,778 habitations and also 2nd prize in terms of use of green technology by completing 855 km of road. Based on the performance of the State for implementation of the PMGSY scheme, the Union Government has given Rs 109 crore as an incentive to the State towards maintenance of PMGSY roads. The Minister said that in the



financial year 2018-19, the State has provided connectivity to 1,675 habitations by constructing 8,130 km all-weather road and achieved the first position in terms of completion of highest length of road in the nation. It also achieved top position in completion of maximum road length in using green and environment friendly technology in construction of road work for a length of 2,785 km and second position in investment in asset management. Basing on the performance of the State for implementation of PMGSY, the Union Government has given Rs 75.83 crore as incentive to the State, Ghadai added. During the year 2019-20, Odisha has completed 5,173 km road and 76 bridges by utilising an amount of Rs 2,369 crore under PMGSY-I and II. In the year 2020-21, the State entered into the arena of PMGSY-III and has already got sanction for upgradation of 9,400.13 km roads and 92 bridges, the Minister said. During 2020-21, the State has completed 1,776.78 km road and 104 bridges by utilising an amount of Rs 1,681.13 crore under PMGSY-I, II and PMGSY-III, he said. Similarly, in 2021-22, the State has completed 2,725.49 km roads and 85 bridges by utilising an amount of Rs 1,739.56 crore under PMGSY-I, II and III, while in 2022-23, 2,000 km roads and 60 bridges under PMGSY were completed, including 150 km road and 31 bridges under PMGSY-I and II and 1,850 km road and 29 bridges under PMGSY-III, he said, adding that there is a budget provision of Rs 1,450 crore for the year 2022-23. The Minister said the State Government has also launched the "Biju Setu Yojana" (BSY) during 2011-12 for construction of bridges in all

Rural Development Department roads and important police station roads to provide an effective and all-weather connectivity to the rural areas of all 30 districts of the State. Since inception of the scheme up to 2020-21, a total 1,332 bridges have been taken up with project cost of Rs 6,130.51 crore, out of which 1,139 bridges have been completed up to March-2022. During 2021-22, 550 bridges have been approved with a project cost of Rs 2,800 crore, out of which 458 have been taken up. At present 379 bridges are in the ongoing stage and 242 are under pre-construction activity stage, Ghadai said. The Minister said that there is a target to complete at least 300 bridges during 2022-23 and a budget provision of Rs 1,788.02 crore has been made for the year 2022-23.

India-China hold talks over LAC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and China on Sunday reaffirmed their resolve to sustain the momentum of dialogue for early resolution of continuing stand-offs between the two armies in Eastern Ladakh. The two sides also agreed to have another round of military-level talks at the earliest.



It was the main takeaway from the 16th round of Corps Commander-level talks between the two armies at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh on the Indian side.

agreed to maintain peace and tranquility and avoid escalating tension, sources said here. The Indian delegation also brought up the issue of Chinese fighter jets transgressing the no fly zone close to the LAC in Ladakh which may lead to more tension, they said.

The most recent case was reported in June when a Chinese jet came close to the LAC on its side.

The two countries have a pact that no jets can fly within ten kms of the border on either side. Besides this issue, the talks focused on firming up a process for disengagement

and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reviewed the situation at the LAC in Bali, Indonesia.

The talks took place on the sidelines of a meeting of the foreign ministers of G-20 countries on July 7. It was learned that the eastern Ladakh border row figured in the discussions.

Jaishankar called for an early resolution of all the outstanding issues along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh, the ministry of external affairs had said. Recalling the disengagement achieved in some friction areas, Jaishankar reiterated the need to sustain the momentum to complete disengagement from all the remaining areas to restore peace and tranquillity in the border areas, the ministry said.

The two Ministers agreed that they should continue regular contact at military and diplomatic meetings, and looked ahead to the next (16th) round of Senior Commanders meeting at the Chushul-Moldo border point at an early date, the statement said.

Incidentally, Wang Yi was the first Chinese minister to visit India in March this year

since trouble erupted on the LAC in eastern Ladakh more than two years back. At present, more than 50,000 troops each from both sides are in a stand-off at some friction points.

The two ministers are likely to take stock of the situation at the LAC when they meet again on July 28 and 29 in Tashkent for Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Foreign Ministers' conclave.

The takeaway from the Corps Commander talks is likely to figure prominently in the talks between Jaishankar and Wang Yi, sources said. The eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake areas. Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year in the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.

India, Bangladesh to review entire spectrum of military, bilateral ties

Army Chief will commence his visit by paying tributes to martyrs of 1971 battle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh will review the entire spectrum of bilateral military ties and security situations in the neighborhood during Army Chief General Manoj Pande's interaction with his Bangla counterparts. He is on a two-day visit starting Monday. This is his first foreign visit after assuming charge in May.

Giving details of Pande's visit, army officials said here on Sunday continuing with the excellent bilateral defence ties between India and Bangladesh, the Army Chief will commence his visit by paying tributes to the bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice during the Liberation War of 1971 by laying a wreath at the Shikha Anirban on Monday.

During the day, Pande will take part in multiple meetings with senior officials of the security establishment and exchange views on various defence-related issues. He will also pay tributes to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi.

On the second day of his visit, the Army Chief will address the students and faculty of



Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur. He will thereafter visit and interact with the members of the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support and Operation Training (BIPSOT), a premier institute of Bangladesh that trains peacekeepers for employment in various UN Peace Operations.

This will be followed by a visit to the Bangabandhu Military Museum at Mirpur. The visit of the Army Chief will further deepen the bilateral relationships between the two Armies and act as a catalyst for closer coordination and cooperation between the two countries on a host of strategic issues.

Naidu meets with all political parties ahead of Monsoon Session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah sought a farewell gift in the form of a meaningful and productive session in the Upper House during the Monsoon Session of Parliament beginning Monday.



Naidu said this during the meeting of leaders of all the parties attended by the highest ever of 41 leaders and ministers. While nostalgically recalling the functioning of the House during the last 13 full sessions that he presided over, Naidu said that he was making one last request for upholding the dignity and decorum of the House of Elders.

members sharing their experiences in detail in the House. He further said as mentioned by some other leaders, "all sections of the House would work together to present a befitting farewell to the Chairman Naidu in the form of a productive monsoon session".

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said, "After this session your absence will be noticed. At times you were angry with us and irritated us but at the end of you are a good person.

It is difficult to prove to be a good person and you proved to be one such a good person and will be missed. Hope your spirit of personal affection and humour will continue to animate the House". He further said that as a token of acknowledgement of your contributions, it is appropriate for the government to create a post of Chairman Emeritus.

On behalf of the opposition, Kharge listed 16 issues for discussion during the monsoon session. These include; Federalism coming under strain; Agnipath scheme; Rising prices and uncontrolled inflation; Declining labour force participation rate; EPFO interest rates; Declining credibility of organizations like the Election Commission, CBI, CVC; External threats to national security; hate speeches; undemocratic actions against opposition leaders; Increasing crime in Jammu & Kashmir and attacks on Kashmiri pundits and Reservations in the promotion and in private sector.

Prachanda, Nadda discuss ways to deepen ties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maist Center Chairman and top Nepalese leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Sunday met BJP president JP Nadda and discussed ways of "deepening relations" between the two countries and their parties.

during the Nadda-Prachanda interaction at the BJP headquarters.

After the meeting, Nadda said, "We had fruitful discussions over strengthening and deepening ties between India & Nepal, especially our age-old cultural and people-to-people bond.

We also discussed ways to further party-to-party cooperation. Nadda has been meeting diplomats and party heads of different countries in the last few months. In the series recently he interacted with the communist party leader of Vietnam, too.



NIA to quiz Khadim of Ajmer Dargah for links with PFI, Udaipur killers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is likely to question Khadim of Ajmer Dargah Gauhar Chisti who was arrested by Rajasthan police for hateful speech. The agency will quiz him about his likely linkages with PFI and Udaipur killers.

radical outfit Popular Front of India. Sources said the NIA is likely to soon take custody of Chisti as part of the probe into the beheading of Kanhaiya Lal Teli. Last week, the NIA searched certain areas around the Ajmer Dargah in connection with the probe into the Udaipur killing case. Earlier, Chisti had given a call for the beheading of those indulging in blasphemy and had subsequently fled to Hyderabad. His father Sarwar Chisti is also accused of hateful speech. A video of his nephew Adil Chisti denigrating Hindu Gods had also gone viral.

Chisti was recently nabbed by the Rajasthan police from Hyderabad where he was hiding at his friend Amanullah's residence. Amanullah has also been arrested by the Rajasthan police.

The Rajasthan police probe has revealed that there had been a transaction of over Rs 20 lakh in his bank account in the run up to the beheading incident in Udaipur on June 28. The probe has revealed that Chisti was in touch with the two prime accused, Riyaz Akhtari and Ghouse Mohammad, in the beheading of tailor Kanhaiya Lal Teli in Udaipur. He even met them before the ghastly incident.

The Rajasthan police is also said to be probing the linkages between the Khadim and

CPI (M): Baseless charges levelled by BJP against V-P Ansari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Sunday condemned the "unsubstantiated and baseless" allegations levelled by BJP on former Vice President Hamid Ansari.

ment.

"The Polit Bureau strongly condemned the unsubstantiated and baseless allegations levelled by the ruling BJP on Hamid Ansari, former Vice President of India.

World Bank data shows that the annual growth of the Indian economy over 2020-22 was a mere 0.8 percent and unemployment is at a staggering rate of 42 percent, said the party.

"According to the CMIE Report for the January-April 2022, the number of unemployed in the age group of 20-24 years was over 2 crore - a staggering unemployment rate of 42 percent. In the 25-29 age group, this was over sixty lac - an unemployment rate of 12.72 percent.

Together unemployment in 20-29 age group is nearly 80 percent of the over 3 crore unemployed Indians above 15 years who are actively looking for jobs.

"India's working age population is 36 percent of the total. Of these 61.2 percent have simply stopped looking for employment as there are no jobs. The Labour Participation Rate has dropped to an all-time low of 38.8 percent," said CPI(M).

The polit bureau in its communiqué also blamed the Centre for collapsing economy and an increase in unemploy-

Philippines in talks with India to procure advanced light helicopters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Philippines is looking at procuring a batch of advanced light helicopters from India to crank up its combat capability, months after sealing a USD 375 million deal to acquire three batteries of the BrahMos cruise missile.

India's ties have witnessed major expansion in the last one decade. In January, the Philippines concluded a USD 375 million deal with India for procurement of three batteries of the BrahMos cruise missile. BrahMos Aerospace, an India-Russian joint venture, produces supersonic cruise missiles that can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or land platforms.

The Southeast Asian nation has been focusing on modernising its military in the face of myriad security challenges as well as decades-long territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea.

In a related development, India signed a framework agreement with the Philippines in March that provided for government-to-government deals for supply of defence hardware and equipment.

Top officials in the security and defence establishment told PTI on Sunday that the Philippines has shown keen interest in procurement of a significant number of advanced light helicopters (ALH) to replace its ageing chopper fleet.

India has been looking at supplying critical military hardware and platforms to countries with whom it has strong strategic ties and convergence of interests. The Tejas aircraft has already emerged as the top choice for Malaysia as the country is looking at replacing its ageing fleet of fighter jets.

It is learnt both sides are holding talks on the proposed acquisition and there has been "positive" movement in the negotiations.

Malaysia has already narrowed down on the Indian aircraft notwithstanding stiff competition from China's JF-17 jet, South Korea's FA-50 and Russia's Mig-35 as well as Yak-130.

The indigenously developed ALH helicopter is a twin engine, multi-role, multi-mission new generation helicopter in the 5.5 ton weight class and is considered to be an effective platform for various military operations.

Tejas, manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, is a single-engine and highly agile multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft capable of operating in high-threat air environments.

The officials said the Philippines has also been impressed by the performance of India's indigenously-developed Tejas light combat aircraft and could consider procuring it as the country continues its hunt for a fleet of fighter jets.

In February last year, the defence ministry sealed a Rs 48,000 crore deal with HAL for the procurement of 83 Tejas fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The Philippines is a key strategic partner of India in the Southeast Asian region and the bilateral defence and security ties have been on an upswing in the last few years, especially in the maritime domain.

India has already started work on the MK 2 version of the Tejas as well as on an ambitious USD 5 billion project to develop a fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

Pay 5% GST on pre-packed, labelled food items, hospital rooms above ₹5K from today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Customers will have to pay 5 per cent GST on pre-packed, labelled food items like atta, paneer and curd, besides hospital rooms with rent above Rs 5,000 from Monday with the GST Council's decision coming into force.

interim report of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation, had also removed duty inversion for goods where the taxes on inputs were higher than those on the output.

cent. Renting of truck, goods carriage where the cost of fuel is included will now attract a lower 12 per cent rate as against 18 per cent.

In addition, hotel rooms with tariff of up to Rs 1,000/day, maps and charts, including atlases, will attract a 12 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST), while 18 per cent GST will be levied on tetra packs and fees charged by banks for the issue of cheques (loose or in book form).

Tax rates on products such as printing, writing or drawing ink; knives with cutting blades, paper knives and pencil sharpeners; LED lamps; drawing and marking out instruments will be hiked to 18 per cent on Monday, from 12 per cent currently, to correct the inverted duty anomaly. Also, solar water heater will now attract 12 per cent GST as compared to 5 per cent earlier. Some services such as work contracts for roads, bridges, railways, metro, effluent treatment plants and crematoriums too will see tax going up to 18 per cent from the current 12 per cent.

GST exemption on the transport of passengers by air to and from northeastern states and Bagdogra will be restricted to economy class only.

Services rendered by regulators such as RBI, IRDA and SEBI will be taxed at 18 per cent and so will be renting of a residential dwelling to business entities.

Besides, individuals will only be able to claim GST exemption for training or coaching in recreational activities relating to arts or culture or sports.

Bio-medical waste treatment facilities shall attract 12 per cent GST, while non-ICU hospital rooms exceeding Rs 5,000/day will be levied 5 per cent GST, without input tax credit, to the extent of the amount charged for the room.

Last month, the GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising her state counterparts, had imposed the exemption list and pruned tax on a host of goods and services. The Council, based on an

Exchequer incurs losses due to restricted trade in rosewood

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian exchequer is incurring huge losses due to restricted global trade in the rosewood (Dalbergia sissoo) from 2016 onward after it was listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

wood under a controlled trade ambit. The proposal has been sent to the CITES ahead of the nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in Panama City (Republic of Panama) in November. "The decrease in exports of rosewood products has affected the livelihoods of around 50,000 artisans who work with the species.

inclusion in Appendix I in the near future and the harvest of specimens from the wild is not reducing the wild population to a level at which its survival might be threatened by continued harvesting or other influences."

According to the Government data, exports of furniture and handicrafts made of the species have fallen by almost 50 per cent from an estimated Rs 1000 crore (USD 129 million) since the restriction imposed in 2016.

It has also had a knock-on effect on the livelihoods of other stakeholders who are directly or indirectly connected with the trade of the species, in particular farmers who have been growing the species as part of agroforestry activities to generate additional income," said India which has got the support from Nepal in the matter.

The species is sustainably utilized for its timber, fuelwood, fodder, medicines, etc. The species is native to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, and South Africa; and has also been widely introduced, especially in Africa and Asia.

India has once again submitted its proposal before the CITES, a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals, seeking its exclusion from Appendix II. Under Appendix II the species are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. India has been opposing the move to include rose-

"The species has a very fast growth rate and capacity to become naturalized outside of its native range and is even invasive in some parts of the world. The regulation of trade in the species is not necessary to avoid it becoming eligible for



'State Forest Report 2021' (FSI, 2021), the total estimated number of trees of D. sissoo outside the forests in India is 7,57,62,000. India has said in its proposal document.

According to an official from the Union Environment Ministry, it was in the 17th COP, in Johannesburg in 2016, several African and Latin American countries had expressed concerns that there was a "rise in interest in wood of Dalbergia in international markets, primarily in China" which was fuelling an illegal trade at the cost of Dalbergia populations. "Although CITES focuses on protection of indi-

vidual species, COP 17 put the entire genus under Appendix II, which regulates trade in species. Though most of the 182 member countries agreed to the proposal, India, for the first time, strongly expressed its reservation concerning the inclusion of all rosewood in Appendix II.

