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BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY NOVEMBER 28, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹4



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Guj poll campaign reaches crescendo

Be wary of parties that are soft on terror: Modi

PM holds three rallies before curtains on campaigning

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday attacked the Congress and the AAP — the BJP's main rivals in the Gujarat elections — for being "soft on terror for votes" as he addressed three back-to-back rallies and held a road show in the diamond city of Surat.

"Gujarat and the country need to be wary of the Congress and like-minded parties, which keep mum on big terror attacks for their vote-bank politics. Gujarat had for a long time been a target of terrorism. People of Gujarat were killed in explosions in Surat and Ahmedabad. Congress was



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with other BJP leaders waves at supporters at a rally ahead of the Gujarat Assembly elections, in Kheda district on Sunday PTI

at Centre then, we asked them to target terrorism but they targeted me instead. Terrorism was at peak in the country," he said. As the curtains will come down on campaigning on Monday for the first phase of polls on December 1, all the stakeholders have gone all out to woo voters

"Your one vote in 2014 has created a lot of difference in killing terrorism in the country. Let alone cities of the country, terrorists have to think a lot even before attacking our borders. But Congress questions our surgical strike," he said.

Detailed report on P4

Modi's frequent Guj visits imply BJP is sacred of rebels, anti-incumbency, says Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday questioned the need for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make frequent visits to Gujarat for campaigning and said it was because the BJP Government did not work and the party was scared of its rebels. It also attacked the BJP for lack of employment in the State. Addressing a rally in Vadodara, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the Prime Minister had campaigned on every street in the State despite the BJP controlling it for nearly 30 years.

"The situation arose as the BJP did not work for the State. No enquiry was conducted into the Morbi incident where 135 people died," Gehlot, who is Congress' incharge for Gujarat elections, said. Gujarat voting for the Congress would

force the BJP to introspect, he claimed.

"What is the need for PM Modi to visit Gujarat repeatedly when his name is enough? It is because the BJP is scared now. I have heard that there are nearly 30-35 rebels inside the BJP. Such is the extent of anger inside the party," Gehlot said.

For his part, addressing a public rally at Dediapada in tribal-dominated Narmada district, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge called Modi a "jhothon ka sardar (chieftain of liars)."

He said Modi tries to gain sympathy by calling himself poor and claiming that people abuse him. But, Kharge said, he himself comes from the 'poorest of the poor and untouchable caste. At least people drink your tea. People do not even drink my tea,' he said.

Detailed report on P4

AAP will form Govt in Guj: Kejriwal asserts in writing

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday made an assertion in writing that his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will form the Government in Gujarat as he held fort in Surat where a dozen Assembly seats are at stake.

"I am going to make a prediction in writing in front of you all. Note down the prediction that the AAP is going to form the Government in Gujarat. After 27 years of mis-governance, the citizens of Gujarat will get relief from these people (BJP)," Kejriwal, AAP's national convener, told media persons in a press conference. He then wrote his prediction on a piece of paper and showed it to media persons and said his predictions for the Delhi and Punjab Assembly elections came true, and the same will happen for Gujarat as well. He claimed people are so



Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party National Convener Arvind Kejriwal addresses a press conference, in Surat on Sunday PTI

scared of the ruling BJP that they shy away from openly admitting support for the AAP in the Gujarat Assembly elections, scheduled in two phases on December 1 and 5. Urging Government

employees in the State to back the AAP, Kejriwal also promised the implementation of the old pension scheme for them by January 31 next year if the party was in power. Detailed report on P4

Protests against Covid lockdowns intensify in China



Chinese police officers block off access to a site where protesters had gathered in Shanghai on Sunday AP | PTI

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's rare public protests Copping stringent Covid lockdowns turned political on Sunday with protesters shouting slogans against President Xi Jinping and the ruling Communist Party, as the demonstrations spread to the university campuses in Beijing and Nanjing, Shanghai, where thousands of protestors converged at the Wulumuqi Road — which is named after Xinjiang

provincial capital Urumqi — witnessed fresh demonstrations on Sunday despite the heavy presence of police. The protests, which began in the morning, intensified with the participation of hundreds of people by mid-afternoon. According to videos posted on social media about the protests in Shanghai, people were heard openly shouting slogans such as "Xi Jinping, step down" and "Communist party, step down", a BBC report said.

Rath Yatra to vie for UNESCO 'Intangible Heritage' tag

SAROJ KUMAR MISHRA
■ PURI

The State Odia Language Literature & Culture Department has written to the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) in Puri to constitute an advisory committee for the purpose of filing a nomination to inscribe the world-famous Rath Yatra on the Representative List of 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' under UNESCO, an official source said on Sunday.

A letter had last year been written by the State Culture Department to the world body for the coveted tag. However, a detailed nomination would be filed this year and the designated advisory committee would be entrusted the work of preparing the nomination papers, the source added.

The SJTA has held a meeting in this regard and requisite efforts have already been initiated.

The proposed five-member advisory committee would



comprise three persons from the SJTA and two seers from local mutts. However, it has been decided in the SJTA meeting to increase the number of members to seven. The draft nomination would include video clips on rituals usually performed during the sojourn starting from Akshay Tritiya, Chandan Yatra, Anabasar, Rath Yatra and Niladri Bije.

The Holy Trinity, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra, move out of the 12th-Century shrine on their nine-day annual sojourn. A large number of devotees coming from across the world through the pilgrim town every year. The Car Festival is

being celebrated these days in many countries across the world, Temple Managing Committee Member Jagannath Kar said.

On an average, over 25 lakh devotees congregate during the annual Car Festival. The festival has a mass appeal; hence, it must be accorded the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' tag, a preacher of the Jagannath cult, Pandit Suryanarayan Ratha Sharma opined.

Notably, the Kumbha Mela and a few other elements from India have already been inscribed on the UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Archana honey-trap: ED to summon more bigwigs

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), which has intensified its probe into the honey-trap and extortion syndicate allegedly operated by Archana Nag and her husband Jagabandhu Chand, is geared up to quiz more influential persons.

Reports said the list includes the names of many builders, jewellery traders and politicians. The interrogation would be carried out by the agency based on the revelations and statements of Archana's aide Shradhanjali Behera, driver Chandan and Khageswar Patra during interrogation.

The ED is also probing into the bank transactions of all those involved in the case. The aim is to ascertain the bank transactions of Archana, her husband and her associates.

ED officials are looking into a transactions of Rs 37 lakh between Khageswar Patra and Archana.



The agency would take Archana and her husband on remand from November 30. It is expected the ED would be able to get more information on how the couple managed to acquire huge assets in a period of only four to five years and lead a lavish life.

Earlier, Khageswar and Shradhanjali have revealed before the ED how Archana used

them to trap bigwigs and how the deals were struck.

Shradhanjali, who was grilled for around 14 hours by the ED, revealed before the officials names of some influential people from whom Archana had allegedly extorted money. She also revealed the modus operandi adopted by Archana to shoot videos and pictures of the victims to blackmail them and extort money.

Earlier businessman Amiyakant Das and film producer Akshay Parija had appeared before the ED for questioning. Das, owner of AK Associates, had deposited Rs 10 lakh in the bank account of Archana and Jagabandhu in 2021-22. He was grilled for seven to eight hours and said that he came in contact with Archana through Facebook. After interrogation, he admitted to the media to have given over Rs 7 lakh to Archana in two instalments for the treatment of Jagabandhu.

Primary teachers cry for Old Pension Scheme benefits

BBSR streets chock-a-block as 1L hold massive rally

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Around 1 lakh primary teachers coming under the New Pension Scheme (NPS) held a massive rally and demonstration before the Assembly on Sunday, pressing for several demands, especially abolition of the NPS and implementation of the Old Pension Scheme.

The rally which started from Master Canteen Square to PMG Square at about 12 PM created traffic mess in the city as the police were on their toes to restore normalcy. The roads at several points had to be blocked and the traffic was diverted. Earlier in the morn-

ing teachers distinct by their uniforms (males in white shirt and black pant and females in pink saree and black blouse) dotted the city including at Kalpana Square, Rajmahal, AG Square, Market Building, and Master Canteen, to join the rally. The agitating teachers shouted slogans like 'Go Back NPS, 'We demand Old Pension', 'We demand 6 years of increment', 'We demand Grade Pay of 2800,' etc.

The Odisha Primary Teachers' Association, the All Odisha Primary Teachers' Association, and the Primary School Teachers' Association coalesced into a single forum with uniform demands. Odisha Primary Teachers Association State secretary Tabarej Khan said, "Though we welcome the historic move by CM Naveen Patnaik to abolish Contractual System of appointment from

the State which benefitted thousands in various departments, still 1.5 lakh teachers who started their job on contract mode are yet to get any benefit of the scheme. He said these teachers were appointed since 2001 as Shiksha Sahayak (SS) with a paltry salary of Rs 1,500 per month. Each year the service period was renewed. Later, after sustained agitations by the teachers, the Government had started a cadre rule according to which these teachers were regularised after 6 years of service. But, still these teachers are deprived of Grade Pay of 2,800, pension benefit under Old Pension Scheme and increments for the initial period of six years of their service which they fully deserve.