"The entire genus of Dalbergia was put in the appendix based on the "look-alike" criterion. This criterion is not based on the level of threat the species face, but on the difficulty of distinguishing the species from other threatened species of the genus", as per the official.

Assam flood situation better but 90K still hit

PTI ■ GUWAHATI
The flood situation in Assam improved further as no major river was flowing above the danger mark on Sunday, though a little over 90,000 people continued to be affected due to the deluge, an official bulletin said.



the impact of the deluge, the bulletin issued by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said.

The affected population has come down from 1,48,645 the previous day.

Seven revenue circles and

99 villages were still impacted by the flood, the ASDMA said.

Morigaon was the worst hit with over 57,000 people under distress, followed by Cachar (28,000). More than 6,000 people have been sheltered in 26 relief camps, the report added.

Govt acts tough on Kannauj violence, removes DM, SP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after "body parts of an animal" were found at the entrance of a temple in Rasoolabad village of Kannauj, leading to communal tension, the Superintendent of Police and District Magistrate were removed and the station house officer of Talgram police station was suspended.

The police said that they were making efforts to arrest the accused. "Our teams are working and very soon we will be making the arrests," Kanpur Range Inspector General of Police, Prashant Kumar (II), said. "The situation is under control now and the area is under police surveillance," said

a senior officer. Taking a serious note of the mishandling of the situation leading to communal tension in Kannauj, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath removed the district magistrate and the superintendent of police.

Kannauj DM Rakesh Mishra was shunted out and put on wait list a few hours after Superintendent of Police Rajesh Srivastava was removed.

Chitrakoot's District Magistrate Shubhransh Shukla has been posted as the new district magistrate of Kannauj and Kunwar Anupam Singh as the new district police chief, confirmed an official communiqué released on Sunday.

The station house officer of Talgram has been suspended and Jitendra Pratap Singh posted in his place.

It may be recalled that communal clashes took place in Kannauj district after some unidentified miscreants allegedly threw pieces of meat in the compound of a village temple and desecrated idols at two places, which led to protests during which several shops were set on fire, police said.

The police added that the gate of a graveyard was also damaged in the violence that ensued. According to police, the incident took place in Rasoolabad village in Talgram police station limits.

Yogi for water conservation with people's aid

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stressed on conservation of water, maintenance of its quality and better usage, saying that it was essential for survival as well as progress of the state.

Yogi Adityanath said that preserving water was the most focused area of his government. He said that in its effort to realise this objective, the government not only ensured the completion and operation of several projects pending for decades but also worked towards saving every drop of water through construction of farm ponds, multi-purpose ponds on the banks of rivers, check-dams and more.

The chief minister said that due to the sustained efforts of the government in the span of the last five years, as many as 25 development blocks of the state had been pulled out of the 'dark zone' slot signifying depleting groundwater levels they had witnessed and a remarkable improvement in terms of availability of groundwater.

He said to improve the quality and presence of groundwater, the government not only worked to ensure the effective implementation of Atal Bhujaal and Catch the Rain schemes but also simul-

taneously made elaborate arrangements for rain water harvesting at various institutions, including state government buildings.

The chief minister was expressing his views while flagging off the 'Digital Groundwater Rath' developed for publicity of various public awareness programmes under the Atal Bhujaal Yojana on the occasion of Groundwater Week at his official residence here on Sunday.

Earlier, the chief minister started the programme by lighting the lamp and flagged off the Digital Groundwater Rath.

The Groundwater Week is being organised from July 16 to 22.

The chief minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had started the 'Catch the Rain' programme two years ago and under this scheme, the Groundwater Week was being organised in the state for creating public awareness regarding groundwater conservation.

"This is a very important week for the country and the state. Under this, digital groundwater raths will go to 10 districts of the state and make their contribution in making every citizen aware about the safety of drinking water and groundwater," he said.

104 rain-related deaths in Maha since onset of monsoon

PTI ■ MUMBAI

At least 104 people have died in rain-related incidents in Maharashtra since the onset of monsoon on June 1, the State disaster management authority said in a report on Sunday.

The fatalities occurred between June 1 and July 16, and two of the deaths were recorded in the last 24 hours - one each in Jalgaon and Amravati districts, it said.

The deaths were caused by floods, lightning strikes, landslides, falling of trees and collapse of structures, among other reasons, the report said.

As per the latest data, two villages in the state were affected by heavy rains and three peo-

ple have been reported missing. However, no one was evacuated anywhere in the state due to flooding in the last 24 hours, the report said.

Several parts of the state, including Mumbai and its adjoining areas, have been witnessing moderate rainfall, it said. After heavy showers for more than a week, rains have abated in the state, including in Mumbai.

It was a sunny day in the state capital on Sunday.

The Colaba observatory in south Mumbai recorded 12.8 mm rainfall while the Santacruz observatory in the western suburbs registered 23.3 mm showers in the last 24 hours, the report said.

Ratnagiri district received an average 20.1 mm rainfall in the last 24 hours, it said, adding that the Parshuram Ghat on the Mumbai-Goa highway was shut for traffic.

Traffic on the Mumbai-Goa highway was earlier this month diverted following a landslide in the Parshuram Ghat section near Chiplun. Besides, Gadchiroli district witnessed 20 mm average rainfall in the last 24 hours.

The Godavari and Indravati rivers in the state were flowing above the danger mark, while three other rivers were flowing close to the danger level, the report said. According to the report, as many as 10,600 people have been shifted to safer



locations in Gadchiroli district so far. Teams from the National

Disaster Response Force and the State Disaster Response Force

have been deployed in the district, the report added.

2 authors highlight history of tribal warriors

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Tilka Manjhi, Thalakkal Chanthu, Budhu Bhagat have remained unheard of to the old and new generations of Indians alike but for the efforts of two young authors by name Tuhin A Sinha and Ambalika.

An effort has been made by this duo to bring the lives and times of these tribal warriors and commanders to the public domain, hopefully for the first time in the history of modern India. A 166 page book "The Great Tribal Warriors of Bharat" encompassing the life sketches of 17

proud sons and daughters of India is the tribute by Sinha and Ambalika to these hitherto unsung souls on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence.

Though history books in schools and universities in the country are full of paens to white-skinned George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, Winston Churchill, the curriculum is silent about the gallant and brave fighters in the sub-continent who staged the country's first wars of independence. The tribals who were the inhabitants of the country's dense jungles and worshipped nature were

the first ones who saw through the evil designs of the occupiers to subjugate this great nation. While the natives were struggling to get into the administrative and military services of the Moghuls and the Britishers, the tribal warriors were the ones who challenged the mighty Moghuls and the Europeans who succeeded them.

The tribals who were the residents of dense jungles spread across the length and breadth of the sub-continent were the first ones who staged armed struggles against the British East India Company. Their feats in these battles

fought with bows and arrows powered by indigenous intelligence would put the 1857 armed uprising labeled as Sepoy Mutiny into pale. It seems there were people in post-independent India who wanted to black out the great sacrifices made by these tribal warriors in their efforts to drive out the white masters. There is no justification in not telling the new generation about the unparalleled achievements made by these tribal warriors," says Prof P G Haridas, eminent historian, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala.

Tilka Manjhi (1750-1785),

the chief of the Santhal tribe was known as the Robinhood of Jungle Terry (modern day Bhagalpur). Story of Tilka's fight against the white oppressors who were exploiting the tribals to the hilt should be an eye-opener to the Indian public. All he stood for was freedom, dignity, and equality. It was the denial of these rights that made him took the traditional hunting weapons to teach the uninvited and exploiting guests a lesson. Thalakkal Chanthu, the tiger from Wayanad's Kurichiyi tribals, is a name that electrify the local residents even today. Though he lived up to

only 25, Chanthu left behind a series of victories against the British East India Company in jungle warfare. He was the commander of Edachena Kunkan., the commander in chief of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and made the supreme sacrifice to save his boss as well as the King from the marauding army and preying eyes of their spies.

In days of yore, jungle warfare was not the prerogative of the male. If the number of women warriors featured in the book is any indication, our tribal ladies were no way inferior to men in fighting qualities. Helen Lepcha (1902-



1980), Rani Gaidinliu (1915-1993), Dashriben Chaudhury (1918-2013) Putalimaya Devi (1920-1984) are the names which would reverberate across campuses in India in days to come. As the saying

goes, better late than never.

According to Kiren Rijiju, the union minister for law and justice who penned the foreword, the volume marks the evolution of the Adivasi contribution to the country.

CRPF ASI martyred in Pulwama encounter

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In another targeted attack on the security forces, an Assistant Sub Inspector of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was martyred in the South Kashmir district of Pulwama on Sunday.

The martyred CRPF officer has been identified as Vinod Kumar, a resident of Farukkabad area of Uttar Pradesh.

According to a tweet of Kashmir Zone police, "terrorists fired upon Naka party at Gangoo Crossing, Pulwama from nearby Apple orchard. In this terror incident 01 CRPF personnel ASI Vinod Kumar

got seriously injured. He was shifted to hospital for treatment where he attained martyrdom". Soon after the attack took place the entire area was cordoned off and searches were launched in the nearby orchards to track down the foot prints of the terrorists.

This is the second major strike on a senior cop in the last six days in the Kashmir valley.

Earlier, an ASI of Jammu and Kashmir police attained martyrdom on July 12 in the Lal Bazaar area of Srinagar while two other jawans received injuries.

The attack took place a day after the Eid festivities were still going on in the Kashmir



valley.

Since January 1, 2022 around two dozen security personnel which included 12 JKP personnel have been killed in various operations, incidents of terrorist violence in the Kashmir valley. Out of these two dozen security personnel 11 belonged to other central para military forces, jawans of the Indian army.

Movement launched across Jammu for 'separate State'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The Ikkjutt Jammu Party (IJP) on Sunday launched a movement across Jammu province for 'Separate Jammu State'. A large number of party supporters led by its president Ankur Sharma held a massive demonstration in Jammu while similar marches were taken out at other places in the province in support of their demand seeking separation of Jammu province from Kashmir.

Addressing the party workers outside Press Club Jammu, IJP President Advocate Ankur Sharma said the only rational, national and constitutional solution to the 75-year-old Jammu's political problem is Full State status for the

province. He said the historic reforms of August 5, 2019 have miserably failed to produce the desired results and the people of Jammu continue to suffer.

Leading the protest march, Ankur Sharma repeatedly said, "IJP only wants Statehood for Jammu. 'Statehood for Jammu is our motto, our battle-cry, our watchword, the gospel of Jammu's political redemption'."

"Separate Jammu state is the only panacea available to meet the national requirement, empower the people of the province to manage their own affairs themselves, defeat the enemies working day and night to change Jammu's demography and create Kashmir-like situation in this strategic region," asserted the IJP presi-



dent. "The people of Jammu province will rise in revolt sooner than later if the powers-

that-be in New Delhi continued to treat Jammu as Kashmir's colony in its des-

perate bid to appease, please and pamper the 'Jihadists' in Kashmir," he warned.

Prez poll today; 5 UP MLAs to vote from outside Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Five MLAs of Uttar Pradesh Assembly will cast their vote outside Lucknow on Monday in the presidential election.

Out of these five MLAs of UP who will vote outside the state, four will cast their votes in Delhi and one in Kerala state capital Thiruvananthapuram.

The five MLAs are Mukesh Choudhary of Bharatiya Janata Party from Nakur in Saharanpur district, Ziaur Rahman of Samajwadi Party from Kundarki in Moradabad district, Pradeep Kumar Singh of Rashtriya Lok Dal from Sadabad in Hathras, Brijbhushan Rajput of BJP from Charkhari in Mahoba and Neel Ratan Patel of BJP

from Sevapuri in Varanasi.

With the highest vote value of 208 for each of the total 403 MLAs, Uttar Pradesh will be an important state to watch out for in Monday's presidential election in which National Democratic Alliance candidate Droupadi Murmu will take on joint opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha.

Brij Bhushan Dubey, the returning officer for the presidential election in Uttar Pradesh, said five MLAs of the state would cast their votes outside the state due to personal reasons.

Elaborating on the instructions issued for the poll, he said, "All MLAs have been informed about the precautions they have to take. The MLAs will have to use a special pen to be

provided by the Election Commission of India to vote for the candidate of their choice."

"Voting will take place through ballot paper at Tilak Hall of Vidhan Bhawan from 10 am to 5 pm," Dubey said, and added that three polling booths had been set up for two ballot boxes which had come from Delhi and would be sent back to the national capital after voting was completed on July 18 itself. Counting of votes will be taken up in Delhi on July 21.

According to the Election Commission of India, the value of vote of an MP this time is 700. The value of vote of each MLA varies in different states. In Uttar Pradesh, the value of vote of each MLA stands at 208.

Akhilesh dinner diplomacy to pacify SP MLAs upset with Sinha's Mulayam remark

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With Samajwadi Party facing anger from party MLAs over the statement of Yashwant Sinha calling Mulayam Singh Yadav an "ISI agent, party chief Akhilesh Yadav resorted to dinner diplomacy on the eve of the polling for the Presidential election.

Mohammed Tahir, SP MLA from Isauli-Sultanpur, hosted the dinner and all 111 MLAs of the party were directed to attend the dinner.

Yashwant Sinha is the opposition candidate in the presidential election. The dinner is an attempt to win over the SP MLAs as already broken ranks with the opposition and its chief Om Prakash Rajbhar



Yashwant Sinha.

SP MLAs, particularly Muslim MLAs are unhappy with Yashwant Sinha for his statement calling SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav "an ISI agent". SP ally Suheldev Bhartiya Samajwadi Party (SBSP) has already broken ranks with the opposition and its chief Om Prakash Rajbhar

has announced to vote for National Democratic Alliance candidate Droupadi Murmu.

Shivpal Yadav, SP MLA and uncle of Akhilesh Yadav, has also announced to support Droupadi Murmu. On Saturday, he had shot off a letter to Akhilesh Yadav, asking him to reconsider SP's support to Yashwant Sinha as the opposition presidential candidate had called Mulayam Singh Yadav an ISI agent.

The statement of Yashwant Sinha about Mulayam Singh Yadav threatened to snowball into a major controversy on the eve of the polling for the presidential elections, thus forcing the SP chief to resort to dinner diplomacy to pacify his party MLAs.

Ex-BSP MLC Mahmood arrested from Mumbai

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Former member of Legislative Council, Mahmood Ali, was arrested from Mumbai by Saharanpur police, officials said on Sunday.

According to the police, Mahmood Ali was arrested in Mumbai late on Saturday night. He is the brother of former MLC Haji Iqbal, allegedly a member of a mining mafia.

A senior police official said that Mahmood was presented in a court in Mumbai, and efforts were on to bring him to Saharanpur on remand.

Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada said that two days ago the police had announced a reward of Rs 25,000 each on Haji Iqbal and his brother Mahmood Ali, who were wanted in different cases.

He added that efforts were on to search out Haji Iqbal.

Three sons of Haji Iqbal have already been arrested in different cases. The SSP also said that cases were registered against Haji Iqbal, his brother and family members in different FIRs and efforts were on to arrest them.

Both the brothers have been BSP MLCs. Haji Iqbal was an MLC from 2010 to 2016, while Mahmood Ali was an MLC from 2016 to 2022.

It may be mentioned that mining mafia Haji Iqbal had become close to the then Chief Minister and BSP supreme Mayawati due to his immense wealth. Haji Iqbal became MLC in 2010 on a BSP ticket on money power to make a stronghold in the ministry and secretariat.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

End revdi culture now!

PM has rightly warned against the freebies which benefit politicians but hurt development and future

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's admonition against freebies is very timely. He has correctly compared them with the free distribution of revdis (a kind of sweetmeat). Referring to this practice, he rightly said, "There is also a huge challenge... If attention is not paid now, it can cause a lot of damage to the youth of India and today's generation. Your present will go astray and your future will be confined to darkness... That's why it's important to wake up now. Nowadays, every effort is being made in our country to introduce the culture of collecting votes by distributing freebies." He went on to point out that the leaders indulging in such culture "will never build new expressways, airports or defense corridors for you.

They feel that they will buy the people by distributing freebies to them." Though he didn't take any names, the message was conveyed.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, whose Aam Aadmi Party is guilty of quite a few irresponsible populist measures, was quick to respond to the Prime Minister, "Allegations are being leveled against me but I want to ask what my mistake is. 18 lakh students are studying in Delhi govt schools. We are providing them with free, quality education. Am I committing a crime by giving them free, good education?" Sadly, this is a spiteful, not reasoned, response. Free education is not a freebie, but free



bus commute to women, free electricity and water, etc., are.