Khan demanded a discussion with the CM over the genuine demands. Odisha



Prathamika Shiksak Sangha (NFE) president Susanta Kumar Jotisha said the teachers who began their service

under Non Formal Education (NFE), Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Gana Shiksak (GS) have been

long neglected by the State Government. He said the NFE was implemented by both the Central and State

Governments since 1979-80 for imparting education in those villages and hamlets where there were no schools.

Later, they were given CT training in phases and regularised in 1997. On March 31, 2001, the NFE was replaced by EGS. While the Central Government directed the State Government to train all teachers and regularise them under the scheme, the State Government failed to do it. In 2008, the State Government appointed these teachers as Gana Shiksak (GS) and provided them CT training and 8 years later, regularised them. Similarly, while appointing SSs, the GSs were given priority. However, the point of worry for these teachers was over pay parity with regular teachers, depriving them of increment by considering their initial years of service and pension benefit under the Old Pension Scheme.

Real estate firm MD held by EOW

Duped Rs 1.72 cr on guise of providing flats

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch has arrested a Bhubaneswar-based builder on the charge defrauding several prospective home buyers of Rs 1.72 crore on the pretext of providing them flats.

Manoj Pattnaik, managing director of the Basera Designs Private Limited, was arrested

on the basis of a complaint filed by one Jyoti Shankar Panda against him and three others in a case of cheating of over Rs 1.15 crore. The complainant and others were promised flats in the 'Basera Fresco' project at Sijua in the capital city.

Panda and his brother Subha had initially booked a 3-BHK flat in the said project of Basera Designs Private Ltd for Rs 41,50,000. Subsequently, an 'Agreement for Acquisition of Ownership in Apartment' was executed on April 25, 2016 with

accused Pattnaik and flat No.306 was allotted to the complainant with a condition that the flat would be handed over to him by June 30, 2017.

As per the EOW, a housing loan of Rs 32 lakh was sanctioned to the complainant from the Allahabad Bank and a tripartite agreement was done between the bank, builder and the complainant. Later, the bank released Rs 18,50,000 via a demand draft which was credited to the account of Pattnaik's firm.

It was alleged that Pattnaik

along with others neither handed over the flat to the complainant nor return the money received from him. "The accused persons also did not renew the approval of BDA which should have been done after three years of approval. The accused closed down their office at Palasuni in Bhubaneswar and vanished after cheating many investors," the EOW said.

The accused, along with his wife Suchitra Bisoi and another director, also cheated other flat buyers of Rs 1.72 crore in the similar manner.

ASI team visits Puri temple ahead of Nata Mandap repair

PNS ■ PURI

A technical team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Sunday visited the Jagannath Temple here for inspection of cracks ahead of repair work of the shrine's Nata Mandap.

The expert team led by the ASI Additional DG came from New Delhi to inspect the outer and inner sides of Nata Mandap.

Source said the team would provide suggestions for the preservation of the structure after inspecting the Nata Mandap and the Jagamohan.



The ASI would carry out the repair work very soon. The condition of the Nata

Mandap is being examined by the crack meter since 2018 after the cracks were found on

the central beam of the Nata Mandap.

As the cracks are not clearly visible, a team of the IIT Chennai under direct supervision of the ASI is monitoring the performance to ascertain the size and intensity of the cracks in the column capital of the Nata Mandap.

The ASI is set to start repair work after a report has been submitted by the Amicus Curiae and the Orissa High Court has expressed discontent over 'negligence' of the Central agency, sources said.

Rs 43 cr given to kendu leaf staffs



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government on Sunday provided assistance to the kendu leaf pluckers, binders and seasonal employees.

While the pluckers were given Rs 1,000 each, the binders and seasonal workers were provided with Rs 1,500 each. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik disbursed the assistance at a special function.

Rs 43 crore was sent to the bank accounts of the

beneficiaries through direct benefit transfer (DBT). The beneficiaries of 17 sub-divisions of 12 districts were provided with the assistance.

Patnaik said the pluckers and other kendu leaf employees of Bargarh district would be provided with assistance once the model code of conduct is lifted.

Kendu leaves are the livelihood of poor people. The charging of 18% GST on it by the Centre should be completely withdrawn, he demanded.

Covid vaccination concludes in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With the decline of daily Covid cases across Odisha, the vaccination drive against the deadly virus came to an end in the State on Sunday.

According to Dr Bijay Panigrahi, who is the State's Nodal Officer of Covid vaccination, the vaccination concluded after administration of only 10

doses of Covaxin. "Only 10 doses or 1 vial of Covaxin vaccine were in stock in Odisha which were administered only in Rayagada district. From today onwards, the vaccination drive will not be carried out in other districts. Also, other vaccines, Covishield and Corbevax, are out of stock in the State since long as the Centre has stopped supplying Covid vaccines to

any State since October 12," Dr Panigrahi informed.

With completion of the Covid vaccination, Odisha joined the list of the States that have successfully completed the programme. The nationwide Covid vaccination programme had been launched in Odisha on January 16, 2021. The healthcare workers and frontline Covid warriors were administered the Covid

vaccines in the first phase while other people availed the vaccines in subsequent phases.

As many as 8,14,54,064 beneficiaries were vaccinated in Odisha of which 3,52,64,700 (97%) took the first dose and 3,30,07,668 (91%) the second dose. Only 1,31,81,696 (40%) beneficiaries received the precaution dose against Covid-19 in the State.

Puri guesthouses, hotels on cyber cheats' target

5 lose Rs 21K in online booking for Nilachal Bhakta Niwas

SAROJ KUMAR MISHRA ■ PURI

Online room booking in the Nilachal Bhakta Niwas of the Jagannath Temple is under cyber attack. At least five persons have lost Rs 21,000 to fraudsters while booking

rooms through online payment for their stay during Puri visit.

The fraudsters have cheated the visitors by opening a fake website in the name of the guesthouse. After inquiry, the police have cautioned visitors about the cyber fraud. The police said many other hotels and guesthouses in the city are also in the target of cyber cheats.

Sources said that one

Bidesh Sadhukhan of Mathura with four others had booked rooms in the Nilahal Bhakta Niwas almost a fortnight ago after searching a website operating in the name of the Niwas. They had also made online payment.

However, when the visitors later contacted the office of the guesthouse, they came to know that no room had been booked in the guesthouse in

their names. They were later ascertained about a cheating they faced during online payment.

As the matter came to the Town police station by the guesthouse official, the cyber cell, after a preliminary inquiry, knew of a fraud made by a fake website. The cops have sounded a warning to guests and tourists those who are booking rooms in Puri online.

Farmers hold anti-Modi rally

'Centre responsible for farm crisis'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Chasi Banchao Abhiyan on Sunday staged a protest at the Master Canteen Square here blaming the Modi Government for the farmers' plight.

The organisation alleged that while the Modi Government at the Centre is writing off loans of Corporate houses and pouring DA hike and bonus on the Government employees, it is not hiking MSP of farm produces.



Addressing the gathering, Aviyan leaders Sangram Kishore and Subhendu Mallick charged the BJP with neglecting the legitimate claims of the farmers.

They claimed that after assigning private insurance companies to cover crop

insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), the Government has remained silent on the cheating by the firms as the farmers are being harassed.

They came down heavily on Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh

Tomar who all along blamed farmers during farmers' protest in New Delhi.

The Abhiyan leaders also protested Tomar's Odisha visit for addressing election rally in Padampur and held the Modi Government responsible for the ongoing farm crisis.

Odisha gets Rs 524-cr GST compensation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Central Government released an amount of Rs 524 crore to Odisha towards balance GST compensation for the period from April to June. In fact, the Union Government has released Rs 17,000 crore to States and Union Territories (UTs) on November 24. The total amount of compensation released to the States/UTs so far during the year 2022-23 is Rs 1,15,662 crore.

This is despite the fact that total Cess collection till October, 2022 is only Rs 72,147 crore and the balance of Rs 43,515 crore is being released by the Centre from its own resources. With this release, the Centre has released, in advance, the entire

amount of Cess estimated to be collected this year till March-end available for payment of compensation to the States.

The decision was taken to assist the States in managing their resources and ensuring that their programmes, especially the expenditure on capital, are carried out successfully during the financial year. Even in May this year, the Central Government had released Rs 86,912 crore as provisional GST compensation to the States for the period February May, 2022 despite the fact that there was only about Rs 25,000 crore in the GST Compensation Fund, by making arrangement of funds of around Rs 62,000 crore from its own resources.

State Govt neglecting rail dev: Vaishnaw

Tomar says State responsible for farmers' plight

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Two Union Ministers on Sunday slammed the State Government for allegedly not implementing the Central Government's proposals for development of the State.

Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar made the accusations at a public meeting at Paikmal in by-election-bound Padampur in Bargarh district.

Vaishnaw said the BJD Government is not cooperating in expansion of the railway network in the

State. Many projects are not taking off because of unavailability of land. "If the State Government allots land tomorrow, we will start the projects day after," he said.

Tomar said the State Government has failed in ensuring funds to farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and is, instead, blaming the Centre for the plight of the farming community.

The two Ministers appealed to the Padampur electorate to vote for the BJP and said Odisha needs a BJP regime so that a "double-engine" Government (both at the Centre and in the State) can fast-pace the State's development.

CONTEMPORARIES

Constitution @ 72: Amazing evolution

We have just celebrated our Constitution Day, which we have been doing since 2015. On November 26, 1949 our Constitution was adopted after three years of exhaustive deliberations and debates in the Constituent Assembly. Interestingly, the Constituent Assembly was elected by provincial legislatures under a British Act of Parliament.

Our experience of working under the Constitution and with the Constitution is as old as its adoption. However, we started to tinker with the Constitution since 1951 when the 1st Constitutional Amendment was passed with the intention to evade and avoid judicial scrutiny by placing legislations in the 9th Schedule. The irony is that since the 1st Lok Sabha



S JYOTIRANJANA

elections were conducted in 1952, the first amendment too was done by the same Constituent Assembly which drafted the Constitution. The tussle for inter-superiority and authority over the Constitution between the executive, the judiciary and the legislature began with this amendment. The goal of the Amendment Act was to

render ineffective the judgment of the Patna High Court which struck down agrarian reform legislations.

The notable Constitutional developments have on most occasions taken place in an atmosphere of sharp differences of opinion between the executive and the judiciary. For example, Press freedom was protected by the Supreme Court by quashing the Government's attempts to control the Press in Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras. Further, in C. Golak Nath v. State of Punjab, the Supreme Court held that the Parliament cannot take away fundamental rights and prospectively set aside such legislations at a time when the Government was inserting legislations in the 9th Schedule.

As a counter to this, 24th and 25th Amendments were introduced in 1971. The 24th Amendment empowered the Parliament to amend any provision of the Constitution under Article 368. However, the amending power of Parliament was finally curtailed in Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973) and it was held that in no case an amendment violating the "basic structure" of the Constitution would be allowed to pass the muster to become law. Further, during Emergency in 1975, the 39th Amendment was passed which provided that the elections of the President, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Lok Sabha were beyond the scrutiny of the courts. However, it was quashed by the Supreme

Court in Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain. This then led to the Government breaking the seniority convention and on two occasions promoted judges favouring it as the Chief Justice. Subsequently, the 42nd Amendment was brought in which attempted to reduce the power of judicial review of Constitutional courts. However, some of its provisions were done away in the 43rd and 44th Amendments by the Government that was elected next. Thereafter, a few other provisions were quashed by the Supreme Court in Minerva Mills Ltd v. Union of India (1980).

In the subsequent years, Public Interest Litigations came up as a revolutionising judicial innovation and took the form of

judicial activism and a number of cases were admitted and decided which expanded the domain of Article 21 (right to life) and other fundamental rights. Besides, environmental jurisprudence was given emphasis within the Constitution mainly by virtue of judgments in cases like M.C. Mehta. Lately, an attempt was made to make judicial appointments by the NJAC through the 99th Amendment, which had the effect of nullifying the judgments in the 2nd and 3rd Judges cases (1993 and 1998). This amendment was quashed in the 4th Judges case in 2015, which then Union Minister Arun Jaitley termed as 'tyranny of the unelected'.

The tension between judiciary, executive and legislature has

always existed; and the NJAC judgment is the brightest example of it. However, this has not stopped our Constitution from evolving on a daily basis. The beauty of our Constitution lies with Articles 13 and 144, which provide for judicial review. It gives us an opportunity to mature and evolve as a Constitutional democracy, where the written Constitution is rewritten and unwritten many times but within the Constitutional scheme and spirit and to guide us with new ways to live and govern ourselves.

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

'BJD unleashing anti-BJP violence in Padampur'

Majhi seeks Central forces to take over law & order

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Sunday alleged that because of the presence of the BJD Ministers and MLAs in Padampur, a law and order problem has arisen in the locality as emboldened by the silence of police and local administration, the BJD leaders and workers are doing every-

thing to suppress the Opposition voice.

Opposition Chief Whip (BJP) Mohan Majhi said that by misusing power, police and administration, the BJD wants to win the by-election in Padampur.

"Despite our repeated submissions with evidences to the Returning Officer and the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), no action has been taken," he lamented. Majhi apprehended if the CEO office is working on the direc-

tion of the BJD.

He alleged that State Health Minister Naba Kishore Das has hired goons to unleash violence and attack the BJP workers. Similarly, BJD MLA Manohar Randhari, violating the model code of conduct (MCC), distributed sickles and blankets for mobilising voters.

Majhi demanded that as the State police and administration are biased, it is high time the Central forces took over the law and order situation in the poll-bound Padampur.

Cow calf killed by panther in Athagarh jungle

PNS ■ ATHAGARH

A calf was killed by a panther in the Sorispal Reserve Forest under the Tigriria Range of Athagarh Division on Saturday.

As per sources, a milkman of Godijharia village had taken his cowherd to the forest for grazing on Friday as usual. During the cattle's return, one of the calves went missing in night. The calf's owner Jayanti Parida complained to the milkman in this regard.

However when villagers were going to the jungle for



firewood on Saturday morning, they saw a mutilated carcass of the missing calf, which was believed to have been eaten by wild carnivorous animals. On intimation, a Forest Department team inquired into the peripheral situation

and appealed to the locals not to enter the jungle and to leave their cattle in the jungle for the present. The forest staffs apprehending the presence of panthers in the jungle installed CCTV cameras to know the movement of the animals.

In Koraput

Youth held for raping schoolgirl

PNS ■ KORAPUT

The Town police on Sunday arrested a 22-year-old youth on the charge of raping a Class-VIII girl. The accused was identified as Padmana Pangi of Machhara village under Koraput block.

According to police, the accused managed to lure the girl to accompany him to a nearby forest area during the school hours on Saturday and allegedly raped her. Later, when the victim returned home and in-

formed her parents about the incident, her father lodged a complaint at the Town police station.

Based on the complaint, police conducted an investigation and nabbed the accused.

"The victim has been admitted to the SLN Medical College Hospital here. We have registered a case in this regard. We will record the statement of the victim tomorrow," said a police official. Later, the accused youth was forwarded to court under the relevant Sections of IPC.

Deoraj fitness funda at the age of 76

Will promote his mantra in Noamundi Run

RAJENDRA K SAHU

■ KEONJHAR

Deoraj Samanta (76), a resident of Joda in Keonjhar district, has not given up his addiction to running yet. He is so obsessive about his physical fitness that he hits the tracks every morning, no matter what the weather condition. His mind still has the same youthful exuberance and frenzy that serves as a role model for the current and future generations.

Surprisingly, this septuagenarian still competes as a participant in all formats of marathon across the country wherever he gets a chance. The five-

foot-tall man with a lean body has been recognised at many such events for his undying willingness to remain fit.

Now, Samanta is excited to participate in the fourth edition of Noamundi Run-a-Thon, which is slated for November 27 after a gap of two years. "I strongly feel I am born to run. Nothing stops me from running every morning. At the big run events, I take part to promote fitness. This is my message to the young generation," says he, adding, "At the Noamundi Run, I will try to improve my timing in 10K race."

Samanta, an ex-employee of Tata Steel, hopes to participate in the upcoming Asian races. He dedicates all his achievements to his wife, who passed away a few months back.



NYK holds Constitution Day in Nuapada

Awareness drive organised

PNS ■ NUAPADA

The Nehru Yuvak Kendra (NYK), Nuapada, in collaboration with the District Bar Association, Nuapada and Sri Sai College, Kurumpuri, organised the 'Know Your Constitution' programme on the occasion of the Constitution Day on November 26.

NYK district youth coordinator Ashish Kumar Thakur presided, while Sub-Collector, Nuapada, Ramachandra Khadia was the chief guest. Bar Association president Prasanna Padhi was the chief speaker and Lopamudra Mallia was the guest of honour. Other speakers were senior lawyers Prasanna Kumar Mahapatra,

Muralidhar Panda and Ashok Kumar Patnaik, who informed the youths about the history of Indian Constitution, Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties and other features of the Constitution.

A question-answer session was held for the youths on the occasion, in which the youths could express their views and asked questions to the guests.

Fourteen youths were awarded in a quiz competition. Professor Bidush Kumar Nayak conducted the stage while Bar Association secretary Ashwini Kumar Bag gave the vote of thanks. Kshitish Ashok Bodhankar, Prakash Chandra Swain, Ghashiram Bag, Amitabh Bose, Purusottam Soni, Iswar Thakur, Gopal Samanta and Nita Bagh among others were present

Coastal highway row

URKC puts off stir after meeting with Min

KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

The Upakula Rajapatha Kriyanusthan Committee (URKC), a Balikuda-based pressure group which was holding a dharna at the Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar opposing a change in plan of the proposed Gopalpur-Digh coastal highway, put off its stir after a meeting with Works and Steel and Mines Minister Prafulla Kumar Mallick on Friday.