Even more unfortunate is the fact that it is not just the AAP but all parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, that are trying to collect votes by distributing freebies. The situation is especially bad at the state level. A recent study by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) study has underlined this fact. "We can identify a core subset of highly stressed states from among the 10 states identified by the necessary condition i.e., the debt/GSDP ratio. The highly stressed states are Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal," it said. Punjab's debt-GSDP ratio is the worst, and it is estimated to not only remain so but exceed 45 percent in 2026-27. And yet, the AAP government in the state has announced that around 51 lakh households will receive zero electricity bills from September as the government has promised 600 units of free power per billing cycle starting from July 1.

Populism has gone berserk in Punjab. Free power, however, is not the only opiate that is toxifying the body-politic and the body-economic; other populist measures are also harming public finance at the state level. Farm loan waivers are the best, or worst, examples of mindless populism. They are morally reprehensible (why shouldn't one repay loans they have taken?) and fiscally ruinous. In the long run, they even hurt the intended beneficiaries, for the lenders become skeptical about giving money to farmers. In the long run, we become Sri Lanka.

PICTALK



Varanasi: Kanwariyas (Lord Shiva devotees) at the Ganga ghat during the holy month of 'Shrawan', in Varanasi.

Are we heading for Armageddon?

Efforts to divide the society for electoral gains may well lead to a highly polarized society sitting on the brink of a civil war



DEEPAK SINHA

It just took a couple of rather coarse and maladroit remarks by the BJP's national spokesperson, Nupur Sharma, on a mainstream television channel to jeopardize Mr. Modi's carefully crafted foreign policy towards the Middle East and other Muslim majority states. Whether they were made in the heat of the moment or premeditated and aimed to provoke, we will never know. Whatever the case, despite the party high command's subsequent action of having thrown them under the bus, the government continues to find itself amid a self-created maelstrom that just refuses to die down.

Initially, its silence on the matter was perceived as condescension and acted as a catalyst for global outrage that was further aggravated, by the MEA's rather ill-conceived attempt to pass it off as the handiwork of "fringe elements". Some deft footwork and eating of humble pie allowed the Modi Government a modicum of control to contain the adverse international fallout, but, as things stand domestically, the situation seems to have taken a turn for the worse.

In uncharacteristic plain speak, a two-judge bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, that ruled on a plea by Nupur Sharma for FIRs against her to be consolidated, observed that her "loose tongue has set the entire country on fire and that she is single-handedly responsible for what is happening in the country". These observations were made regarding the retaliatory attacks at the hands of Muslim radical elements, resulting in gruesome and premeditated murders, of two individuals who wrote in support of Nupur Sharma on social media. These observations, made despite Nupur Sharma and her family facing death threats from radicals, have been seen by some as going well beyond the remit of the Hon'ble Bench.

Whatever one's view on the issue, it is undeniable that increasing religious intolerance and polarisation are setting the streets on fire leading to violent communal clashes. While this may be of help politically to some



in the short term, it hardly bodes well for the society at large. Unfortunately, this intolerance is not just reflected in the conflict between those of differing faiths, but also between extremists and liberals within their religions as well, with extremists invariably winning out.

The prevailing social milieu is such that even the average citizen, even if he belongs to the majority community, prefers to keep his or her head down, mouth shut and nose clean to avoid any confrontation with those espousing differing ideological leanings as they are unsure of the repercussions. They are fully aware that the wheels of justice grind at a snail's pace here and that the judiciary cannot be fully trusted as many within it, even at the highest levels, are perceived as having been compromised. The Police too are no better, seemingly in terminal decline having degenerated into local militias and handmaidens owing fidelity to politicians in power.

The issue has been further complicated by the accusations, true or not, that Governments both at the Centre and in some of the States are complicit in this violence. A problem that will get accentuated in the coming years as youth, with basic

weapons and a modicum of tactical training, find themselves jobless thanks to that nonsensical initiative formulated by the Modi Government, the Agnipath Scheme, and are drawn towards radical groups. The United States is a living example of this as can be seen from the fact that white supremacist paramilitaries, like the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers, are filled with military veterans.

Moreover, in the face of majoritarian bulldozing, in the literal sense, that we have witnessed in the past few years, and the psycho-social stresses that it has created within minority communities, there will be those among them who will suffer an amygdala hijack, wherein emotions involving either a flight or fight response will take over.

Undoubtedly, in most cases, the response will be to run, but there will be those, who may be just a fraction of the community, who will fight. Given our demographics, even that fraction will be an extremely large number. We would do well to remember that despite a population of around two million, the Union Government has not been able to resolve the Naga problem through force in the past seventy-five years.

The results are already there for all to see. Sectarian violence can hardly be the way forward and will adversely impact internal cohesion and development. Once we enter the downward spiral, it will assume a life of its own and cannot be controlled. Pakistan is an example of this as, despite their best efforts, neither politicians nor religious leaders nor the military has complete control over radical groups that terrorize citizens. This is not the path we wish to tread, though things continue the way they are, we may well be gifting ourselves a civil war.

Why then are our politicians, across the board, so engrossed with religion? The Pandemic and the Ukrainian War have left many of us in dire straits, unable to make ends meet. Isn't that where our focus should be? Does our middle-class have the spine to step forward, as only their intervention will bring about change, or are we destined to follow in the footsteps of our neighbors?

(The writer is a military veteran and Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and a Senior Visiting Fellow with the Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. Views expressed are personal)



IT IS UNDENIABLE THAT INCREASING RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND POLARISATION ARE SETTING THE STREETS ON FIRE LEADING TO VIOLENT COMMUNAL CLASHES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY RADIO

Sir — As the medium of mass communication, radio is always fascinating and has its hold on people even in the face of stiff competition from other mass communication channels, such as television. Though radio is largely a commercial broadcasting service across the country, community radios still hold their forte in rural India.

The importance of community radio has been predominantly felt during the Covid-19 pandemic. Radio networks played a crucial role in disseminating credible information about the deadly virus. ("Roping in radio to enhance immunity", July 15).

In fact, for millions of rural India radio is the only window to the outside world, and naturally, community radio stations have emerged as a vital channel, especially during the last two years when the country went into frequent lockdowns. Reportedly, until the end of 2021, India had little over 300 community radio stations, which is a significant increase compared to previous years, and reflected a rising trend that had developed over the past decade. These community radios are well managed, controlled, and owned by the communities they serve. For those who may not know, when Kerala got India's first Covid-19 case, community radios were first pressed into action across rural areas in the State to broadcast information about the pandemic for more than seven hours a day.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

A PLAYER OF A "VIRAT" RACE

Sir — Virat Kohli's form is being debated heavily. Virat, who missed the first ODI due to muscle soreness, was unable to perform. Everything about Virat is under the scanner. After all, he is Virat.

It has been decided to withdraw him from the West Indies tour to give him rest. The question has been raised as to why former Indian captain Kapil Dev does not remove Virat from the team. Captain Rohit Sharma is seen strongly supporting Virat Kohli. England's T20 captain Jos Buttler also said that Virat Kohli needs big innings. How

NDA's VP PICK A RELIEF FOR MAMATA



West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar, NDA pick for the post of Vice President, may come as a sigh of relief to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Dhankar and Banerjee were on collision course ever since the former was appointed Governor of West Bengal in 2019. It may be recalled that Banerjee has done the role of Chancellor of West Bengal Universities, a step that took away the position of Governor as Chancellor of the Universities. Since Dhankar happens to be an NDA pick, it can never be her choice to vote for him but it

would be no wonder if the thought of voting for him once crosses her mind to facilitate the exit of Dhankar more easily. Even though it is visible and well known that Dhankar is the bête noire of Mamata, the CPM has termed the candidature of Dhankar as a reflection of under-the-table relations between the TMC and BJP.

Dhankar, a native of Rajasthan and a former Supreme Court Advocate, hails from the Jat community and farmer's family. He was instrumental in getting OBC status to the Jats. A person's political journey comes to an end soon after he or she is appointed as President or Vice President though the Constitution does not envisage any such condition.

As an experiment, why not make an ex-Prime Minister a President. Prime Minister is well-versed in Constitutional matters and he or she can be a good guide as President to a sitting Prime Minister.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

fair is it to question the career of a player like Virat because of his low runs in a few matches? Sportsmen are always suffering from physical problems. Sportsmen are also individual and can have mental problems too. Even the best player like Virat faces critics. Virat Kohli has a long way to go.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

A GLIMPSE OF COSMIC BEAUTY

Sir — Sir, The 'deep field' virgin images from NASA's James Webb space telescope, described as 'a window on the unknown' were stunningly and indescribably beautiful. The pictures of SMACS 0723 galaxy cluster, WASP-96 b planet, the Southern Ring Nebula, Stephan's Quintet and the Carina Nebula were tremendously exciting to behold; these 'cosmic beauty shots' gave us a sense of the incomprehensible vastness of space and time.

Seeing the infrared images of hitherto invisible places in the cosmic backyard is a unique and wonderful experience. The Webb telescope is state-of-the-art; it is so

sophisticated that it can peer through cosmic dust and clouds and detect the feeble glimmer of some of the oldest and most distant stars. Space exploration, as is being done by the Webb space observatory, is evidence that scientists continue to push the boundaries of human knowledge.

Science has now put us in a position to look back to the dawn of time, probe the deep structure of the universe and peek inside the atmospheres of exoplanets to detect signs of life or conditions ripe for life. We eagerly await more pictures and findings; we are excited at the prospect of more new discoveries. Reaching out for an infinite universe is good for life on earth; it reshapes our understanding of the universe, its origins, evolution and composition. It is wondrous that the human brain is unravelling the mysteries of the universe.

G. David Milton | Tamil Nadu

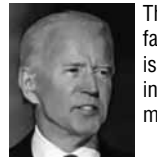
Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

Gujarat has emerged as one of the better-performing states in India, especially the government schools and grant-in-aid schools.



Union Minister for I&B —Anurag Thakur

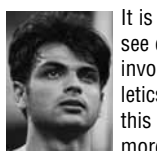


US President —Biden

Today we officially take our first step on the Music Journey of Brahms, a film and experience of a lifetime...



Music Composer —Pritam



Athlete —Neeraj Chopra

Why not just remove Gandhiji's statue from the premises? And erase Article 19 (1) a of the constitution.



TMC MP —Mahua Moitra

Government must act

If the rupee keeps falling against the dollar the country's economy would be hit badly

The rupee has breached the psychological 80-level mark against the US dollar and is now hovering around it for a couple of days. This is indeed bad news for numerous importers and of course, the country whose trade deficit swells to a new high. Though it would be wrong to assume that it is the end of the road for the Indian economy and we are headed for a Sri Lanka-like situation. Nevertheless, it is ominous as it means that something needs to be done to stop the further slide of the rupee against the dollar as it is the US from where we import a lot of goods that are essential for Indian businesses.

The reason for the depreciation of the rupee against the dollar is varied, some manageable others not. A big factor is indeed the Ukraine war which has obstructed the supply lines. It has been a steady decline in the Indian currency since February when the Ukraine war began.



The rising dollar is bad news for the Indian economy as the current account deficit increases. The slide in the rupee would put an extra burden on the current account deficit (CAD). India is already struggling with its CAD. It is likely to touch \$105 billion or 3 percent of the GDP this fiscal.

Even worse is its impact on inflation which is already racing fast. As the rupee loses its sheen the imports become dearer. This leads to a rise in the prices of raw materials and that reflects in the selling prices. So, we have to pay more for the same goods as the sellers struggle to sustain.

India has to act and act fast to avoid any misgivings about the economic fundamentals of the country. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is taking several measures like selling US dollars in the open markets, out of its forex reserves. This increases the supply of USD in the markets, bringing down their value. But this is a risky proposition as it leads to depreciation of forex reserves. Since February 2022, India's forex reserves have depleted by Rs 1 trillion.

Besides, the rupee settlement mechanism is also being talked about. Under this arrangement, foreign companies can make payments in rupees. How far this will work is difficult to say as we have a net trade deficit with the USA. Let's hope the Ukraine war ends easing the flow of goods and easing the payment situation.

FIRST COLUMN

METaverse IS BAD; IT BOOSTS RAPE CULTURE

Metaverse builds on rape culture, and mute bystanders



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

When metaverse creates a series of historic experiences, it sets a precedent of rape culture. The rape culture propagated by metaverse builds on the medieval concepts that the victims of sexual crimes are to be blamed for their plights, while trivialising sexual crimes.

Interacting with others in the metaverse, however, is made possible by the use of virtual reality (VR) headsets. At the same time, Avatars, surprisingly and interestingly, can be created by altering clothing, gender, hairstyle, facial and body traits, as well as the appearance of the user's face.

They can use cryptocurrency to buy goods and attend activities like concerts and sporting events. Rape culture is just being reinforced by metaverse. Millions of people are unfortunately witnessing this ghastly affair, as rape culture is apparently more widespread than most people realise. Offensive jokes about rape victims, inaction of onlookers are commonplace in the metaverse, while false beliefs are propagated and disseminated to the participants and the audience.

Social media, even in the metaverse, is fueling the rape culture among college students. Strangely, such culture continues to be normalised, despite the fact that it has been well-documented for years that social media is harmful for mental well-being and many other parts of lives. Sad to say that no one wants to accept that sexual crimes are trivialised and normalised in the society, but the truth is that this is indeed the situation. Bystanders who do nothing to aid are another major factor in perpetuating this mentality in the society. We cannot even begin to demolish the rape culture on college campuses around the world without the aid of people who witness or have information of a sexual assault event taking place or having taken place.



The sad and undignified episode is not ending here. Metaverse platform owned by a popular social media had a researcher's avatar sexually attacked, making her the latest victim of virtual sexual abuse. Metaverse, which translates as beyond universe or parallel universe, is a virtual reality environment in which one can interact with others via a computer-generated persona.

Privacy and safety should be integrated into the metaverse and this is the hard-press job to execute to curb the menace of rape culture. Firms are developing devices that provide a physical component to social virtual reality encounters as the internet's 3D space evolves. However, these areas could become safest havens for sexual offenders.

The governments must swiftly amend their laws to address this concern. In India, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 354A, 354D, 499, 507, 508 and the Information Technology Act Sections 66C, 66E, 67 and 67A are some of the legislative provisions for the victims of online abuse. However, in the world of metaverse, these laws are just futile. In the metaverse world, it would be difficult to track down someone to chastise for meta-avatar abuse. It is possible to create an avatar that resembles anyone. A child or a superman can be created from anyone who has the access to the power of technologies.

The IPC provisions against sexual offences or injuries pertain to a man or woman, their body and bodily injury. As a result, it's hard to see how an avatar can be blamed for it. At this point, it is impossible to argue that the penalties of harassing a digital avatar are comparable to those of harassing a real person.

Immense amount of moral pressure is mounting on the platforms to implement safety measures that are activated when a user's avatar feels threatened or vulnerable or compromised. Along with the moral compass, tough laws are the need of the hour. Let's wait and watch. (The author teaches at Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow)

Saving life on Earth in times of climate change

Modern technologies prove effective for biodiversity management, but sustainable consumption and production practices have no substitutes



BKP SINHA

Life forms on Earth have much diversity, ranging from bacteria to plants and animals. No life form can survive on Earth without the direct or indirect support of other organisms. Each of these species and organisms works together in an ecosystem to maintain balance and sustain life. Biodiversity thus includes not only the variety of different species but also the variations within and among them and between ecosystems such as different habitats and ecological processes.

Biodiversity provides humans with a variety of essential resources and ecosystem services, including food production, pollination of plants, air and water purification and climate stabilization. It can also be instrumental in achieving sustainable development goals (zero hunger, improvement of land and soil quality), halting land degradation, building food security, preventing future pandemics and providing jobs in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, etc.

However, the world is currently experiencing an unprecedented biodiversity loss. Over one million species are at a risk of extinction and we are in the midst of a sixth mass die-off?— the largest since the extinction of dinosaurs. The most notable drivers behind this crisis are habitat loss, overexploitation, invasive species, fragmentation, pollution and climate change. Recent climate changes such as rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and more extreme weather events have disrupted species' tolerance limits and nutrient cycling processes.

It is possible that these changes may create opportunities for invasive species which could further add to the stress on species already struggling to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Fragmented ecosystem is often less resilient than a contiguous one, because areas cleared for farms and roads provide pathways for invasion of non-native species, which further contribute to the decline of native species. The genetic loss also threatens species' survival over time, mainly because the number of mates becomes scarce and the chances of inbreeding risk rises. So, the best way to conserve biodiversity is to save habitats and ecosystems, because no organism can exist in isolation. Hence, a diverse pool of data from all possible domains that are directly or indirectly related to biodiversity is required for monitoring and assessing these multiple pressures on species and formulating conservation strategies.

Although, it requires a more coordinated, coherent and strategic approach by all stakeholders such as scientists, biologists, ecologists, government, private sector, forest sector, civil society and individuals. Historically, bio-geographical surveys for conservation usually involved many hours of field work performed by professional researchers, rangers, which certainly could not scale up to meet today's con-



CLIMATE CHANGE IS A REALITY THAT'S EVIDENT IN THE CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS, WHICH ADDS TO THE CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING BIODIVERSITY, WHILE SUSTAINABLE GOALS IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE, INCLUDING AGRICULTURE, CANNOT BE IGNORED

The author is former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttar Pradesh



servation goals.

Surveillance, especially in tropical and inaccessible terrains, is also challenging and complex. It was implausible to predict the global consequences of human activities from these locally collected data. However, recent technological advances have facilitated biodiversity conservation on many fronts, notably for collecting field data and analyzing large datasets, which is expanding human understanding of ecosystems. The increased availability of satellite imagery for instance has revolutionized data collection for ecological survey and monitoring. Similarly, application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can also change the dynamics of the field in favour of threatened species. Varieties of algorithms can be developed to harness AI for surveillance, capturing picture, security, animal counting, poaching management, research, etc.

Today, satellites are being used worldwide to collect data of temperature, location, moisture, etc. These environmental information along with geo-location data are essential for understanding the scope of threat to a given species.

Habitat maps or land cover data are usually the most commonly derived product from satellite imagery which can be used to determine species' presence and absence with vegetation types and habitat components.

Even regions that are experiencing rapid change, such as tropical environments, can be closely surveyed through these means. Remote sensing enables faster and more frequent analysis of terrestrial and aquatic landscapes, including chemical and geological parameters and biological processes,

which are crucial for taking timely action. It can also help conservation biologists in assessing biodiversity hotspots, maintaining healthy habitats and protecting the life they harbor by detecting failing food webs and excessive human interference.

By conventional means, this kind of surveillance was unfeasible, exhaustive and the territories needed to be monitored by the rangers were humongous when compared with the number of rangers. Fortunately, there are a variety of wildlife tracking systems now that allow us to identify protection priority areas and track animals' movements, assess critically endangered species and protect them from natural calamities and illicit activities. Data gathered from these tracking systems generates massive high-resolution datasets that reflect the ecological context in which animals perceive, interact with and respond to their surroundings.

The AI-enabled robots or drones image datasets are becoming increasingly useful for identifying species, determining animals' social groups, population, location, migration patterns, their daily activities, habitat, repeated behaviors – reproduction patterns, foraging routes, hunting habits, etc. Researchers are using floating robots equipped with image classification algorithms to locate and eradicate invasive species of marine algae before they become well-established. Also, drones can also be used to select ideal seeding sites by assessing site conditions like soil types, gradients and competing vegetation.

AI-powered acoustic sensors are helping conservationists in understanding the underwater

ecosystem health by observing species behavior and their presence in a specific region or island through their sounds. Acoustic sensors can also be used to detect chainsaws, vehicles and gunshots sounds and alert authorities in real time about illegal poaching, mining or logging. Similarly, camera traps are facilitating conservationists to non-invasively monitor and track both vulnerable species and human presence in largely inaccessible areas and quickly spot anomalies or warning signs. Using environmental DNA, conservationists are quickly and easily collecting traces of animal DNA by scanning water and soil samples which can reveal the presence of unobserved species and make the case for greater protection of an area.

These conservation technologies are rapidly expanding scientific frontiers, improving conservation opportunities and assisting scientists, ecologists, foresters, policymakers and others in better understanding the complex natural environment at national, regional and species level. However, human technology cannot fully replace nature's technology, which has evolved over millions of years to provide essential services to sustain life on Earth. It is challenging to conserve the biosphere with standard economic practices that ignore sustainability issues in relation to resources or excessive stress on the environment. The success of our civilization has been largely dependent on a diverse, productive natural world and a stable climate. Thus, more sustainable production and consumption practices along with national and sector policies are required to address climate and biodiversity change together.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR IS A 'KISAN PUTRA' (SON OF FARMER) WHO ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS 'PEOPLE'S GOVERNOR'. —BJP PRESIDENT JP NADDA



THE INTENTION OF THE BJP WAS TO DO SOMETHING TOTAL CHAOS THROUGH DHANKHAR IN BENGAL. —TMC MLA MADAN MITRA

Great multicultural experiment succeeds in West

Only 14% people in England and Wales are non-white, and yet half the candidates vying to replace Johnson are non-white

Here's an interesting fact. Only 14 per cent of people in England and Wales are 'Black, Asian, Mixed or Other' (i.e. non-white). Yet half the candidates vying to take the place of disgraced British prime minister Boris Johnson as leader of the Conservative Party—and therefore the new prime minister—are non-white. Four out of eight.

In case you're worried, this article is not about the internal struggle in Britain's Conservative Party. Not only do I not know who will win the race; I can't bring myself to care much about it either. The Conservatives are probably political toast in 2024 no matter whom they choose.

Only eight candidates were left by Tuesday evening, as three of the other hopefuls



GWYNNE DYER

failed to win the support of enough Conservative members of parliament (MPs) to make the first cut. But all three who fell by the wayside were also technically 'visible minorities': Sajid Javid, Rehman Chishti, and Priti Patel.

The eight who remained were: Kemi Badenoch (Nigerian descent, born in England); Suella Braverman (Indian descent, born in England); Jeremy Hunt (English descent, born in England); Penny Mordaunt (ditto); Rishi Sunak (Indian descent, born in England); Liz Truss (English descent, born in England); Tom Tugendhat (ditto); and Nadhim Zahawi (Kurdish descent, born in Iraq).

Most of the candidates are probably non-believers, but even in Britain there's still a

minor political price to be paid for saying so publicly. So three are at least nominally Protestant, two are Catholic, two are Hindu and one is Muslim. And half of them are female. Hurray for diversity, but what does this tell us about a) the United Kingdom, b) the West, and c) the world?

It says less about diversity in British politics than it seems to, for in fact the 65 Members of Parliament who are 'non-white' are exactly 10 per cent of MPs, whereas 14 per cent of the general population are. But the proportion has been rising since at every general election since 1988, and will probably soon accurately reflect the ethnic makeup of the population.

But fully HALF the contenders for next British prime minister are 'non-white'? Really?

How does one explain that, especially when the Conservative Party, despite having more than half the seats in parliament, has only one-third of the 'non-white' MPs?

It's probably down to the old story of recent immigrants working extra hard not just to fit in but to rise, since the hostility of some of the native-born makes them feel insecure. And those who do manage to rise, like most people who are financially and professionally successful in any society, tend to believe that their success is mainly due to their own efforts.

That's a belief that will naturally draw them towards conservative political parties, and to strive harder to rise within them, so no mystery here, and no miracle either.

What is remarkable is that

the white British majority, which was still clearly racist just a generation ago, is now quite content with a slate of prime ministerial candidates of whom half are non-white. None of them are token candidates, either, and the likeliest winner is Rishi Sunak. And nobody even notices that half of them are women.

Is this transformation occurring in the rest of the 'West' too? Yes, but at different speeds.

Australia, Canada and New Zealand all run around one-quarter 'visible minorities' (24 per cent, 25 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively), but only New Zealand has a similar proportion of MPs. Canada stalls out at 15 per cent visible minorities in Parliament, and Australia crashes with only 7

per cent. They do better with women MPs: 30 per cent in Canada, 39 per cent in Australia, 49 per cent in New Zealand.

Germany is about the same as Britain: 14 per cent visible minorities in the country, but only 11 per cent of the seats in the Bundestag. France is much worse: only nine members out of 577 deputies in the National Assembly are 'non-whites', although 15 per cent of the population are. They're not doing well with women in parliament either: only 25 per cent in Germany and 27 per cent in France.

So far the United States is the only 'Western' country to have had a non-white head of government (Barack Obama), although Britain may soon have one too. In other respects,

however, the US lags: only 23 per cent non-whites in Congress, although they are almost 40 per cent of the population—and only 27 per cent of the members of Congress are women.

And the show stops there. Apart from Western Europe and its daughter countries overseas, hardly anybody is running this kind of experiment with creating genuinely multi-cultural democracies driven by large-scale voluntary migration.

We can already conclude that these emerging societies are a great deal less turbulent and unequal than the pessimists feared (with the possible exception of the United States). It remains to be seen what advantages they might confer in the long run, but so far, so good.

Russia strikes south Ukraine city, presses attacks in east

AP ■ VINNYTSIA (UKRAINE)

Russian missiles hit industrial facilities at a strategic city in southern Ukraine on Sunday as a funeral was held for a four-year-old girl killed in an earlier deadly strike elsewhere in the country.

Liza, who had Down syndrome, was en route to see a speech therapist with her mother when a Russian missile struck the city of Vinnytsia in central Ukraine on Thursday.

At least 24 people were killed, including Liza and two boys aged 7 and 8. More than 200 others were wounded, including Liza's mother, who remains in an intensive care unit in grave condition.



"I didn't know Liza, but no person can go through this with calm," priest Vitalii Holooskyvych said, bursting into tears as Liza's body lay in a coffin with flowers and teddy bears in the 18th century Transfiguration Cathedral in Vinnytsia.

"We know that evil cannot win," he said, his voice trembling.

On Sunday, more Russian missiles struck industrial facilities in the strategic southern city of Mykolaiv, a key shipbuilding center in the estuary of the Southern Bug river. There was no immediate information about casualties.

Mykolaiv has faced regular Russian missile strikes in recent weeks as the Russians have sought to soften Ukrainian defences.

The Russian military has declared a goal to cut off Ukraine's entire Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border.

If successful, such an effort would

deal a crushing blow to the Ukrainian economy and trade and allow Moscow to secure a land bridge to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, which hosts a Russian military base.

Early in the campaign, the Ukrainian forces fended off Russian attempts to capture Mykolaiv, which sits near the Black Sea Coast between Russia-occupied Crimea and the main Ukrainian port of Odesa.

Since then, the Russian troops have halted their attempts to advance in the city but have continued to pummel both Mykolaiv and Odesa with

regular missile strikes.

Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said on Sunday that Russian missiles destroyed a depot for anti-ship Harpoon missiles delivered to Ukraine by NATO allies, a claim that couldn't be independently confirmed.

The Russians also sought to reinforce their positions in the Kherson region near Crimea and part of the northern Zaporizhzhia region that they seized in the opening stage of the conflict, fearing a Ukrainian coun-

teroffensive. The British Defence Ministry said on Sunday that Russia is moving manpower and equipment between Kherson, Mariupol and Zaporizhzhia. It said the Russians also are increasing their security measures around Melitopol.

It added: "Given the pressures on Russian manpower, the reinforcement of the south whilst the fight for the Donbas continues indicates the seriousness with which Russian commanders view the threat."

For now, the Russian military has focused its efforts on trying to take

control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, where the most capable and well-equipped Ukrainian forces are located.

Ukraine says its forces still retain control of two small villages in the Luhansk region, one of the two provinces that make up the Donbas, and are successfully fending off Russian attempts to advance deeper into the second one, the Donetsk region.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said on Sunday that Ukrainian troops thwarted Russian attempts to advance toward Sloviansk, the key Ukrainian stronghold in Donetsk, and other attacks elsewhere in the region.

During a visit to the front lines on Saturday, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu issued an order "to further intensify the actions of units in all operational areas."

The Russian military said it has struck Ukrainian troops and artillery positions in Donbas in the latest series of strikes, including a US-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launcher. The Russian claims couldn't be independently verified.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, responded to Ukrainian officials' statements that Kyiv may strike the bridge linking Crimea and Russia, warning that that would trigger devastating consequences for the Ukrainian leadership.

"If that happens, the consequences will be obvious: They will momentarily face the Doomsday," Medvedev said on Sunday. "It would be very hard for them to hide."



Cargo plane operated by Ukraine carrier crashes in Greece

AP ■ PALAIOCHORI (GREECE)

An Antonov cargo plane operated by a Ukrainian airline crashed Saturday near the city of Kavala in northern Greece, authorities said. Local residents reported seeing a fireball and hearing explosions for two hours after the crash.

The An-12, a Soviet-built turboprop aircraft, was operated by cargo carrier Meridian.

Greek media reported there were eight people on the plane and that it was carrying 12 tons of "dangerous materials," mostly explosives. But local officials said they had no specific information on the cargo and provided varying numbers of people on board.

As a precaution because of a strong smell emanating from the crash site, a coordinating committee made up of municipal, police and fire service officials told inhabitants of the two localities closest to the crash site to keep their windows shut all night, to not leave their homes and to wear masks. Authorities say they do not know if there were dangerous chemicals on the plane, including those contained in batteries.

Greece's Civil Aviation authority said the pilot managed to alert authorities about a problem in one of the plane's

engines and he was given the choice of landing in either the Thessaloniki or Kavala airports, and he opted for Kavala, which was closer, saying that he had to make an emergency landing.

Communication with the plane ceased almost immediately afterwards. The plane crashed about 40 kilometers west of the airport.

"We were hearing explosions until a few minutes ago," Filippos Anastassiadis, mayor of the municipality of Paggaio, told the Associated Press a little over an hour after the accident. "I am about 300 metres from the site of the crash."

One of Anastassiadis' deputies told state broadcaster ERT that explosions were heard for two hours following the crash.

Locals reported seeing a fireball and a plume of smoke before the crash.

ERT reported that army and explosive experts were en route to the site, located on farmland close to two villages that are part of the Paggaio municipality. But they are not expected to start working before dawn. Experts from Greece's Atomic Energy Commission will join them.

The fire service has cordoned off the area at a radius of about 400 metres. The cordoned-off area will be expanded at dawn, fire service officials said.

Diplomatic spat erupts between Balkan rivals



AP ■ BELGRADE (SERBIA)

Diplomatic tensions soared on Sunday between Balkan rivals Serbia and Croatia after Croatia refused to allow a private visit by Serbia's populist president to the site of a World War II concentration camp where tens of thousands of Serbs were killed by pro-Nazi authorities in Croatia.

Croatia's authorities said they learned about the planned visit to the Jasenovac camp by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic through "unofficial channels."

Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic Radman told reporters that the fact that the Croatian government had not been formally notified of the visit was "unacceptable".

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to stress that in the planning of any visit by foreign officials the time, nature and programme of the visit should be subject of official communication and agreement by both sides," said Grlic Radman.

"This was not a trip to the seaside. The president of a country is a protected individual."

Croatia's decision sparked outrage in neighbouring Serbia, where officials described it as "scandalous".

Serbia's hardline Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin said all Croatian officials from now on would have to announce any transit or visit to Serbia, and would be placed under "special

regime of control".

He did not elaborate.

"This was an anti-European and anti-civilisation decision and brutal violation of the freedom of movement," Serbian Prime Minister Ana Branabic told the pro-government Pink television. "I don't know what our relations will look like in the future ... This is sending a frightening message."

Relations between Serbia and Croatia have remained tense since the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the 1991-95 war in Croatia that erupted when its Serb minority, backed by Serbia, rebelled against Croatia's independence. More than 10,000 people were killed in the war.

Although the two nations have pledged to work to resolve remaining problems from the conflict - such as finding those still missing - occasional diplomatic spats have marred the postwar efforts.

Serbia's populist authorities have insisted that Croatia's government has not done enough to acknowledge its World War II past, while Zagreb accuses Serbia of using the issue for internal politics and refusing to deal with own role in the 1990s' war.

"We see this as a provocation," Grlic Radman said. He added "such a visit is not sincere, it is not about honouring the victims" of the Jasenovac camp, where tens of thousands of Croatia's Serbs, Jews and Roma perished in brutal executions during the WWII rule of the pro-Nazi authorities.