A URKC delegation met Minister Mallick and Department Chief Engineer



Manoranjan Mishra and held a discussion over the issue. The URKC members pleaded that the proposed coastal highway had been designed earlier to touch the Balikuda region in the year 2015, but sadly in the modified coastal highway plan their region has been excluded from the project ambit. It would now pass through the

Naugao block.

The Balikuda people complained that as per earlier plan, as many as 15 Panchayats comprising around 120 villages from Balikuda block were to be connected with the proposed coastal highway. These villages are at a distance of 5-10 km from the sea. But the new modified alignment has

taken villages which are around 25 km from the sea, flouting the coastal highway norms, the URKC said. After holding a patent hearing from the URKC delegation, Minister Mallick assured that a meeting with the NHAI would be arranged in the early week of December.

The URKC however threatened if their claims were not met, the agitation would be resumed again. URKC leaders former MLA Lalatendu Mohapatra, Prasant Routray, Subash Nayak, Satyabrata Biswal and Kedar Dalei were present.

Pet dog shuns food, keeps shedding tears

Since master died in road accident 16 days ago

MALAY RAY

■ SUNDARGARH

It is not reel, it is real. A six-month-old Rottweiler dog has left eating food for the last 15 days and has been shedding tears after the death of his master, who died in a road accident 16 days ago.

Harish Chandra Padhi (27), son of Rajaram Padhi of Fertiliser area under Tangarpalli police limits in Sundargarh district, was working in a software company as an engineer in Bhubaneswar. He was returning to Rourkela



on November 12 in a bullet motor cycle with his friend Biraja Prasad Maharana, when they met with an accident in Dhenkanal. Harish died on the spot.

After the heart wrenching news reached the parents of

Harish, they broke down and cried loudly. Harish's pet Max could sense the death of his master and barked continuously in grief. When they opened his chain, Max ran towards the room of Harish and sat there and shed tears. Max

was also seen sitting near the bereaved Padhi couple, shedding tears. Padhi and his family members thereafter brought the body of Harish to their Fertiliser home.

"Max has not taken food since that day, grieving the loss of his master Harish and has become weak. Even Max is looking towards gate of the house, to listen the sound of the bike of Harish. Harish had brought Max six months ago to his house and was taking care of the dog. He was also going on morning walk with Max," said Harish's sister Priya Padhi, adding "My brother was very much attached with Max and even Max was sleeping in Harish's room."

Thinkers' Club webinar

Need to improve society ethically: Speakers

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The 50th webinar of the Thinkers' Club was held on Friday on the topic 'Impact of advances of intellectuals on building of a healthy society.'

Speaking on the occasion, former Justice Naba Kumar Das and poet Dr Sachi Routray said that superstition and blind beliefs, if removed, can boost the standard of the present society.

The meeting started with reading of the opinions of famous people from the book "Satyar Sandhan" by Barada Prasanna Das, the president of

the club. The meeting was presided over by president Das too. According to Professor Chitaranjan Das, all citizens should try to have some contribution towards the wellbeing of the society. Er Priyabrata Das was of the opinion that Vedas are the source of all knowledge; it is therefore necessary that all should read the ancient texts to improve their moral standards and, in the process, also improve the moral standards of the society. The president read the opinions of 37 intellectuals on the topic, which included famous peoples like,

Padmasree Satya Narayan Rajguru, Professor Satrugna Nath, Dr Srirama Chandra Dash, Professor Gauri Kumar Brahma, Justice Ranganath Mishra, former Chief Minister JB Pattanaik and M Ahmed.

Sambad Editor and Khandapada MLA Soumya Ranjan Pattanaik, Pandab Behera from the Odisha Forest Service, Dr Braja Nayak, Er Nanda Nandan Das, DB Hrudaya, Professor Umasankar Misra and Nimai Swain participated in the discussion. Citizens should visit the developed countries like

Japan, UK etc and judge their ethical life and advise the Government to adopt their tasted experiences, they told.

There is also necessity of revamping the policies of the Government. Before providing rice at Re 1 per kg, the Government should have discussed about the repercussions of the policy on the economy and morality of the society with the economists. The vote bank policy is not in the interest of the nation and citizens, they opined.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks by Subas Sahoo, from Baharin.

Mahendragiri gets Biodiversity Heritage Site tag

Hill rich in plant, animal lives

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has declared the Mahendragiri hill in Gajapati district as a Biodiversity Heritage Site in order to preserve its habitats which are rich in plant and animal lives. ACS Forest, Environment and Climate Change (FE and CC) Mona Sharma has issued a detailed notification in this regard.

"The Government has been pleased to declare an area of 4,250 hectares (ha) of Mahendragiri covering two reserve forests (Idongiri and Mahendra) in the district of Gajapati under forest division



of Parlakhemundi as the second 'Biodiversity Heritage Site of Odisha,' read the notification. Notably, Mandasaru Gorge area, spread over 544 ha in Kandhamal district, is State's first such heritage site, notified in 2016. The State Government has issued the notification after receiving recommendations from the Odisha Biodiversity Board (OBB). OBB Chairman Rajiv Kumar took the issue with all

seriousness and approached the State Government for such an initiative. The Board, prior to approaching the State Government, had received proposals from the Biodiversity Management Committee of Gandahati GP, the DFO, Parlakhemundi and NGO LIPICA, Brahmapur, to declare Mahendragiri hill as a biodiversity heritage site. Mahendragiri hill, located 1,000 metre above mean sea level, is

one of the biological, ecological and archaeological important mountain ecosystems in Odisha. The hill ecosystem acts as a transitional zone between flora and fauna of Western Ghats and the Himalayan biogeographic zones making the region an ecological estuary of genetic diversities. A total of 1,358 species of plants including 1,042 species of angiosperms under 122 families, 60 species of pteridophytes, 104

species of bryophytes, 53 species of lichens and 72 species of macro-fungi and two species of gymnosperms occurring in the hill ecosystem. In terms of botanically curious plants, 44 species of orchids, 8 species of insectivorous plants and more than 300 species of medicinal plants are found here.

Of late 5 new plant species with their type localities in different parts of the hill have been discovered from Mahendragiri which has increased the phyto-geographical significance of the hill. The hill is an abode of 20 species of threatened medicinal plants ascertained by Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Tradition (FRLHT), Bangalore. Similarly, out of 41

threatened medicinal plants found in Odisha as per IUCN, 20 species are occurring in Mahendragiri with suitable population for conservation function. The faunal diversity of the hill consists of 388 species of animals which include 27 species of mammals, 165 species of birds, 60 species herpetofauna (23 species of snakes, 15 species of amphibians, 3 species of turtles, 19 species of lizards), 100 species of butterflies and 36 species of moths occur here. The hill also plays a pivotal role in maintaining the ecological balance and controlling the climate of the entire south Odisha and Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh.

INBRIEF

AIIMS HOLDS WALKATHON FOR ORGAN DONATION

Bhubaneswar: A walkathon for "Organ Donation Awareness" was organised by the AIIMS Bhubaneswar on Sunday. Hockey India Chairman Dilip Tirkey flagged off the event aimed to create awareness for organ donation. He said students should come forward to combat superstitions over organ donation. About 1,000 students, faculties and employees of the national institute participated in the walkathon. Executive Director Dr Ashutosh Biswas and Medical Superintendent Dr SN Mohanty were among the participants. Pioneer in liver transplant surgery in public sector Dr Viniyendra Pamecha also took part in the walkathon.



U SAMMILANI LEADER ASHOK DAS PASSES AWAY

Bhubaneswar: The Utkal Sammilani Central Committee on Saturday paid rich tributes to its Bhubaneswar unit president Ashok Kumar Das, who passed away on Friday. A condolence meeting was organised under the chairmanship of committee president Bibhuti Mishra. Vice-president Dr Surendra Mohan Mishra, Mancheswar Industrial Estate branch president Dillip Dashsharma and Subrat Mohapatra described Das as a frontline leader and said his untimely demise is a huge loss for the Sammilani.



KIIT CONFERRED FICCI INDIA SPORTS AWARD

Bhubaneswar: The KIIT has been awarded the FICCI India Sports Award by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in recognition of the university's contribution to the field of sports. The award was given away in New Delhi on Saturday. It was received by KIIT Sports Director General Dr Gaganendu Dash. KIIT and KISS founder of Dr Achyuta Samanta said the award would continue to inspire the KIIT to contribute more to the development of sports in India.



ROTARY CLUB B'PUR EAST HOLDS JOB FAIR

Brahmapur: The Rotary Club of Brahmapur East organised a job fair in collaboration with the Odisha Private ITI Association here on Saturday. The fair was jointly inaugurated by association president Dr Aruna Kumar Patnaik and Rotary Club president Sumit Kumar Patnaik. They said the selected participants for various jobs have to follow the rules and the regulations of the company they serve. Introduction was given by Kamaraju Moharana. Fair chairman Jayant Patro outlined the ethics. Jaya Bharat Maruti Udyog HR officer Sandeep Rout conducted the interview. Out of 250 participants, 120 were selected.