Man shot by off-duty police in DC's Wharf area

AP ■ WASHINGTON

An off-duty police officer shot and killed a man armed with a semi-automatic handgun in the area of a Southwest Washington entertainment district Saturday night, the Metropolitan Police Department said.

The encounter took place shortly after 9 pm EDT in the area of The Wharf, a district of restaurants, shops and entertainment venues along the Potomac River.

At least one shot was fired by the



officer, who was with a second off-duty officer at the time, Police Chief Robert J. Contee III said.

A person who may have been with the gunman was being treated at a hospital for a graze wound, Contee said.

The officers had observed the man pointing a handgun while on a pier just outside of a restaurant and "engaged" the man, Contee said in a statement to reporters. He said the suspect was "a very brazen individual" and that the investigation was continuing.

Holocaust survivors mark 80 years since mass Paris roundup

AP ■ PARIS

Family by family, house by house, French police rounded up 13,000 people on two terrifying days in July 1942, dispatching them to Nazi death camps simply because they were Jewish. Eighty years later, France is honouring the victims, and trying to keep their memory alive.

For the dwindling number of survivors of France's wartime crimes, commemoration ceremonies Sunday are especially important. At a time of rising antisemitism and far-right discourse sugarcoating France's role in the Holocaust, they worry that history's lessons are being forgotten.

A week of ceremonies marking 80 years since the Vel d'Hiv police roundup on July 16-17, 1942, culminates Sunday with an event led by President Emmanuel Macron.

The raids were among the most shameful acts undertaken by France during World War II, and among the darkest moments in its history.

Over those two days, police herded 13,152 people - including 4,115 children - into the Winter Velodrome of Paris, known as the Vel d'Hiv, before they were sent on to Nazi camps. It was the biggest



roundup in western Europe. The children were separated from their families; very few survived.

In public testimonies over the past week, survivor Rachel Jedinak described a middle-of-the-night knock on the door, and being marched through the streets of Paris and herded into the velodrome, in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

She recalled her desperate mother shouting at police. Some neighbours informed on Jews, others wept as they watched them corralled like livestock.

Chantal Blaszkas' aunts and uncle were among the children rounded up: 6-year-old Simon, 9-year-old Berthe, 15-year-old Suzanne. Their names are now engraved on a monument at a garden where the velodrome once stood, along with some 4,000 other children targeted in the raids. Photos of the children hang from tree trunks, the result of years of painstaking research to identify and honor the long-anonymous victims. Of the children deported from the Vel d'Hiv 80 years ago, only six survived.

"Can you imagine?" Blaszkas asked, pointing at the names and shaking her head. "Can you imagine?" Serge Klarsfeld, a renowned Nazi hunter whose father was deported to Auschwitz, spoke Saturday in the garden, calling it an "earth-shaking testimony to the horrors lived by Jewish families."

Envoys from Bulgaria, North Macedonia meet on EU bloc talks

AP ■ SOFIA

The foreign ministers of Bulgaria and North Macedonia met in Sofia on Sunday to discuss the next steps of North Macedonia's path to EU membership talks, a day after the parliament in Skopje voted in support of a French proposal that should lift Bulgaria's veto of North Macedonia joining the bloc.

EU member Bulgaria had until recently held up any progress for those accession talks, accusing North Macedonia's government of disrespecting shared cultural, linguistic and historic ties.

Both countries agreed on "extremely ambitious short-term and long-term measures, which in practice aim to solve many of the open issues", Bulgarian Foreign Minister Teodora Genchovska told reporters.

"Bulgaria is the country that most strongly supports the European integration of the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania; hence we wish them success on the path they have long wanted to take. With joint efforts and with our support, they will reach what the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia most want to reach - membership in the EU", Genchovska said.

Her counterpart, Bujar Osmani, said his country is counting on Bulgaria's support and expressed hope that bilateral ties are entering a new phase.

"It is a historic opportunity for us that after 17 years with the status of a candidate country for membership, the Republic of North Macedonia gets the opportunity to start negotiations with the EU," said Osmani.

North Macedonia will start accession talks with EU on July 19, its prime minister announced on Saturday.

Bulgaria's National Assembly already has approved the French proposal, but legislators set additional conditions for agreeing to North Macedonia's EU membership.

They included protection for Bulgarians living in North Macedonia by including them in its constitution on an equal basis and no assumption that Bulgaria would recognise Macedonian as a separate language from Bulgarian.

Fires scorch France, Spain, temperature-related deaths soar

AP ■ PARIS

Firefighters struggled on Sunday to contain wildfires raging out of control in France and Spain as Europe wilts under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid link to a rise in excess mortality.

Two huge blazes that have been consuming pine forests for six days just south of the city of Bordeaux in southwest France have forced the evacuation of some 14,000 people, including many who were set to spend their vacation at campsites.

In Spain, firefighters supported by the armed forces' emergency brigades are trying to stamp out over 30 fires consuming forests spread across the country.

Spain's National Defence Department said that "the majority" of its fire-fighting aircraft have been deployed. Many areas are rugged, hilly terrain that makes it difficult for ground crews to access.

Drought conditions in the Iberian Peninsula have made it particularly susceptible to wildfires, some caused by lightning, others by accident, and even some intentionally set, after a mass of hot air was blown up from Africa last week.

So far, there have been no fire-related deaths in France or Spain. In Portugal, a pilot of a firefighting plane died when his aircraft crashed on Friday.

But as temperatures remain unusually high, heat-related deaths have soared amid a heat wave that the EU considers the work of climate change.

In Spain the second heat wave of the summer has kept highs above 40 degrees Celsius in many areas, hitting peaks of 43 degrees Celsius regularly.

According to Spain's Carlos III Institute, which records temperature-related fatalities daily, 360 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10-15. That was compared with 27 tem-



perature-related deaths the previous six days.

The death of a street cleaner after he suffered heat stroke while working has led to the town hall of Spain's capital giving the option for its street cleaners to work in the evenings to avoid the worst spells of the day.

In France, the fire in La Teste-de-Buch near the Atlantic coast has forced 10,000 people to flee the area popular for the Arcachon seaside resort.

The Gironde regional government said on Sunday that "the situation remains unfavourable" due to gusting winds that, combined with hot and dry conditions, have fanned more flare-ups overnight. That led to a protracted struggle to protect campgrounds.

A second fire near the town of Landiras, south of a valley of Bordeaux vineyards, has forced authorities to evacuate 4,100 people this week, including some 1,900 on Saturday.

Authorities said that one flank has been brought under control by the dumping of white sand along a two-kilometer (1.2-mile) stretch. Another flank, however, remains unchecked.

Overall more than 10,300 (25,400) hectares of land have burned in the two fires.

Emergency officials warned

that high temperatures and winds on Sunday and Monday would complicate efforts to stop the fires from spreading further.

"We have to stay very prudent and very humble, because the day will be very hot. We have no favourable weather window. The site is very, very hot and very active," regional fire official Eric Florensan said on Sunday on local radio France-Bleu.

Temperatures are forecast up to 40 degrees Celsius in the area, with Monday expected to be the hottest day in a stretch of extreme July weather.

Some of the most worrisome blazes in Spain are concentrated in the western regions of Extremadura and Castilla y León.

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska announced a joint command that will take over coordinating the efforts to battle the fires that are active in the adjoining regions.

Firefighters have been unable to stop the advance of a fire that broke out near the city of Cáceres that is threatening the Monfragüe National Park and has kept 200 people from returning to their homes.

Another fire in southern Spain near the city of Malaga has forced the evacuation of a further 2,500 people. There are more fires near the central city of Avila, in north-west Galicia, among other areas.

Hungary, Croatia and the Greek island of Crete have also fought wildfires this week, as have Morocco and California.

The scorching temperatures have reached as far north as Britain, where its weather agency has issued its first-ever "red warning" of extreme heat for Monday and Tuesday, when temperatures in southern England may reach 40 degrees Celsius for the first time.

That will still be relatively bearable compared with the 47 degrees Celsius recorded in Portugal's northern town of Pinhao on Wednesday, establishing a new national record.

Lanka's own 'Arab Spring' uproots Rajapaksa clan, but eco recovery still uncertain

PTI ■ COLOMBO

What started as a small protest by a handful of individuals demanding basic necessities turned into a tsunami that uprooted the once-powerful Rajapaksa family in what was Sri Lanka's 'Arab Spring' moment, but the road to recovery from the country's worst economic crisis in decades looks distant and painful.

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since independence from British rule in 1948, with a severe foreign exchange shortage hampering the import of essentials including food, fuel and medicines. Its foreign debt is over USD 50 billion with repayments this year falling to the tune of USD 7 billion.

As the crisis emerged in March, a handful of individuals gathered in a small group holding placards to demand basic necessities like milk powder and a regular power supply.

Within days, Sri Lankans were forced to wait in miles-long queues to get fuel and cooking gas and suffered from multiple hours of power outages. Some 20 people even died

while waiting for their turn in the serpentine queues in scorching heat.

Enough was enough for the people having waited each passing day for the government to respond, respond positively. But the Rajapaksa government did not offer any solutions and there was no end to the people's suffering.

The government declared bankruptcy in mid-April by refusing to honour its international debt. The situation created a thriving black market where people paid to secure a place in the queue and fuel was sold 4 times higher than the legal retail price.

With no end to their sufferings, people across Sri Lanka took to the streets calling for resignations of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his elder brother Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The Rajapaksa, a powerful dynasty that ruled Sri Lanka for nearly two decades, has been blamed for the country's economic ruin.

It was the dawn of the 'Arab Spring' moment, a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across



much of the Arab world in the early 2010s.

Unfazed by the power that the Rajapaksa family wielded, the people gathered at the Galle Face Green in the heart of Colombo, raising the slogan "GoGotaGama" in a peaceful protest.

These protesters have been at the forefront of the popular 'Aragalaya' movement - named after the Sinhalese word for 'struggle' - calling for the resignation of President Gotabaya and his elder brother Mahinda.

The slogan attracted students,

activists, youths and the people from all walks of life, who joined the protest overcoming the deep ethnic and religious divide in the country.

Under mounting pressure, President Gotabaya first dropped his older brother Chamal and the eldest nephew Namal from the Cabinet in

mid-April.

In May, Prime Minister Mahinda also resigned after his supporters attacked anti-government protesters, triggering violence against the Rajapaksa family loyalists in many parts of the country.

Gotabaya tried to tackle the crisis for a few weeks along with the newly-appointed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe before the President was forced to flee his official residence in the face of massive public protests in July.

"We are tired of the situation in the country. They have no solution," says Ananda Arunajith, a tuk-tuk operator. While he languished in the petrol queue, his wife Sumali waited in the cooking gas line.

Some mothers had to take their toddlers to the queues as they waited overnight to hear the news of stocks arriving.

Shehan Perera, an IT industry middle-level executive, says the jobs have come under threat due to the fuel crisis.

"The employees now seem to look for running businesses with minimum manpower resources. This has made us work a lot hard-

er to perform and show results," he says while keeping his car in a long queue in the city.

"Our generation has been almost rendered useless by this fuel crisis. I take a rest break at night in the fuel queue to get the limited fuel supply for my scooter," says Yohan Perera, a young hospitality industry trainee.

He has waited in the queue for over hours many times, only to be told that the pumps had run dry when he was within striking distance of the pumping station.

"Who takes responsibility for the deaths of nearly 20 people who have died in the waiting queues?" asked Walter Peiris, a retired official.

He said his wife was sending food and water to the fuel queue as he waited. The government has said the situation would get worse before it gets better.

"This is sheer incompetence. They just don't know how to manage the economy," says Shamal Jayaratne, a self-employed man.

He says he closes his motorcycle battery and tyre selling business to join the queue at least three days of the week.

Candidates for UK leader woo Right wing before vote



AP ■ LONDON

The candidates to become the next British prime minister burnished their right-wing credentials on Sunday, as they looked to remain in the race to succeed Boris Johnson.

Many of the five remaining hopefuls highlighted issues linked to Brexit and immigration as they attempted to woo fellow Conservative lawmakers ahead of a third round of voting on Monday, when another contender will drop out.

Even though the eventual winner will automatically become prime minister, the contenders must appeal to a narrow constituency of party members, who tend to be whiter, older and more right-wing than the general public. The candidates face a series of votes from lawmakers next week, who will narrow down the field to two, before facing a runoff among an estimated 180,000 Conservative Party members.

Writing in Britain's Sunday Telegraph newspaper, the former Treasury chief Rishi Sunak, who is the frontrunner among Conservative lawmakers, pledged to tear up European Union laws as Britain beds down its position outside the bloc.

Appealing to the pro-Brexit party vote, Sunak wrote that he will have "scrapped or reformed all of the EU law, red tape and bureaucracy that is still on our statute book and slowing economic growth" by the time of the next election if he becomes the next prime minister.

Meanwhile, Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt, who became a surprise frontrunner and bookmaker favorite last week, was forced to challenge accusations that she had pushed through a policy to end the requirement for trans people to obtain a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria before they could legally change gender when she was equalities minister in Theresa May's government.

She told the BBC's Sunday Morning programme that she had managed a consultation with health care professionals but no policy had been developed while she was in the job.

Despite the demographics of the members, the race to succeed Johnson has been called the most diverse for a British prime minister. Sunak and Kemi Badenoch, a former equalities minister, are both non-white, while three of the remaining five contenders are women. Badenoch, whose parents are from Nigeria, remains little known. But she has seen her star rise after her public showing in a television debate Friday, and led a poll of party members by the ConservativeHome website on Sunday.

She would be the first Black prime minister and, at 42, the youngest in more than 250 years.

Despite her background, she has made immigration control a key pillar of her political pitch, pledging Sunday to "do whatever it takes to deal with the small boats issue."

Voters believe Rishi Sunak will make good PM: UK opinion poll

PTI ■ LONDON

Almost half of the voters for the UK's governing Conservative Party believe Rishi Sunak will make a good Prime Minister, according to the results of a new opinion poll on Sunday.

"The Sunday Telegraph" reports that the JL Partners poll of more than 4,400 people found that 48 per cent of those who backed the Tories in the 2019 general election felt the British Indian former Chancellor would be a good Prime Minister.

This is also the first poll that puts Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in second place, with 39 per cent backing her for Prime Minister and 33 per cent in favour of Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt.

The survey comes as the race to elect Boris Johnson's successor as the next Conservative Party leader is narrowing down to these three main contenders, with former equalities minister Kemi Badenoch and Parliament's Foreign Affairs

Committee Chair Tom Tugendhat in fourth and fifth place, respectively.

"Among those who have heard of Mordaunt, the overwhelming view is one of neutrality," James Johnson, co-founder of JL Partners and a former Downing Street pollster, told the newspaper.

"Sunak invites strong opinions. One-third of voters think he would be good in the top job, one third do not. But in an unpopular field where every other candidate is in net-negative territory, this score draw makes him the public's favourite. He is particularly popular with the all-important 2019 Conservative voter, as the only candidate to have half approve of him," he said.

Among all voters, the most popular policy priority was to "turn the economy around", with addressing the National Health Service (NHS) backlog and restoring trust and integrity in public life coming second and third respectively.

Cutting taxes, which has emerged as a central focus of all the debates so



far, was the fourth priority, selected by 38 per cent of voters overall and 40 per cent of Conservative voters.

The JL Partners poll, which also delved into the characteristics voters are seeking from a new leader, found that 19 per cent of Conservative supporters and 24 per cent of voters overall most wanted a leader who is "truthful".

The survey, carried out last week, puts the Opposition Labour Party 11 points ahead of the Conservatives, on 42 points to the Tories' 31.

"While the public chew over the economy, the NHS and public trust, Conservative MPs may have a much simpler question: who is the best candidate to hold their seat? On this evidence, the answer is Mr Sunak," added James Johnson.

An MRP model, which maps survey results onto every seat in the country, found that, among all voters, Sunak had the highest net approval score in 76 per cent of the seats won by the Tories in the last general election over two years ago, compared to

19 per cent in which Tugendhat came out on top and five per cent in which Mordaunt had the best score.

Sunak, 42, has topped the first two rounds of voting among Tory MPs last week and the next few rounds of voting in the coming week are set to narrow down the field further, with only two left in the race by Thursday.

While Sunak is a clear favourite among the Tory MPs, some polling among the Conservative Party members who will have the final say has had Mordaunt in the lead.