OPSA HOLDS NATIONAL PHARMACY WEEK

Brahmapur: The Odisha Pharmacy Services Association (OPSA) celebrated the 61st National Pharmacy Week here on Saturday. While Brahmapur MP Chandra Sekhar Sahu inaugurated the event, Ganjam District Pharmacy Services' Association president K Khali Subudhi presided over it. Prominent among the guests were State Planning Board Member Dr Ramesh Chandra Chyau Patnaik, Chief District Medical Officer Dr Uma Shankar Mishra, SCB Medical College Hospital, Dept of Pharmacy Head Dr Saroj Kumar Choudhary, OPSA general secretary Srikanta Jena and ex-president Nabin Kumar Mohapatra.



MANIABANDH COLLEGE HOLDS CONSTITUTION DAY

Athagarh: Students, faculty members and staffs of the Maniabandh College observed the Constitution Day on Saturday. Under the chairmanship of Principal Bijaya Kumar Parida, a meeting was conducted where former Professor of Utkal University Dr Narottam Gaan attending the function as chief guest spoke about the spirit and importance of the day. Senior Lecturer in Political Science of the college Prof DC Das administered the oath and affirmation of the Preamble of the Indian Constitution to the gathering.



ARI HELD TAKING BRIBE IN KORAPUT

Koraput: The Vigilance police on Saturday caught Amit Kumar Behera, Assistant Revenue Inspector (ARI), Suku RI Circle in Koraput district, while accepting a bribe of Rs 6,000 from a person. Behera had demanded the bribe from him for correction and issuance of separate Pattas (RoRs) in favour of him and his brother. Following the trap, simultaneous searches were carried out at Behera's official residence at Upper Kolab Colony and his office room at Suku in the district. Later, Behera was arrested and forwarded to court

BARGARH DHANU YATRA PILLAR INSTALLED

Bargarh: On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the world-famous Bargarh Dhanu Yatra this year, with the advice of the royal priest, the installation ceremony of the auspicious pillar was held on Sukla Pakshya Dwitiya Tithi of Margashira. District Collector and Dhanuyara Mohotsava Samiti president Monisha Banerjee, SP and executive president Parmar Smith Purusottam Dash sat in a pooja for the installation of the pillar.



OPGC HOLDS HEALTH CAMP IN J'SUGUDA DIST

IB Thermal: The Odisha Power Generation Corporation (OPGC) organised a health camp at the Tilia panchayat office in Jharsuguda district on Saturday. Sarpanch Pushpanjali Pradhan inaugurated the camp. The patients were given free consultation and medicine. About 230 patients were treated. The patients were checked up for ailments like Vertigo, LBA, URTE, LRTE, hypertension, diabetes, tinia and skin diseases.



Spectre of terror eradicated by us: Modi

All parties go all out to woo voters for Dec 1 election



Prime Minister and senior BJP leader Narendra Modi waves at supporters at a public meeting ahead of the Gujarat Assembly elections, in Kheda district on Sunday

PTI Photo

‘Congress objected to surgical strike’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday attacked the Congress and the AAP — BJP's main rivals in the Gujarat elections — for being "soft on terror for votes" as he addressed back to back rallies and held a road show in the diamond city of Surat.

"Gujarat and the country need to be vigilant from Congress and like-minded parties, which keep mum on big terror attacks for their vote-bank politics.

Gujarat had for a long time been a target of terrorism. People of Gujarat were killed in explosions in Surat and Ahmedabad. Congress was at Centre then, we asked them to target terrorism but they targeted me instead. Terrorism was at peak in the country," he said.

As the curtains will come down on campaigning on Monday for first phase of polls on December 1, all the stakeholders have gone all out to woo voters

Drawing attention of people to alleged Congress criticism of 'surgical strike' across border by his government, Modi asked voters to make a clear choice against terror.

"Your one vote in 2014 has created a lot of difference in killing terrorism in country. Let alone cities of country, terrorists have to think a lot even before attacking our borders. But Congress questions our surgical strike," he said. On Sunday, the Prime Minister addressed three rallies at Kheda, Netrang and Surat.

Modi's schedule includes addressing 14 rallies between November 27 and December 2, according to party sources. He will spend the night at the Surat circuit house and hold four more rallies on November 28, at Palitana, Anjar, Jamnagar and Rajkot, before returning to Delhi.

Modi first addressed a public meeting at Mota Varachha in Surat after a 25-km road-show from the airport to the rally venue. Voting will be held in Surat in the first phase of the Gujarat Assembly elections on December 1 when 89 assembly constituencies are to go to polls.

Raising high the poll decibel and targeting the Congress, the Prime Minister at a public rally at Kheda said, "The Congress government at Centre was soft on terror."

Modi also mentioned Batla house encounter which was questioned by the top Congress leadership.

"During the Batla House encounter, Congress leaders cried in support of terrorists. Even terrorism is vote bank for Congress. It's not just congress now, several such parties have risen, who believe in politics of shortcut and appeasement", Modi said in an indirect reference to AAP too.

"Some parties using appeasement politics as shortcut to power", he further said attacking AAP which in Gujarat election fray for second time with 181 candidates. Citing increasing incidents of terrorism in Gujarat when the Congress was at centre, Modi Said the then government "targeted me" instead of the "terrorism". "We caught terrorists in Gujarat but then Congress government in Delhi was saving terrorists for vote bank politics", he said.

important for us. On the issue of Rajasthan, we will decide on a solution which will strengthen our organisation. For this, if we have to take tough decisions, we will take. If a compromise has to be made (between the factions of Gehlot and Pilot), then it will be done," he said.

Ramesh also said the Congress leadership is considering a proper solution to the Rajasthan issue. "But, I cannot fix any time frame for this solution. Only the Congress leadership will decide the time frame for it," he said. In a dilemma over how to diffuse the renewed crisis in Rajasthan,

itics", the Prime Minister continued in his rally accusing Congress of pursuing the alleged politics of appeasement.

Appealing to vote again for BJP in state, he cautioned people of rival parties' "vote bank politics". "The specter of terrorism will remain till time vote bank politics is eradicated", he said. All through his public meetings, he accused Congress and the AAP (without naming it) of "indulging in vote bank politics".

AAP likely to form Govt in Guj, claims Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday made an assertion in writing that his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will form the government in Gujarat as he held fort in Surat where a dozen Assembly seats are at stake.

"I am going to make a prediction in writing in front of you all. Note down the prediction that the AAP is going to form the government in Gujarat. After 27 years of mis-governance, the citizens of Gujarat will get relief from these people (BJP)," Kejriwal, AAP's national convener, told media persons in a press conference.

He then wrote his prediction on a piece of paper and showed it to media persons and said his predictions for the Delhi and Punjab Assembly elections came true, and the same will happen for Gujarat as well. He claimed people are so scared of the ruling BJP that they shy away from openly admitting support for the AAP

Kharge calls Modi ‘jhoothon ka sardar’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday questioned the need for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's frequent visits to campaign in Gujarat and said it was because the BJP government did not work and the party was scared of its rebels. It also attacked the BJP for lack of employment in the State.

Addressing a rally in Vadodara, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the PM had campaigned on every street in the State despite the BJP controlling it for nearly 30 years.

"The situation arose as the BJP did not work for the state. No enquiry was conducted in the Morbi incident where 135 people died," Gehlot, who is Congress' incharge for Gujarat elections, said. Gujarat voting for Congress would force the BJP to introspect, he claimed.

"What is the need for PM Modi to visit Gujarat repeatedly when his name is enough? It is because the BJP is scared now. I have heard that there are nearly 30-35 rebels inside the BJP. Such is the extent of anger inside the party," Gehlot said. For his part, addressing a public rally at Dediapada in trib-

al-dominated Narmada district, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge called Modi a "jhoothon ka sardar" (chieftain of liars).

He said Modi tries to gain sympathy by calling himself poor and claiming that people abuse him. But, Kharge said, he himself comes from the "poorest of the poor and untouchable caste". "Modiji and (Union Home Minister Amit) Shah ask what Congress did in 70 years? Had we not done anything in 70 years, you would not have got democracy.

And people like you who always claim to be poor. I am also poor. I am from the poorest of the poor. I come from the untouchable caste. At least people drink your tea. People do not even drink my tea," he said.

"And then you say, I am poor, someone abused me, said something to me, asked what my status is. If you are trying to gain sympathy by saying such things, then (understand) people are now intelligent. They are not that foolish," he said.

Asserting that people will listen if you lie once or twice, Kharge asked the PM, "How many times have you told a lie?" He alleged Modi had



indulged in telling "lie after lie" and was accusing the Congress of looting the country while himself standing with the rich. "How many times have you told a lie? Lie after lie. He is a chieftain of liars. And on top of it he says, these Congress people looted the country. You are also looting the land of the

poor, not giving land to the Adivasis. Who is destroying land, water and forest? You and the rich people with whom you stand, they are looting us," he alleged.