However, a survey overnight for the Conservative Home website of 850 Tory members put Badenoch in the lead on 31 per cent, with Truss second on 20 per cent, Mordaunt third on 18 per cent, Sunak fourth on 17 per cent and Tugendhat fifth on 10 per cent.

Postal votes will be sent out to around 160,000 Tory party members who are eligible to vote and they will decide the eventual winner and new Prime Minister to be announced on September 5.

Biden's realism approach runs head-on into liberal pressure

AP ■ WASHINGTON

On restoring access to abortion, President Joe Biden says his hands are tied without more Democratic senators. Declaring a public health emergency on the matter has downsides, his aides say. And as for gun violence, Biden has been clear about the limits of what he can do on his own.

"There's a Constitution," Biden said from the South Lawn in late May. "I can't dictate this stuff." Throughout this century, presidents have often pushed aggressively to extend the boundaries of executive power. Biden talks more about its limits.

When it comes to the thorniest issues confronting his administration, the instinct from Biden and his White House is often to speak about what he cannot do, citing constraints imposed by the courts or insufficient support in a Congress controlled by his own party - though barely.

He injects a heavy dose of



reality in speaking to an increasingly restive Democratic base, which has demanded action on issues such as abortion and voting rights before the November elections. White House officials and the president's allies say that approach typifies a leader who has always promised to be honest with Americans, including about how expansive

his powers really are. But Biden's realpolitik tendencies are colliding with an activist base agitating for a more aggressive party leader - both in tone and substance. Although candidate Biden sold himself as the person who best knew the ways of Washington, he nonetheless is hamstrung by the same obstacles that have bedeviled his

predecessors.

"I think that if you hesitate from important actions like this just because of a legal challenge, then you would do nothing," said Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif., who has been pressing for more administrative actions on abortion. "People all across the country are expecting us - the leaders - to do something."

Biden's cautionary approach could be to protect himself if the White House falls short - like Democrats did in negotiating a party-line spending package centered on the social safety net and climate provisions. That sweeping effort had been steadily thwarted due to resistance from two moderate Democrats, one of them West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, who on Thursday scuttled for the time being a scaled-back effort that focused on climate and taxes.

That development prompted calls from Democratic senators for Biden to unilaterally declare a climate emergency. In a state-

ment Friday while in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Biden pledged to take "strong executive action to meet this moment" on climate. But in recent weeks, that gap between "yes, we can" and "no, we can't" has been most glaring on abortion.

Since the Supreme Court last month overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling from 1973 with its constitutional protections for abortion, the White House has come under considerable pressure to try to maintain access to abortion in conservative states that are set to outlaw the procedure.

For instance, advocates have implored Biden to look into establishing abortion clinics on federal lands. They have asked the administration to help transport women seeking abortions to a state that offers the procedure. And Democratic lawmakers are pressing the White House to declare a public health emergency.

Without rejecting the ideas

completely, White House aides have expressed skepticism about such requests. And even as he signed an executive order last week to begin addressing the issue, Biden had one clear, consistent message: that he could not do this on his own, shifting attention to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

"The only way we can secure a woman's right to choose and the balance that existed is for Congress to restore the protections of Roe v. Wade as federal law," Biden said shortly after the court struck down Roe. "No executive action from the president can do that."

Shortly after declaring that the filibuster - a Senate rule that requires 60 votes for most legislation to advance - should not apply for abortion and privacy measures, Biden acknowledged during a meeting with Democratic governors that his newfound position would not make a difference, at least not right away.

90-year-old Indian woman revisits Pak after 75 yrs to see her ancestral home

AP ■ LAHORE

An Indian woman's long-cherished dream of visiting her ancestral home in Rawalpindi materialised when Pakistan granted 90-year-old Reena Chhibber

Varma a visa and she arrived here on Saturday via the Wagah-Attari border, 75 years after leaving the country at the time of Partition.

Moist-eyed Varma, immediately after her arrival in Pakistan, left for her hometown Rawalpindi, where she will visit her ancestral dwelling Prem Niwas, her school, and childhood friends.

In a video she uploaded on social media, Varma, who is from Pune, said her family was living on the Devi College Road in Rawalpindi when the Partition

took place. "I studied at the Modern School. My four siblings had also gone to the same school. My brother and a sister also studied at the Gorden College located near the Modern School," she recalled. "My elder siblings had Muslim friends who would come to our home as my father was a man of progressive ideas and had no

issue in meetings with boys and girls. Before the Partition, there was no such issue of Hindus and Muslims. This happened after the Partition," she said.

"Although the Partition of India was wrong, now that it has happened, both the countries should work together to ease visa restrictions for all of us," she said.

Zimbabwe students scoop international awards for moot court

AP ■ HARARE

A history-making team of Zimbabwean high school students that became world and European moot court competition champions has been widely praised in a country where the education system is beset by poor funding, lack of materials and teachers' strikes.

The 11-member Zimbabwean team of nine girls and two boys aged between 14 and 18 and drawn from different schools was crowned world champions last month after winning the International High School Moot Court competition held online at the end of May.

A team from New York City came second in the competition where par-



ticipants used fictional cases to simulate proceedings in the International Criminal Court pre-trial chambers.

Zimbabwe now has also been crowned champions of Europe after beating The Netherlands in the finals of the European Moot Competition for

high school students on July 3. It was Zimbabwe's first time competing in both prestigious events.

Organizers of the European competition were so impressed with Zimbabwe's performance at the International High School Moot Court competition that they invited the team to be the first-ever African country to enter their competition, said team captain Ruvimbo Simbi.

"It is surreal and extraordinary," said Simbi after returning from Romania, where the European competition was held. "When we were at the European Moot Court, many people didn't even know Zimbabwe. We put Zimbabwe on the map, letting the world know of the amazing talent found in this country," said Simbi.

Hindu temple, homes vandalised in B'desh over Facebook post: Reports

PTI ■ DHAKA

A temple, shops and several houses of the Hindu community have been vandalised in southwestern Bangladesh by some unidentified persons over a Facebook post allegedly belittling Islam, in the latest spate of violence targeting the religious minority in the country, according to media reports on Sunday.

Police fired warning shots to disperse a mob that vandalised several homes and torched one of them in Sahapara village in Narail district on Friday evening, bdnews24.Com, an online newspaper quoted Haran

Chandra Paul, an inspector at the local police station, as saying.

The attackers also threw bricks at a temple in the village during the attack around 7:30pm, he said.

They also broke the furniture inside the temple.

Several shops were also vandalised, The Daily Star newspaper reported.

Haran said a young man posted something offensive on Facebook, triggering anger among Muslims. Police took his father to the police station after a search for the young man failed to trace him.

Rupee's fall fuels inflation, but it makes exports competitive: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rupee depreciation has impacted the current account deficit and fuelled inflationary pressures but at the same time it has made Indian exports more competitive, according to experts.

The Indian rupee has been depreciating against the USD dollar and is nearing the psychologically key mark of 80, making imports expensive.

"The depreciation of the rupee has multiple impacts on the economy. Given we have a negative trade balance, though a depreciation of the rupee makes our exports more competitive, our import bills go up significantly."

"It has an impact on the current account deficit thus further putting pressure on the rupee as well as imports inflation too as the price of imports in rupee terms is higher," said Ranen Banerjee, Leader, Economic Advisory Services, PwC India.

A recent report by the finance ministry cautioned that India's current account deficit (CAD) is expected to deteriorate in the current fiscal on account of costlier imports and tepid merchandise exports.

Primarily driven by an increase in the trade deficit, the CAD stood at 1.2 per cent of GDP in 2021-22.

Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India, said the US dollar has strengthened amid economic uncertainties marked by rising global inflation and commodity prices, rapidly tightening monetary policy in advanced nations, rising geopolitical tensions, fears of a global economic slowdown, and even a possible recession in the US and a few major European nations.

However, not always does curren-



cy depreciation hurt an economy, she added.

"The opportunity to boost services exports revenue on the back of the global digitisation wave is promising. A weaker domestic currency also is an opportunity for FPIs to enter the equity market to earn handsome returns in the medium to long term," she opined.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net sellers in the Indian equity market for the ninth consecutive month in June, with an outflow of Rs 49,469 crore -- the highest since March 2020. The sell-off has continued this month, with net outflows to the tune of Rs 7,432 crore during July 1-15.

Overall, FPIs have withdrawn Rs 1.2

lakh crore from the Indian equity market in 2022-23 so far, but the sell-off has been absorbed by domestic institutional investors (DIIs).

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA Limited, was of the opinion that a weaker rupee will partly counteract the slide in commodity prices, lessening the fall in the wholesale (WPI) and retail (CPI) inflation expected over the next few months.

"Similarly, the beneficial impact of the fall in input costs on corporate margins will be tempered. The weaker INR will help to protect some export competitiveness, given the sharper fall recorded by many emerging market (EM) currencies than the INR in the

recent period," she added.

Khalid Khan, vice-chairman of exporters' body FIEO, said while a depreciating rupee will help exporters, exporting goods which have import content in terms of raw materials will not be benefited that much.

An article published in its recent bulletin said that amid a hostile international environment, close and continuous monitoring of the widening trade deficit and portfolio outflows is warranted, strong reserve buffers notwithstanding.

As per the latest data, the country's imports expanded by 57.55 per cent to USD 66.31 billion in June compared to the year-ago month.

The merchandise trade deficit in June 2022 was estimated at USD 26.18 billion as against USD 9.60 billion in June 2021, which is an increase of 172.72 per cent.

Crude oil imports in June almost doubled to USD 21.3 billion.

Coal and coke imports more than doubled to USD 6.76 billion in the month as against USD 1.88 billion in June 2021.

It is widely expected that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may go for the third consecutive hike in the key interest rate next month as retail inflation continues to rule above 7 per cent -- higher than its upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent.

Banerjee further said the matching rate hikes by the RBI in response to the US Federal Reserve actions will also provide support to the rupee.

These counterbalancing forces have helped the rupee in the past few months wherein it has not depreciated to the extent of other emerging market currencies, he added.

Six of top-10 firms lose ₹1.68 lakh cr in M-cap; TCS biggest laggard



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Six of the 10 most valued firms suffered a combined erosion of ₹1,68,260.37 crore from their market valuation last week, mainly dragged down by IT major TCS amid an overall weak trend in the equity market.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex fell 721.06 points or 1.32 per cent last week.

From the laggards, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) took the biggest hit as its market valuation tumbled Rs 99,270.07 crore to reach Rs 10,95,355.32 crore. Shares of TCS dropped last week after the company's June quarter earnings failed to meet market expectations.

Another IT behemoth Infosys also suffered an erosion of Rs 35,133.64 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 6,01,900.14 crore.

HDFC Bank's market valuation fell by Rs 18,172.43 crore to Rs 7,57,659.72 crore

and that of State Bank of India (SBI) declined by Rs 4,433.76 crore to Rs 4,27,488.90 crore.

The market capitalisation (m-cap) of HDFC dipped by Rs 4,091.62 crore to reach Rs 4,02,121.99 crore and that of ICICI Bank went lower by Rs 3,158.85 crore to Rs 5,22,498.11 crore.

In contrast, the valuation of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) jumped Rs 17,128.52 crore to Rs 6,03,551.26 crore.

Reliance Industries added Rs 6,801.72 crore, taking its market valuation to Rs 16,24,681.08 crore.

ITC's m-cap climbed Rs 1,318.81 crore to Rs 3,62,327.81 crore and that of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) went higher by Rs 316.25 crore to Rs 4,48,157.71 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries continued to remain the most valued domestic company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, HUL, Infosys, ICICI Bank, LIC, SBI, HDFC and ITC.

India's fuel demand falls in July as monsoon sets in: Data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's demand for petrol and diesel fell in the first half of July over the previous month as the onset of monsoon chipped away consumption in some sectors and restricted mobility, preliminary industry data showed on Sunday.

Diesel, the most widely used fuel in the country, saw consumption drop 13.7 per cent during July 1-15 to 3.16 million tonnes from 3.67 million tonnes demand in the same period of the previous month.

The arrival and intensity of monsoon weighs heavily on diesel demand in the country and consumption traditionally is lower in July-September than in April-June. Floods restrict mobility and demand from the farm sector, which uses diesel in irrigation pumps and trucking, also drops with the onset of rains.

Diesel demand was however almost 27 per cent higher year-on-year, supported by strong economic growth and a relatively low baseline for the same period in 2021 when a second wave of COVID-19 had impacted the economy.

Consumption of diesel was 43.6 per cent higher than the 2.2 million tonnes demand during July 1 to 15 of 2020. It was 13.7 per cent more than pre-COVID July 2019, the data showed.

Remittances from Gulf countries fell sharply in FY20-21 due to Covid-19

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The share of inward remittances from Gulf nations dipped sharply during 2020-21 on account of the economic stress created by the COVID-19 pandemic, said an RBI article.

On the other hand, advanced economies like the US, the UK and Singapore emerged as important sources for the country for remittances, accounting for 36 per cent of the total payments in 2020-21, the article said citing an RBI survey.

To analyse the factors contributing to the resilience of remittances and to understand to what extent the pandemic has changed the underlying dynamics of remittances flow, the Reserve Bank of India conducted the fifth round of the Survey on Remittances for the year 2020-21.

"...The share of remittances from the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) region in India's inward remittances is estimated to have declined from more than 50 per cent in 2016-17 (last surveyed period) to about 30 per cent in 2020-21," said the article prepared by the officials in the Department of Economic and Policy Research, RBI.

The central bank, however, said the views expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India.

Overall, notwithstanding headwinds of COVID-19, India's inward remittances have proven to be a resilient source of current account receipts, the article published in the RBI's July bulletin said.

The decline in remittances from the Gulf countries during 2020-21 reflects a slower pace of migration and a larger presence of Indian diaspora in informal sectors which was hit the most during the pandemic period. As a result, the proportion of small size transactions in total remittances increased in 2020-21.

The US surpassed the UAE as the top source country, accounting for 23 per cent of total remittances in 2020-21.

This corroborates with the World Bank report (2021) citing an economic recovery in the US as one of the important drivers of India's remittances growth as it accounts for almost 20 per cent of total remittances, the article said.



The share of the traditional remittance recipient states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which had strong dominance in the GCC region, has almost halved in 2020-21, accounting for only 25 per cent of total remittances since 2016-17, while Maharashtra has emerged as the top recipient state surpassing Kerala.

"Apart from the host country dynamics, reducing wage differentials, changing occupational patterns in these states with increasing white collar migrant workers to GCC region and entry of low-wage semi-skilled workers from other states and Asian countries may have led to this compositional shift," it said.

By contrast, migration from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal to the Gulf countries has increased in recent years. According to the Ministry of External Affairs data, more than 50 per cent of the approved emigration clearances for the GCC region in 2020 were for these states.

With the dominance of low-wage unskilled labourers, however, their share in remittances has remained significantly

low while the share of Maharashtra and Delhi has increased significantly in 2020-21, it said.

The article also concludes that the majority of the remittances continue to be routed through private sector banks, followed by public sector banks although foreign banks have witnessed a marginal increase in remittances transactions, particularly from Singapore.

It also noted that stressed income conditions are discernible from small size transactions gaining a share in total remittances during the pandemic period. "Notwithstanding, India is the second cheapest remittance receiving market in the G20 group after Mexico, the cost for certain remittance corridors has been consistently higher than others," it said.

Policy measures need to be undertaken that expand the scope of the Money Transfer Service Scheme (MTSS) in high-cost corridors, it said, and added that remittance service providers need to adapt to the changing times by investing heavily in digital technologies.

General Aeronautics begins production of agri-drones

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Drone startup General Aeronautics on Sunday said it has begun commercial production of agricultural drones and aims monthly production of 100 units. General Aeronautics is into delivering advanced aerial technologies for agriculture, healthcare and unmanned aerial vehicle design.

"We have started commercial production this month after conducting trials for the last three years," Srikanth Srinivasan, Head of Sales and Marketing at General Aeronautics, told PTI.

The trials were conducted in 10,000 acres in 45 crops in 14 states in experimental plots of agricultural companies. The trial results have been validated by 15 agricultural institutes, he said. With brand name 'Krishak', the drone manufactured by General Aeronautics has 16 kg payload with 25 minutes flight time and has a coverage of up to six acres per battery charge with artificial intelligence assisted navigation, he said.

Srinivasan said nozzles used in Krishak are different as spraying happens in mist form without posing any hazard and increasing coverage.

"The battery used now has a capacity of 600 cycles. The company is working on a new battery of 6,000 cycles," he said. Currently, the Bengaluru-based startup has priced its drones at Rs 25 lakh each with three batteries. Its main clients at present are agro-chemical companies like Syngenta, Bayer Cropscience and others. It is mainly focusing on B2B sales.

Last year, the government issued standard operating procedures for use of drones in the farm sector. The Union Budget too gave a push. Come up with a scheme to fund drones to cooperatives, entrepreneurs and farmer produce organisations.

Front-loading monetary policy action can anchor inflation expectations: RBI paper

PTI ■ MUMBAI

By front-loading rate hikes, the RBI can cement the credibility of its monetary policy intent and action when it fights supply-side driven inflation on one hand and also contains the negative impact on growth, as per an article. The paper has been authored by three RBI analysts, including Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra who is a member of the rating setting panel Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) and also heads the key monetary policy department at the central bank.

The article has been published in the monthly RBI bulletin for July but does not officially represent the views of the monetary authority. Underlining that the current inflation pain is global and supply-side driven and can be better tackled by fiscal measures and not monetary policy actions like rate hikes, the article notes that the ongoing supply shocks are larger and unrelenting, carrying the risk of "unanchoring inflation expectations".

They are also accompanied by a rebound in pandemic related revenue spending, leading to a gradual closing of the output gap underway.

Therefore, coordinated monetary and fiscal policy responses are needed to tackle this because "given the limited policy space, front-loading of monetary policy actions can keep inflation expectations firmly anchored thus maintaining the credibility of the central bank, re-align inflation with the target and reduce the medium-term growth sacrifice," says the article penned by Patra, Joice John and Deepak Kumar. The article squarely pins the blame for the ravaging global inflation pressures on crude oil prices and the resultant ripple effect on rates of other commodities following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Using crude prices as an exemplar of supply shocks, simulations from the RBI's quarterly projection model show that when the shock is transitory, inflation returns to equilibrium without the need for any monetary policy action.

On the other hand, repeated supply shocks trigger second round effects through cost-push, inflationary expectations, exchange rate volatilities and demand channels, warranting pre-emptive monetary policy action. "Lack of credibility can reduce the monetary policy response even and therefore by frontloading monetary policy actions, credibility is demonstrated by showing commitment to the inflation target."

"The required monetary policy response is lower when there is a fiscal policy response to supply-side shocks, but the latter entails macro-economic costs, including potentially a slowing down of medium-term growth," says the arti-



cle. If the central bank is seen credible with its intent, words, and actions, then timely monetary action can prune the long-term impact on growth, it added. The article also quoted the World Bank which has pegged global median inflation at its highest level since 2008. For advanced economies, it is at its highest level since 1982 and in the US it is at a 41-year high.

This inflation surge draws its origins from a series of supply shocks---pandemic lockdowns, supply chain disruptions, elevated commodity prices and the war in Ukraine.

The energy component of global consumer price inflation is at its highest level since early 1980s. For over 40 per cent of emerging markets and most low-income countries, consumer price index and food inflation is expected to remain in double-digits through 2022.

Consequently, the global inflation crisis is just the face of one of the most severe food and energy crises in recent history that now threatens the most vulnerable across the globe, it added. In a world wherein elevated inflation is globalised, "it is the direction of the change that matters, not the height" and central to that exercise is the "role of credibility of the monetary policy and anchoring of inflation expectations."

Higher crude price increases other international commodity prices, feed into global inflation and weaken global demand and growth.

The direct impact of higher crude price on inflation occurs due to the pass-through to domestic petroleum product prices. Second round effects occur through cost-push -- petroleum rates increase prices of intermediate goods and services which, in turn, push up prices of final goods and services.

There is also a demand channel of transmission to domestic inflation at work -- higher fuel prices reduce consumption of other items and profit margins of firms, leading to lower cash flows and investment.

India's first shopping mall-cum-coworking facility to come up in Pune: Anarock Retail

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's first shopping mall-cum-coworking facility adjacent to an airport is expected to be launched in Pune in mid-October, according to Anarock Retail.

Situated adjacent to the Pune Airport, the AeroMall, being developed by Pebbles Infra-Tech under the PPP model with AAI, is spread over 4,45,000 sq ft, including 1,30,000 sq ft of leasable space for retail.

As sole advisors to the



facility, Anarock Retail has designed the complex, managed its development, and crafted its tenant mix. Anarock Retail, the retail services division of the home-grown real estate consultant Anarock, said. Pune airport is the only air-

port in India within the city and the only instance of a co-working and shopping facility directly adjoining an airport with a multi-level car park, Anarock Retail said.

The post-pandemic revival in air travel has brought airport retail back centre-stage. However, there continues to be a deficit of quality retail spaces at Indian airports for the best-suited retailers dealing in apparel and fashion, wellness, electronics and travel accessories, F&B, and beauty products, the company said.

Airport retail is attractive for retailers due to the relatively higher ROI compared to other locations. However, a well-researched tenant mix is critical in airports, it said.

Stating that AeroMall is set to be launched on October 15, Anarock Retail said it expects to complete leasing out Pune Airport's standalone mixed-use centre encompassing shopping, office and coworking, a food court and multi-level car park (MLCP), spread in 2,50,000 sq ft, by the end of the third quarter of 2022.

Average farm income soared 1.3-1.7 times in FY22 from FY18: SBI Research

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The income of farmers has grown in the range of 1.3-1.7 times in FY22 from the FY18 levels on average while grain exports soared to over USD 50 billion, says an SBI Research report.

For certain crops in some states (like soyabean in Maharashtra and cotton in Karnataka) farmers' income more than doubled in FY22 from FY18 levels, while in all other cases it rose in the range of 1.3-1.7 times.

The increase in the income of farmers engaged in cash crops has been more prominent

compared to farmers growing non-cash crops, SBI chief economist Soumyakanti Ghosh said in an elaborate report on Sunday.

This also has led to an increase in the share of agriculture in the GDP to 18.8 per cent from 14.2 per cent, the report said. This rise was also due to the shrinkage of the industrial and services contribution to the economy due to the deadly second wave of the pandemic.

But the report is silent on the massive fall in the prices of spices like black pepper, cardamom, clove, and cinnamon among others as also natural rubber.

Also, the report, based on key farming states like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, MP, UP, Karnataka, and Gujarat among others, notes that allied/non-farm income showed a significant increase of 1.4-1.8 times in the majority of states in tandem with farm income during this period, substantiating the trend in the 77th National Sample Survey that said source of farmers income has become increasingly diverse apart from crops.

Significantly, this also ensured that there have been no yawning gaps in income inequalities in the hinterland during this period.

Luxury car market remains suppressed in India due to high taxes, says Audi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian luxury car market has huge growth potential but remains suppressed due to high taxation on luxury cars and unfavourable regulatory environment, as per a senior executive of German luxury carmaker Audi.

Luxury car volumes account for less than 2 per cent of the overall passenger vehicle sales annually and the sector has been more or less at the same level for the past decade.

SINDHU CLINCHES SINGAPORE TITLE

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu lifted the Singapore Open Super 500 trophy after outwitting China's Wang Zhi Yi in an intense women's singles final here on Sunday.

In a mistake-filled title clash, Sindhu managed to stay strong in the key moments to come up trumps against the 22-year-old Wang, the reigning Asian Championships Gold medallist. The final scoreline read 21-9, 11-21, 21-15 in the Indian's favour.

The 27-year-old from Hyderabad came into the match with a 1-0 lead over Wang, having beaten the Chinese player in their only meeting at the All England Championships this year.

Sindhu produced another fine display to grab her third world tour title of the season.

Toss played a major role in the match with drift in the hall making life difficult for the shuttlers. Wang's decision to choose the side put her in an advantageous position as she played against the drift after the final change of ends.

However, Sindhu managed to limit the errors and keep her nerves

to emerge victorious in the end.

After losing the first two points, Sindhu used her reach to get the shuttle early, played some superb angled returns, and produced one winner after another to stay ahead all the way in the opening game.

The second game, however, turned into a forgettable affair for Sindhu as Wang, now on the better side of the court, displayed her prowess.

Sindhu tried to use the spinning net shot and use the gaps on the court to make a comeback but points were too few to come by as Wang continued to move ahead.

The match came alive in the decider as the duo played some long rallies.

While Wang seemed charged up initially, Sindhu was patient and after an initial duel of 5-5, played a superb smash and then finished a long rally with a delectable drop shot to leave her opponent on the floor.

The Indian grabbed a five-point advantage at the interval after producing another superb cross-court smash from a deep forehand corner.

Back to the better side after the final change in ends, Wang reduced

the deficit to 11-12 with Sindhu committing errors.

The Indian, however, managed to establish a four-point advantage with a good follow-up shot.

Just two points away, Sindhu hit long before unleashing a smash to finish an intense rally and grab five match points.

Wang hit wide as Sindhu threw her arms to the air in celebration.

The title run will be a big boost for Sindhu, who will be leading the India's charge at the Commonwealth Games, starting July 28 in Birmingham.

This was her third title of the season -- having won two Super 300 crowns in Syed Modi International and Swiss Open -- and an addition to her brimming cabinet which has a Gold, two Silver, and as many Bronze medals from the World Championships besides two Olympic medals.

GINTING WINS

Indonesia's Anthony Ginting ended his two-year title drought by beating Japan's Kodai

SINDHU MANAGED TO STAY STRONG IN THE KEY MOMENTS TO COME UP TRUMPS AGAINST THE 22-YEAR-OLD WANG, THE REIGNING ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS GOLD MEDALLIST

Naraoka 23-21, 21-17 in the men's singles final.

After taking down world champion Loh Kean Yew in the semi-final, Ginting, the world number six, continued to display the same attacking style to end the giant-slaying run of Naraoka.

The world number 43's passage to the final saw him stun world number eight Jonathan Christie, India's HS Prannoy and China's Zhao Jun Peng, who were all ranked higher than him.

Thailand's Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai retained their mixed doubles title after they beat China's Wang Yi Lyu and Huang Dong Ping in straight games 21-12, 21-17.

Indonesia, meanwhile, won both the doubles competition with Apriyani Rahayu and Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti clinching the women's doubles.

While Daniel Marthin and Leo Rolly Carnando claimed the men's doubles title.

Champ hopes winning spree will continue



PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Living out of a suitcase is the norm for international athletes and Sindhu admitted there is no time to celebrate as she shifts focus on the Commonwealth Games starting July 28.

"I just have a week after that again we leave for Commonwealth Games. Maybe I can take a day off, and spend time with my family," she said.

"It has been a long tour for me, there was Indonesia, Malaysia for two weeks, and now Singapore. So it is time to go back home and just relax for a bit and then get back to training but definitely, I am going to enjoy this win, it means a lot.

Asked if the Singapore open title augurs well for the Commonwealth Games and World Championships, Sindhu said: "Ya it is. I wanted to be more successful (laughs). Right now it is time to just go and relax and then focus on the Commonwealth Games and hope I get a medal in that.

"Followed by that we have the world championships and Japan Open, of course, hope for a medal in that too. I have to be physically and mentally fit. My strength and conditioning coach Srikanth is there with me, so it should be okay."

Sindhu, who already has a Silver and a Bronze apart from the team Gold from the Commonwealth Games, will be favourite to win the Gold this time.

Talking about the Birmingham event, Sindhu said: "It is going to be a team event. We have to give 100 percent and be in 100 percent form. As a team, we need to work (towards it) and after that, there is an individual event.

"I hope I give my best, it is not going to be easy, there are some good players. So hoping for as many medals as we can."

PM Modi lauds Sindhu, says proud moment for country

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated ace shuttler P V Sindhu on winning her first ever Singapore Open Super 500 title, saying it is a proud moment for the country and her victory will inspire upcoming players.

Modi tweeted, "I congratulate P V Sindhu on winning her first ever Singapore Open title. She has yet again demonstrated her exceptional sporting talent and achieved success. It is a proud moment for the country and will also give inspiration to upcoming players."



Anjum Moudgil wins Bronze in Changwon Shooting WC

PTI ■ CHANGWON

India's Anjum Moudgil won a Bronze medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Sunday.

Anjum shot 402.9 in the final round to finish third behind Germany's Anna Janssen (407.7) and Italy's Barbara Gambaro (403.4), who won the Gold and Silver medals respectively.

Sanjeev Rajput, Chain Singh, and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar clinched the Silver medal in the men's 3P team event.

The Indian trio, which had finished second in the qualification stage, faced a strong Czech Republic team in the Gold medal match.

But despite putting up a good fight, the Indians went down 12-16 to the trio of Petr Nymbursky, Filip Nepechal, and Jiri Privratsky.

Anjum, a world championship Silver medallist, had qualified for the finals after finishing sixth in the ranking round on Saturday. This is the 28-year-old shooter's



second individual medal in consecutive World Cup stages. She had won Silver in the same event at the Baku World Cup held last month.

While Anjum was off the radar and slipped to sixth position after the second prone series, she recovered steadily in the final standing position.

By the time the fifth and sixth place shooters were eliminated after the 15th standing position shot, Anjum was 0.2 points ahead of 4th placed Rebecca Koeck of Austria.

However, a slip up in the initial stages meant, she was 1.5 points behind Gambaro, and despite gaining a full point in the fourth and final five-shot standing position series, Anjum had to remain contented with a bronze.

With one Bronze and Silver apiece, India consolidated its position at the top of medal tally with a total of 11 medals (four Gold, five Silver and two Bronze).

PTI ■ EUGENE

Long jumper Murali Sreeshankar failed to live up to the expectations as he finished seventh in the finals with his best effort of 7.96m on day two of the World Athletics Championships here on Sunday.

Having become the first Indian male athlete to qualify for the long jump finals in the World Championships, Sreeshankar had raised hopes of a historic medal in the showpiece. But his performance in the final was way below his season's and personal best of 8.36m.

He had three legal jumps -- the opening jump of 7.96m, fourth round effort of 7.89m and last attempt of 7.83m. The other three tries were fouls.

The 23-year-old must be disappointed as he could not cross the 8m mark in six attempts. He has been a consistent performer this season having jumped 8.17m, 8.36m, 8.31m and 8.23m since March and going into the World Championships.

He had qualified for the finals with a best jump of exactly 8m in the qualification round on Saturday, finishing second in Group B and sev-

Sreeshankar finishes 7th in long jump finals at World C'ships



enth overall.

Sreeshankar had gone into the championships in the joint second spot in the season's top list on the basis of his national record 8.36m jump.

China's Jianan Wang won the Gold with a sensational final round jump of 8.36m while Olympic champion Miltiadis Tentoglou of Greece, who was leading till the penul-

imate round, won the Silver with a best effort of 8.30m. Season leader Simon Ehammer (8.16m) of Switzerland took the Bronze.

His father and coach S Murali said it was sheer bad luck that Sreeshankar could not at least jump more than 8.16m, which would have given him a Bronze.

"Sreeshankar was confident to do well today but it was sheer bad luck. Jumping more than 8.16m was within his reach and he has done many times this season," Murali said.

"The third jump turned out to be a foul by just 3mm and had it been a legal one, Sreeshankar would have crossed at least 8.16m and won a medal. But we have to look ahead with this World Championships experience and do well in the Commonwealth Games."

In other events involving Indians, Parul Chaudhary ran her personal best of 9:38.09 in

women's 3000m steeplechase to finish 12th in heat number two to miss out on the finals. She finished 31st overall.

The top three finishers and the next six fastest across the three heats qualify for the finals.

Chaudhary's earlier personal best was the 9:38.29 she had clocked during the Indian Grand Prix series in Thiruvananthapuram in March.

In men's 400m hurdles, Madari Palliyalil Jabir also failed to advance to the semi-finals after finishing seventh and last in heat number two with a time of 50.76s.

He finished 31st overall across five heats.

The top four finishers and the next four fastest across the five heats qualify for the semi-finals.

He recorded a season's best of 49.76s while winning the gold at the National Interstate Championships last month. He has a personal best of 49.13s.

Bayern confirm Lewandowski move to Barcelona

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich confirmed on Saturday they have agreed a deal with Barcelona for the sale of Poland star Robert Lewandowski to Spanish club.

"We have a verbal agreement from Barcelona. It's good for both sides that we have clarity," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said on the club's Twitter account.