Gujarat assembly polls is the real litmus test for Kharge as he got less time to address the Himachal Pradesh assembly elections campaign which finished on November 12 just within 15 days of his taking over.

Kharge has devised a strategy to take on the BJP which

has been in power for over two decades, in the home state of the Prime Minister. He will address several rallies and public meetings in his four consecutive days of stay there.

So far, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi has addressed only a single rally as part of campaign in the State since he has been leading the Bharat Jodo Yatra which has now almost completed the halfway mark of the 3500 Km total padyatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir.



Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party National Convener Arvind Kejriwal addresses a press conference, in Surat, Sunday

PTI Photo

Party would take tough decisions if Gehlot-Pilot fight worsens: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday indicated that if the crisis involving Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and former Deputy CM Sachin Pilot worsened then the party would not 'shy away from taking tough decisions'.

The statement from party's chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh is significant as the newly elected president Mallikarjun Kharge is scheduled to meet his predecessor Sonia Gandhi this week to discuss the Gehlot-Pilot tug of war. "The organisation is most

important for us. On the issue of Rajasthan, we will decide on a solution which will strengthen our organisation. For this, if we have to take tough decisions, we will take. If a compromise has to be made (between the factions of Gehlot and Pilot), then it will be done," he said.

Ramesh also said the Congress leadership is considering a proper solution to the Rajasthan issue. "But, I cannot fix any time frame for this solution. Only the Congress leadership will decide the time frame for it," he said. In a dilemma over how to diffuse the renewed crisis in Rajasthan,

Kharge has sought time from Sonia Gandhi to resolve prevailing tension. While party said that meeting is to discuss strategy for Winter Session of Parliament and also modalities of Plenary session to be convened, sources said Gehlot-Pilot tussle is top on agenda.

Ramesh said Gehlot and Pilot both are equally important for the party, but decisions to resolve crisis in Rajasthan will be taken to strengthen party — not looking at individual. "Some unexpected words have been spoken by chief minister. I was also surprised. But I am reiterating myself that both are equally

important for party," Ramesh said. The comment comes in the context of Gehlot calling his bete noire Pilot 'gaddar' (traitor) which escalated their tussle. Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra is scheduled to enter Rajasthan in December.

Ahead of yatra, the state unit remains strife-torn with Gurjar community leader Vijay Singh Bainsla threatening to disrupt yatra if Sachin Pilot is not made chief minister.

On demands of making Pilot chief minister, Gehlot said he cannot be replaced by a 'gaddar' like Pilot and accused him of plotting to topple the government in 2020.

India, Australia hold Army exercise today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to further strengthen the defence ties between the two countries, India and Australia will for the first time participate in a joint army exercise.

It starts on Monday in Rajasthan and will last for 11 days. Named 'Austra Hind 22', this exercise will be conducted alternatively every year in Australia and India.

The bilateral training exercise between the contingents of the Indian Army and the Australian Army is scheduled to take place at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges (Rajasthan) from 28 November to 11 December 2022. This is the first exercise



in the series of AUSTRA HIND with participation of all arms and services contingent from both armies, the defence ministry said here on Sunday.

The Australian Army contingent comprising soldiers from the 13th Brigade of the 2nd Division has arrived at the exercise location.

The Indian Army is represented by troops from the

Dogra Regiment, it said.

The aim of the exercise is to build positive military relations, imbibe each other's best practices and promote the ability to operate together while undertaking multi-domain operations in semi-desert terrain under a UN peace enforcement mandate, the ministry said.

This joint exercise will enable the two armies to share best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures for conducting tactical operations at company and platoon level for neutralising hostile threats.

"Training on new generation equipment and specialist weapons including snipers, surveillance and communication equipment to achieve a

high degree of situational awareness apart from casualty management, casualty evacuation and planning logistics at battalion/ company level are also planned, it said.

During the exercise, participants will engage in a variety of tasks ranging from joint planning, joint tactical drills, sharing basics of special arms skills and raiding a hostile target.

The joint exercise, besides promoting understanding and interoperability between the two armies, will further help in strengthening ties between India and Australia, the ministry said.

Defence and strategic ties between the two countries have increased in the last few years.

1 in 8 elderly experienced depression during Covid pandemic: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

One in eight older persons in Canada experienced their first episode of depression during the epidemic, says a study. The statistics were significantly worse for people who had previously struggled with depression. Nearly half (45 per cent) of this population reported having depression by the fall of 2020.

The analysis of responses from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging, which gathered information from participants for an average of seven years, was published in the International



Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. "The high rate of first-onset depression in 2020 highlights the substantial mental health toll that the pandemic caused in a formerly mentally healthy

group of older adults," says first author, Andie MacNeil, a recent Master of Social Work graduate from the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work (FIFSW) and the Institute for Life Course and Aging,

University of Toronto. Although it is well known that depression among older adults increased during the pandemic, few studies have examined the proportion of people who developed the disorder for the first time or the proportion of people with a history of the condition who had a relapse.

"The devastation of the pandemic which upended so many aspects of daily life hit those with a history of depression particularly hard," said co-author Sapriya Birk, a researcher formerly based in the Department of Neuroscience, Carleton University, Ottawa who is cur-

rently a medical student at McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada, adding, "Health professionals need to be vigilant in screening their patients who had mental health problems at an earlier time in their life.

"The researchers determined that a number of factors, such as low income and savings, loneliness, chronic pain, difficulty accessing healthcare, a history of traumatic childhood experiences, and family conflict, were linked to depression in older adults during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, older adults who felt their income was insufficient to

meet their basic needs and those with fewer savings were more likely to experience depression during the pandemic. "These findings highlight the disproportionate mental health burden borne by individuals with low socioeconomic status during the pandemic.

Many of these socioeconomic risk factors may have been exacerbated by the economic precarity of the pandemic, particularly for individuals with fewer resources," says co-author Margaret de Groh, scientific manager at the Public Health Agency of Canada.

CBI files case against Delhi couple for possessing leopard skins

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case against Delhi resident Sikha Pahuja and her husband Anurag Pahuja for illegally possessing two leopard skins.

The recoveries were made during searches at her residential premises in Saomi Nagar here in connection with a separate case registered on May 20 against Sikha, her husband and their company Sikha Developers Ltd on a complaint from the Specialised Assets Recovery Branch of Small Industries Development Bank

of India (SIDBI).

After recovery of the two animal skins believed to be of leopard, Sikha was telephonically contacted by the CBI but she could not provide any justification for the possession of the wildlife product which is a punishable offence under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

Following the failure of Sikha to provide a justification for the possession of the wildlife product, the recovered skins were taken into possession by observing due procedure, reads the FIR.

State's responsibility to check anti-national forces: Nadda

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD/VADODARA

BJP president JP Nadda on Sunday said like "antibodies keep a check on bad cells", it is the government's responsibility to maintain vigil on anti-national forces, as he battled for an anti-radicalisation cell announced by his party in its Gujarat assembly polls manifesto.

Releasing the BJP manifesto for the polls, Nadda on Saturday had announced setting up the cell to identify and eliminate potential threats and sleeper cells of terrorist organisations and anti-India forces. In an interview with PTI, he said it is the State's responsibility to keep a check on forces working against the country and society.

"Like antibodies in the human body, keep a check on bad cells. It is the State's responsibility to keep a check on anti-national cells in the

country. Then there are some cells that work underground so this anti-radicalisation cell is required to keep a check on such cells," said the chief of the BJP, which has been in power in Gujarat for nearly 25 years.

On the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which the BJP has promised in several assembly polls, including for the recently held Himachal Pradesh elections and now for Gujarat, Nadda said it is a "national issue" for the party and it is committed to it.

"The country's resources and its responsibilities are equal for all. Therefore, the UCC is a welcome step. We would like to implement the UCC in as many states as possible," he said.

Asked about the BJP not fielding a Muslim candidate in Gujarat, Nadda said his party believes in 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas' (with all and development for all).

"Late Dr. (APJ) Abdul

Kalam became the President (of India) with the BJP's support, then the (Narendra) Modi government at the Centre appointed Muslim governors as well. So, we follow the principle of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas', and tickets for elections are given purely based on winnability," he said.

On the BJP announcing several "freebies" in its manifesto for the Gujarat polls like its rivals did, Nadda said one should "distinguish between empowerment and allure-ment".

"Both the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress know they are not coming to power in Gujarat. Therefore, they can announce freebies without accounting for the funds and budget needed for them," the BJP chief said.

"While our programmes are welfare measures for empowering the poor and the needy. It is not like freebies, which are free for all, they are



specifically meant for a segment of the population," he said.

He said that the BJP's welfare programmes are for the "empowerment" of the poor and the needy. This has resulted in them contributing to the economy, Nadda asserted.

Nadda, who has been holding election rallies and roadshows across Gujarat, is confident of a massive victory for the BJP in the state assembly polls. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi resides in the

hearts of the people of Gujarat and they will again repose their faith in the BJP and the party will win another term," he asserted.