"Robert is a very deserving player, he has won everything with us. We are incredibly grateful to him."

Bayern did not give details but Spanish and German media reported the two-time FIFA men's player of the year had agreed a four-year deal worth 50 million euros, including five million in potential add-ons.

Later, the Catalans confirmed the move for the 2020 Champions League winner.

"Barcelona and Bayern Munich have reached an agreement in principle for the transfer of Robert Lewandowski, dependent on the player passing a medical and contracts being signed," they said in a statement.



the Barcelona squad on their tour of the US from July 18-31.

Media reported he would undergo his medical in Miami.

The agreement between the two teams closes the standoff

with the 33-year-old who said at the end of May "it is certain that my story with Bayern has come to an end."

Bayern had only offered Lewandowski a one-year exten-

De Ligt wants to join Bayern: Kahn

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich are hopeful of luring defender Matthijs de Ligt away from Juventus, with club CEO Oliver Kahn saying on Saturday that the Dutch international is eager to join the Bundesliga giants.

"We have had talks for Matthijs de Ligt, I can confirm that the player wants to come to FC Bayern," Kahn said, according to The Guardian's Fabrizio Romano. "We'll have more talks and then we'll see how it goes."

It's understood that Bayern are preparing to submit an offer, with Romano reporting that

tion to his contract, which expires in the summer of 2023.

He was also unhappy with the salary offered and had clashed with the Bavarian club's coach Julian Nagelsmann over tactical choices.

Although he resumed training with Bayern a few days ago, Lewandowski arrived late each time, except this Saturday, when he took the opportunity to bid farewell to his teammates.

With his imminent arrival, Barcelona continue to strengthen with the ambition of return-

ing to the forefront of the European scene.

He is the club's fourth summer transfer after Ivory Coast midfielder Franck Kessie from AC Milan and Chelsea defender Andreas Christensen on a free transfer, and Brazil winger Raphinha, recruited for 70 million euro from Leeds.

Double European top scorer, Lewandowski, who turns 34 next month, can bring experience to supervise a very young group, carried by Ansu Fati, Pedri, Gavi and Ferran Torres.

Juventus could demand a fee worth up to €100 million.

Last week, Bayer Munich board member Hasan Salihamidzic was in Italy to meet with Juventus officials and discuss signing the 22-year-old center-back.

"You all know that we had a conversation in Italy, you saw that. There will definitely be more talks," he told German outlet Bild on Friday.

De Ligt is three years into the five-year contract he signed after joining the Bianconeri from Ajax for €75 million. He appeared in 31 Serie A games last season.

Lewandowski joined Bayern in 2014, scoring 344 goals in 375 competitive matches and broke the Bundesliga single-season scoring record.

He won the Bundesliga in each of his eight seasons with the club as well as the Champions League, the Club World Cup and three German Cups.

Last season, "Lewy" scored 42 goals in 50 matches in all competitions, including 35 goals in 34 league matches and 13 goals in 10 Champions League games.

Hewitt inducted into Tennis Hall of Fame

AP ■ NEWPORT

Lleyton Hewitt, a two-time Grand Slam champion and former world number one, was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame on Saturday, a ceremony delayed from 2021 by Covid-19.

Hewitt won the 2001 US Open and 2002 Wimbledon titles among 30 career ATP triumphs and helped Australia capture the Davis Cup in 1999 and 2003.

The 41-year-old from Adelaide was unable to travel to the Hall of Fame last year from Australia so his induction was postponed for a year and staged after Saturday's ATP Hall of Fame Open semi-finals.

The ceremony was staged on the court where Hewitt won his first ATP grass court match as a teen in 1998. Hewitt was a year-end world number one in 2001 and 2002 and his intense emotion combined with speed and skilled shotmaking made him a threat on any surface, great shots usually followed by the scream, "Come on."



Hewitt finished with a career record of 616-262 in ATP singles play. The Aussie icon won his first ATP title in Adelaide in 1998 and his last in 2014 at the Hall of Fame Open, defeating Ivo Karlovic. "I feel fortunate I was able to play across generations," Hewitt said, "to play against my heroes like Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras" as well as against legends Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic.

INDIA BOWL OUT ENG FOR 259

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

Hardik Pandya grabbed a career-best 4/24 as a disciplined India bowled out England for 259 with more than four overs to spare in the series-deciding third and final ODI here on Sunday.

Skipper Jos Buttler top-scored for England with an 80-ball 60, but it was the flamboyant all-rounder from Gujarat, who dominated the first half of the match with his excellent bowling, sending out a warning to the opponents in the year of the T20 World Cup.

Playing in place of injured Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj got a massive confidence boost early on, when he dismissed Jonny Bairstow with his third ball of the day. As the England opener shaped up to play it on the leg-side, the bat turned in his hand and the ball ballooned to Shreyas Iyer at mid-off following a leading edge.

His tails up, Siraj then ran in to bowl to the prolific Joe Root, got the ball to move away, and the outside edge was nicely taken by skipper Rohit Sharma at second slip. Siraj, in fact, squared Root up with his late movement.

With two of their in-form batters back in the hut for ducks, England were in trouble at 12 for two.

This was after Jason Roy (41) collected three boundaries off Mohammed Shami, including a four through mid off in the very first delivery of the match.

Rohit made a bold move to field first given that eight of the last nine games at Old Trafford have been won by teams batting first.

His English counterpart Buttler was happy to bat first and Bumrah not around was comforting for the hosts. But little did he know that the world-class bowler's replacement for the day would rock their boat so early into their innings, that too on a batting-friendly wicket.

Ben Stokes showed what a good pitch it was to bat on when he offered the face of the blade to push the ball through the off-side for a four.

Roy and Stokes steadied the innings but when their counterattacking partnership reached 54 runs, Hardik had the for-



mer caught behind after tying him down by bowling to a tight line and length.

The ball was on the shorter side but there was hardly any room for Roy to free his arms, and the result was England los-

ing their third wicket with 66 runs on the board.

In the middle of a fine spell, Hardik sustained the pressure from his end and soon he had the English Test captain

caught and bowled. It was a reward for some brilliant bowling by Hardik who dropped the ball short after he saw a frustrated Stokes stepping out, the all-

rounder getting his second wicket maid-

en.

India's bowling was tight, so much so that England could score just 16 runs in seven overs since Siraj's departure.

Returning to the attack, Siraj hit

Bumrah out of 3rd ODI due to back spasm

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was on Sunday ruled out of the series-deciding third ODI against England due to a back spasm.

The 28-year-old fast bowler was replaced by Mohammed Siraj in the playing XI.

The team management didn't consider young fast bowler Arshdeep Singh as he is yet to regain his full fitness following an abdominal strain.

"Jasprit Bumrah was ruled out of this game owing to back spasms. Arshdeep was not considered for selection as he is yet to fully recover from right abdominal strain," the BCCI said in a statement.

Bumrah had claimed a career-best six for 19 to power India to a 10-wicket win in the opening ODI.



Buttler on the helmet twice in the space of three balls. On both occasions, the physio took a look at him as per the concussion protocol, but the batter seemed okay.

The English captain meanwhile smashed Yuvendra Chahal (3/60) for a six over long-on, Moeen Ali (34) got a maximum against Siraj, before the two again hit a six each in that order.

Having got his eye in, Moeen was out caught down the leg side off Ravindra Jadeja, who also pulled off a brilliant catch running a long way from deep square leg.

Babar's 119 rescues Pak against Sri Lanka

AP ■ GALLE

Pakistan captain Babar Azam pulled his side back from the brink with a century that helped the touring side dig themselves out of trouble on day two of the first Test against Sri Lanka on Sunday.

With Pakistan on 148-9, the writing appeared to be on the wall as they appeared set to concede a huge lead to the home side on a turning track. But a record partnership for the last wicket between Babar and Naseem Shah put Pakistan back in contention as they conceded just a four-run deficit in the first innings.

The 70-run stand between Babar and Naseem is a new record in Galle in Tests with the previous best being the 63-run partnership between Dimuth Karunaratne and Lakshan Sandman against South Africa in 2018.

Sri Lanka were 36-1 at stumps on day two for a lead of 40. Oshada Fernando was unbeaten on 17 while night-watchman Kasun Rajitha was on 3.

Pakistan were struggling in their reply after Sri Lanka had posted 222 in their first innings before Babar played a captain's knock.

On a track where most Pakistan batsmen struggled to play spin, Babar was solid. Often playing on the front foot with soft hands negating the turn, he left well and cashed in when there were opportunities to score.

The last wicket partner-



ship lasted for more than two hours and frustrated Sri Lanka, which had to take the second new ball to break the stand. By that time Babar, who was playing his first Test match in Sri Lanka had posted his seventh hundred. His knock lasted more than five hours in which he faced 244 deliveries, hit 11 fours and two sixes.

Babar also dominated the strike from the No. 11 with Naseem Shah contributing just five runs during the partnership.

Prabath Jayasuriya, meanwhile, continued his impressive run in Tests. Playing his second Test match, the left-arm spinner claimed his third five-wicket haul to finish with five for 82.

Asia Cup 'likely' to be shifted to UAE: SLC secretary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Asia Cup is "likely" to be moved out of Sri Lanka in the wake of political unrest in the island nation, SLC secretary Mohan de Silva said on Sunday, adding that the tournament could be played in the UAE.

Sri Lanka, which has been battling an economic crisis, has witnessed widespread protests against the government for weeks.

However, the situation worsened with president Gotabaya Rajapaksa fleeing the country on a military jet.

"The Asia Cup is very likely that it will be held in the UAE," Sri Lanka Cricket secretary de Silva told PTI when asked about a possible change in the venue of the T20 tournament.

The dates for the six-team tournament are expected to remain the same as scheduled earlier from August



26 to September 11.

A qualifier will also take place before the main event with Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuwait and UAE battling out for the one qualification spot.

Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh will be the five full member teams.

With Australia tour of Sri Lanka going off smoothly and Pakistan currently playing Test cricket in Sri Lanka, there were hopes that the SLC might be able to host the continental event.

The tournament serves as good preparation for the Asian teams ahead of the T20 World Cup in Australia in October-November.

An official announcement from the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) on the change in tournament venue is expected soon. The ACC is headed by BCCI secretary Jay Shah.

Pakistan Cricket Board on Saturday said that it wanted Asia Cup to be played in Sri Lanka.

"Our first preference is to support Sri Lanka and play the Asia Cup there. If this tournament does not take place in Sri Lanka, it will be a huge cricketing and financial loss for them. Australia's recent tour of Sri Lanka went off without any problems," said PCB chief executive Faisal Hasnain in a statement.

"Similarly, there have been no issues with the ongoing Pakistan tour of Sri Lanka as we are constantly in touch with Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) and our embassy in the country."

"Our discussions with the ACC representatives have suggested that the tournament is on track at the moment as they are monitoring the situation very carefully and we will support their decision."

Captains should be suspended if teams are unable to bowl 90 overs in a day: Chappell

IAN S ■ SYDNEY

Former Australia captain Ian Chappell has asked for captains in Test cricket to be suspended if their teams aren't able to bowl 90 overs in a day.

As per the current playing conditions, a minimum of 90 overs have to be bowled in a day of Test match action.

Earlier this month, after losing the rescheduled fifth Test to England at Edgbaston by seven wickets, India have been fined 40 per cent of their match fees and penalised two ICC World Test Championship points for maintaining a slow

over-rate during the match. India, led by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, were found to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration.

"While England have recently done much to improve the image of Test batting, the worrisome DRS, and over rates that continue to be glacial, need urgent attention. Umpires don't enforce on-field protocol in this regard, probably because they lack the backing of the administrators. This is unfair on patrons, who are short-changed."

"The administrators could

make some compromises and demand that players bowl 90 overs in six hours with no deductions accepted. A captain should be suspended without question if this aim isn't achieved," wrote Chappell in his column for ESPNcricinfo on Sunday.

Chappell further delved into the causes behind over rates being constantly abysmal in Test cricket. "Over rates have been declining for decades and yet they are virtually ignored as the focus is on the money-making capabilities of T20. The reason 90 overs in a day were originally

recommended is because it's very much possible for a team to bowl that many in that time."

"Under Clive Lloyd, West Indies promoted the notion that over rates don't matter when matches are being won in less than the allotted time. That argument is flawed. The batting team should receive a reasonable number of deliveries in a six-hour day, while front-line bowlers tire at an acceptable rate. These days, overs are rarely completed even with extra time allowed - and those extensions are a blight on the game."



Dhoni supported me to win games for CSK when I was 22, says Ngidi

PTI ■ LONDON

South African pacer Lungi Ngidi has acknowledged his Chennai Super Kings skipper MS Dhoni's contribution to his career, saying "for someone of his calibre to put his trust in me to win him games at a young age was massive for me."

Ngidi was picked up by the CSK in 2018. The right-arm pacer grabbed 11 wickets in seven matches at an average of 14.18 that season, helping the Dhoni-led side to win the title. He was also part of the title-winning side in 2021.

"Having someone of Dhoni's calibre put his trust in me to win him games when I was 22 was massive for me," Ngidi told 'The Guardian'.

The 26-year-old credited the IPL for teaching him how to deal with massive crowds.

"The IPL also taught me how to handle a big crowd. I'd never played in front of 60,000 people and that was a bit overwhelming at the start. But once you get going it's a breeze," he added.

After the high of 2020,

which saw him win South Africa's T20 and ODI player of the year awards, Ngidi has had to deal with selection issues and lost his place in South Africa's attack this year.

At the IPL auctions this year, Ngidi was picked up by the Delhi Capitals and although he did not play for his new side, the pacer feels being around and bowling to the prodigious Rishabh Pant has helped him grow as a player.

"When I talk to Kagiso Rabada, if I am a little down he'll remind me: 'You're an IPL winner, twice, and you've won man of the match awards. So why are you sitting here denouncing yourself?'"

"Even this year, in Delhi, Rishabh Pant has been so good. He's young but he already has so much influence within the game and being able to bowl to him in the nets and run ideas past him helps you grow as a cricketer."

Ngidi made a comeback to South Africa T20I team during the five-match series against India recently and he's hopeful of securing his place.

Bangladesh sweeps West Indies again in ODIs

AP ■ GUYANA

Bangladesh swept the ODI series in the Caribbean by winning the third match against a depleted West Indies bowling attack by four wickets.

Bangladesh was favored to win an 11th consecutive ODI against the West Indies, especially after bowling out the home side in the 49th over for 178, its best total of the series.

The West Indies was handicapped further when all-rounder Keemo Paul pulled a hamstring and didn't bowl, and part-time medium-pacer Rovman Powell suffered a side strain after delivering 11 balls on Saturday.

The West Indies used seven bowlers, but after spinner Gudakesh Motie-Kanhai used up his 10 overs for a team-best



4-23, Bangladesh strolled to the win at 179-6 with nine balls to spare.

While Bangladesh respected Motie-Kanhai, who claimed captain Tamim Iqbal, caught and bowled Liton Das, bowled Afif Hossain and Mosaddek Hossain, the batters comfortably took runs off everyone else.

Tamim got 34 before mis-

cuing a sweep to fine leg and Liton pushed the scoring with 50 off 65 balls.

Mosaddek charged Motie-Kanhai and hit straight to the long off fielder to leave Bangladesh on a worrying 116-5. But Motie-Kanhai was finished, and Mahmudullah, 26, and Mehidy Hasan Miraz, 16 not out, stayed calm and collect-

ed the runs.

Bangladesh made one inspired change from the second ODI, giving spinner Taijul Islam his first international match on the tour ahead of pacer Shoriful Islam. Taijul took a career-best 5-28 in 10 overs.

He bowled Brandon King with his third ball and got Shai Hope stumped with his 11th.

Shamarh Brooks was trapped by lone pacer Mustafizur Rahman in the next over and West Indies was 16-3.

Mosaddek and Nasum Ahmed returned and Mehidy was introduced and West Indies crawled to 23-3 after 12 overs.

Captain Nicholas Pooran and Keacy Carty, in for Kyle Mayers, spread the ball around for 33 off the next six overs but Carty fell to Nasum and the run rate dropped back.

Pooran's ninth fifty was his slowest, in 93 balls, and he was eighth man out to Taijul for 73 off 109 balls.

Taijul, Mustafizur and Mosaddek strangled the home side by bowling a combined 29 overs at less than three per over.

The ODI series was consolation for Bangladesh after losing the Test and T20I series.