The BJP is eyeing to win Gujarat for a record seventh time.

Besides the Congress, the party has a new challenger in the form of the Aam Aadmi Party. The state will see two-phase assembly polls on December 1 and 5, while votes will be counted on December 8.

Gujarat polls: Cricketer brother, his sister bat for different parties in battle of Jadejas

PTI ■ JAMNAGAR

Hours before cricketer Ravindra Jadeja travelled through the city's market in an open SUV as part of a BJP roadshow, his sister Naynaba Jadeja sought votes for the Congress, reminding voters of price rise under the ruling party and its "unfulfilled" employment promises.

While the famous cricketer campaigned for his wife Rivaba Jadeja, his elder sister canvassed for Bipendrasinh Jadeja, highlighting the 'sibling rivalry' that has added another layer of interest in the poll after the BJP dropped its sitting MLA Dharmendrasinh Jadeja, locally better known as Hakubha.

Herself a contender for the

Congress ticket from the Jamnagar North seat, Naynaba has emerged as a key campaigner for her party after the BJP chose her famous brother's wife as its candidate.

She is often the focus of media queries while the Congress candidate, a seasoned organisation man and businessman, plays a supporting role.

"I have my ideology and have been with a party I admire," she says, slamming the BJP over the issue of price rise and claiming that it only makes promises to people but never fulfils them, be it on employment or education.

An overwhelmingly urban constituency, Jamnagar North may be seen as more favourable to the BJP than the Congress

even though the opposition party's supporters believe their party can spring a surprise.

Naynaba argues that since the constituency voted for the first time in 2012 after being carved out following delimitation, it is essentially a Congress seat as it won for the first time while the BJP grabbed it in 2017 after the incumbent MLA crossed over to the saffron camp. Even the winning BJP candidate was a Congressman who won on his appeal, and our party will score this time, she claims.

Congress leaders also hope to benefit from any faultlines within the BJP caused by its denial of the ticket to the sitting MLA. The AAP has fielded Karsan Karmur, who had quit the BJP to join it last year.

BJP using police, dist administration to threaten SP workers in bypoll: Azam

PNS/PTI ■ BAREILLY

Senior Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan has alleged that BJP is using police and district administration officials to threaten SP workers campaigning for the Rampur Sadar Assembly by-election.

"Akhilesh Yadav, Jayant Chaudhary and Chandrasekhar Azad are going to come here to campaign for the bypoll. But they need not to, as elections are not going to take place in the



district," he said in a press conference in Rampur on Saturday.

"When Akhilesh Yadav comes here, I will ask him to request the Election

Commission to declare the BJP candidate as the winner," he added.

He also alleged that the SP workers are being "threatened" and "atrocities" are being meted out to them at the hands of police and district administration.

"Police broke doors of 50 houses and picked up innocent people from road. They did not even spare my wife, who is a former MP, and used unparliamentary language for her," Khan said.

He alleged that besides

others his wife - Tazeen Fatma - has also been warned not to come out of the house.

"Asking for votes for my party candidate is my right," Khan said, adding that he has video footage of "police atrocities", which he will not share with the media as then the court will not consider it as an evidence.

The bypoll will be held on December 5.

The seat fell vacant after the disqualification of Khan after his conviction by a court in a 2019 hate speech case.

KCR to lay foundation stone for airport express Metro on Dec 9

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao would be laying the foundation for the Airport Express Metro on December 6, Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development KT Rama Rao said in a tweet on Sunday.

He said the project, starting at Mindspace junction to Shamshabad (Hyderabad International Airport) Airport, would be 31-km long and cost approximately Rs 6,250 crore. "Hyderabad is forging



ahead. Happy to announce that CM KCR will be laying the foundation for Airport Express Metro on December 9. This project starting at Mindspace junction to Shamshabad

Airport will be 31 KM long & will be costing approximately Rs 6,250 cr," he tweeted.

The airport express Metro is a Telangana government-funded project and would be completed in three years, he said in another tweet.

"We have submitted DPR & been in discussions with the Central government for an additional 31-km city Metro expansion; BHEL to Lakdikapul -26 KM & Nagole to LB Nagar - 5 km," he said.

The State government has already formed a special pur-

pose vehicle- Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited (HAML) which would be responsible for development, construction, operations and management of the airport Metro link.

The GMR group, operating the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) here, had earlier said the group would invest about 10 per cent of the total cost of the metro rail link project being proposed by the Telangana government for connectivity to the aerodrome from various parts of the city.

Dimple warns of 'crackdown' on party leaders ahead of Mainpuri bypoll

PNS/PTI ■ MAINPURI

Samajwadi Party leader Dimple Yadav on Sunday claimed that the BJP-led administration will crack down on local party leaders ahead of the Mainpuri by-election and asked them to 'not sleep at their homes' the night before polling.

She said the Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri constituency has been the area of SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav's who had worked for its development and asserted that the party is going to the people with this reality in the upcoming bypoll here.

Dimple, the wife of SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, has been fielded from the seat, which has been represented by party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Polling in Mainpuri will be

held on December 5, while counting of votes will take place on December 8.

"I would like to tell my young friends and SP leaders that the administration will act tough on you on December 4. Do not sleep in your homes on December 4, so that on December 5, nobody can even touch you.

"You go and cast your votes, and on December 6, the administration will disappear from here," she said at an election meeting at Ahirava village under Bhogaon assembly segment.

She also urged women to vote for the party, saying "the administration cannot use force on you. You are the women power and you can fight. You should go and cast your vote."

"An elderly person told me that it is the administration which is contesting the bypoll.

I told her on one hand, there is the administration which is contesting the elections, on the other, the people of Mainpuri are contesting the bypoll for 'netaji'.

"This is not my election. This is the your (people) election and that of our respected 'netaji'. I am sure that Mainpuri will honour and pay tributes (to 'netaji')," she said.

An SP delegation also met Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral officer (CEO) and demanded removal of Mainpuri District Magistrate and Senior Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) from election work, alleging that they were misusing their administrative power.

The SP leaders alleged that DM Avinash Kumar Rai and SSP Jai Prakash Singh are putting pressure on village heads, block heads, district panchyat members and others



to vote for the BJP in the Mainpuri bypoll.

"It is a reality that this area (Mainpuri) has been the area of 'netaji'. You cannot cover this reality. This is the fact, and reality, and we are going to the public with this (reality)," she told PTI on the sidelines of her election meeting.

Asked how she views this bypoll, she said, "People of Mainpuri know that 'netaji' carried out development projects here and people will honour him in the upcoming

bypoll."

Asked whether the SP's first family reunited because of the polls and may again part ways later, she said, "Let us not speculate about the family. Let us work at the ground level on matters related to the public."

Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) president Shivalp Singh Yadav had recently said it was a phone call from "daughter-in-law" Dimple Yadav that prompted him to campaign for her for the upcoming Mainpuri bypoll.

Amid a deteriorating relationship with nephew Akhilesh Yadav, the PSP chief agreed to campaign for the SP chief's wife in the upcoming bypoll.

The Mainpuri parliamentary constituency has five assembly segments -- Mainpuri, Bhogaon, Kishni, Karhal and Jaswant Nagar.

In the 2022 assembly elec-

tions, the SP won the Karhal, Kishni and the Jaswant Nagar seats, while the BJP won the Mainpuri and the Bhogaon seats.

Akhilesh Yadav's Karhal assembly seat is part of Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency and so is Jaswant Nagar, which is represented by Shivalp Yadav.

Addressing the gathering, Dimple said, "This is the first bypoll when 'netaji' is not among us. 'Netaji' had an emotional relationship with the people of Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency, and people from here resided in his heart.

"He used to consider their problems as his own. He has done the maximum development of this place -- be it roads, electricity, irrigation, education of girls or jobs for the youth.

"Netaji' had always thought

about everyone, he had given importance to everyone, and had taken everyone along. He had never indulged in politics of partiality and discrimination.

"He was always concerned about the development of Mainpuri, and how to help people here," she said.

She said the farmers are feeling worried under the BJP-led state government as they are not able to get fertilisers. Those who are getting it are able to do so with great difficulty and procuring it at expensive rates, she said.

"Our women are not safe, they are not getting their pensions," she said, adding that the earlier SP government had given 'Kanya Vidya Dhan (to girls), laptops to students and had built good roads.

"However, a present, not a single new work has been done

in this area or in the state," she charged.

She alleged that the present "arrogant" government is not ready to accept that people are facing difficulties, they are dealing with inflation, youths are unemployed and the daughters are not safe.

"This government is not ready to accept the prevailing circumstances. When they will not ready to accept, how will it deliberate on them?" she asked.

"They can only talk about diversions. They can make you fight against each other, and will not think about your future or of your children," she said and urged people to vote for her party on December 5.

She also claimed that when SP was in power, the party followed the path of ideology and principles, and also moving forward by taking everyone along.

LG Sinha unveils 'J&K Cyber Security Policy' at 25th National Conference on e-Governance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Sunday unveiled the 'J&K Cyber Security policy' during the valedictory function of 25th National Conference on e-Governance at Mata Vaishno Devi University.

A MoU between IT Department J&K and DITECH Haryana was also signed on the occasion.

The agreement between the J&K Government and Haryana Government is expected to strengthen and deepen the collaboration on knowledge sharing, IT initiatives & best practices in e-Governance, said the Lt Governor.

In his address, Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana, recalled his deep connection with Jammu Kashmir.

I am witnessing a new, 'badalta' Jammu Kashmir. We are looking forward to the new J&K-Haryana collaboration and are committed to support the J & K Government in meeting the goals, he said.

The Haryana Chief Minister also highlighted the IT interventions and several digital initiatives of his government to bring transparency in the system and streamlining the public service delivery system.

In response, the Lt Governor said that the 25th National e-Governance



Conference in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will prove to be a milestone in the direction of fulfilling our resolve of Digital Society.

Under the guidance of PM Narendra Modi, J&K UT is an emerging model of digital government with focus on transparent governance and citizen-centric approach to delivering public services, he said.

Observing that technology is making a real difference in people's lives, the Lt Governor said in 2013, the total number of e-transaction was merely 20 Lakh. This year, till 25th November, the number of e-transaction is 38.50 Crore. On an average J&K is recording 550 e-transactions every minute.

The Lt Governor underscored that despite being a late entrant in digital transformation, J&K has achieved several milestones with solid technical architecture at the service of citizens. Speedy development is the new identity of

J&K, he said.

The Lt Governor further observed that the launch of Digital J&K Vision Document and launch of J&K Cyber Security Policy will promote a common approach to use the power of innovation and secure the IT assets in the rapidly changing technology landscape.

Speaking on the digital transformational journey of Jammu and Kashmir, the Lt Governor shared the vision of the J&K government to expand e-Governance to the next level. "We have prepared a roadmap and action plan for the next one, three & five years. More than 500 services will be made online in the next 3 years for a better digital delivery ecosystem," said the Lt Governor.

Our strategy is to enable the people to access high-quality services anywhere, anytime, on any device. All services in mobile for mobile workforce, the Lt Governor said.

Nitish inaugurates Gangajal Aapurti Yojana at Rajgir, Gaya & Bodh Gaya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

The popular tourist destinations of Rajgir, Gaya, and Bodh Gaya, known collectively as the 'Buddhist circuits', received a 'valuable gift' from Chief Minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, on Sunday. The CM inaugurated the first phase of India's first-of-its-kind innovative drinking water project, the Gangajal Aapurti Yojana.

The project, initiated under the Jal Jeevan Hariyali mission, is the "dream project" of the Chief Minister. It is also Bihar's first, and largest drinking water programme.

The project will store, treat, and supply the floodwaters of the River Ganga the state receives during the monsoon months.

The initiative has two objectives. First, it conserves floodwater, preventing wastage, and second, it transforms this precious resource into safe, drinkable water.

This floodwater will be lifted through pumps at Hathidah and transported through a 151-kilometre pipeline to three enormous reservoirs in Rajgir, Tetar, and Gaya. These reservoirs stand out as they have been constructed based on the terrain and using natural materials.

Water from the reservoirs will travel to two Water Treatment Plants (WTP),



SALIENT POINTS ABOUT GANGAJAL AAPURTI YOJANA

- The Gangajal Aapurti Yojana is India's first-of-its-kind floodwater to drinking water project
- It is Bihar CM Nitish Kumar's dream project
- It is the largest drinking water project in the State
- It serves dual purpose of saving floodwater & transforming it into safe drinking water

where it is treated and transported to the "enlightenment" cities.

These three South Bihar cities of Rajgir, Gaya, and Bodh Gaya have been experiencing water shortages due to excessive groundwater extraction via borewells.

Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL) has executed the entire first phase of the project. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the MEIL finished the project within three years.

With the supply of potable, safe, clean drinking water, the water challenges in these cities will be minimised to a large extent.

With the successful completion of the first phase, drinking water requirements of significant locations, such as Nalanda University, IT Park, Cricket Stadium, Film City, Police training camp, Nature Safari, and Zoo Safari, will be fulfilled. In addition, the Ganga Jal will be accessible to well-known temples.

BJP leaders ask for Rarh Banga in south Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Not sure whether Hindutva plank would fetch them a desired result in next year's panchayat elections a section of the State BJP leaders seem to have discovered a new strategy of inciting regional sentiments.

After a demand for a separate North Bengal State the BJP MLAs from south-western Bengal have started asking for a separate Rarh Banga comprising Bankura, Purulia, Jhargram West Midnapore and Birbhum districts.

BJP MLA Niladri Shekhar Dana on Sunday demanded a separate Union Territory carved out of five tribal dominated districts of southwestern Bengal which he wanted to be named as Rarh Banga.

"Enough is enough. The people of Rarh Banga have been a victim of negligence for decades ... now they have woken up to their cause. They have understood that under this Government there will be no development in this region ... all the projects conceived by Prime Minister Narendra Modi are hijacked by the Trinamool Government ... not only the names of the central schemes --- meant for the deprived people of this region are changed --- but funds too are

diverted and misused ... this can never go on for long ... "now the people of this area have woken up to their cause and they want a separate Union Territory of Rarh Bengal so the central funds can directly reach this area for development of the local people," Dana said adding he would personally make moves for a separate UT.

Dana's statements came days after another saffron legislator Amarnath Shakha made a similar demand. "The people of Bankura, Jhargram, West Midnapore and Birbhum are the victims of negligence ... the people should raise their voice for a separate state ... If our party does well in the panchayat elections then we will place this demand before Union Home Minister Amit Shah," he said.

A similar demand had earlier been made by Bishnupur MP Saumitra Khan. Senior BJP leader and national vice president of the party Dilip Ghosh however, rejected such demands saying demand for a separate state was not the party's official view.

"Our party never supports such demands. Though some of our MLAs have been raising such issues but that is not our party's official line and the national leadership has made it clear," said Ghosh.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Precept and practice

Politicians say nice things in speeches but opt for expedience, as evident from their campaigns

When a netaji is pontificating about virtue, responsibility, etc., talking about dos and don'ts, he is actually telling his rivals how they should behave. He, however, would continue to do what he deems fits, expedient; after all, it is winnability that matters. Others, however, should behave themselves; they should not indulge populism or promote the 'revdi' culture; their language should be civil, within the lakshman rekha. Almost all politicians are convinced that their adversaries should follow these rules; I, however, will do whatever I want to do. This has once again become evident in the run-up to the Assembly polls in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 16 cautioned the political class about the menace of what he called the "revdi culture." He was absolutely correct when he said that freebies are "very dangerous" for economic development. For a while it looked like the Bharatiya Janata Party had decided to weed out the menace from the political arena. A BJP leader, Ashwini Upadhyay, petitioned the Supreme Court, seeking restrictions on parties on distributing "irrational freebies" before elections. All this looked nice—till the campaign for Assembly elections in the two states gained momentum. All the nice things said about the danger of freebies have been forgotten by the BJP. Other parties anyway were not preaching the virtues of fiscal prudence; in fact, Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party boss Arvind Kejriwal defended freebies with usual sanctimoniousness.



In Himachal, the BJP has promised Rs 2,500 every month to 5,000 girls in government schools with best performance in class 12 throughout their graduation. Also, all school girls will get bicycles and college girls scooties. While promoting female education is a laudable enterprise, one may wonder if freebies are the best way to do that. Unsurprisingly and expectedly, the AAP has promised free power, an unemployment allowance, and monthly cash allowance for all adult women in Gujarat, where its ambition is to topple the BJP Government. The saffron party has been ruling the western state for the last 27 years. Not to be left behind, the Congress manifesto has pledged farmers' debt waiver, gas cylinder at Rs 500, and 300 free units of electricity in Gujarat. Quite ominously, the party manifesto says, "Congress will stop mindless privatisation of healthcare and education." Such phraseology is the consequence of a socialist mindset. In a way, the three parties' elections manifestoes also show their desperation: the BJP doesn't want lose, especially in Gujarat because it is Modi's home state; the grand old party wants to stage a comeback; and the AAP wants to convince everyone that it is on a successful expansion drive, especially after its spectacular victory in Punjab earlier this year. In normal circumstances, politicians are not the best specimens of mankind; in their desperation, they can breach several norms of civility and canniness. This is exactly what they are doing now.

PICTALK



Artists perform a Garo traditional dance during Wangala festival at Chotipara, in Goalpara

PTI

Govt's dilemma

Indian govt abstains on UNHRC resolution on anti hijab protesters to show its support to Iran

India abstained on a resolution adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to set up a fact-finding mission into alleged human rights violations in Iran committed on protesters in the country by state authorities. The anti-Hijab protests are at the peak in Iran which started after the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody. She paid with her life for not wearing a 'hijab'. India's was one of 16 abstentions on the resolution, sponsored by Germany and the Netherlands, and comes just a week after New Delhi voted against an Iran-specific resolution in the third committee of the UN General Assembly. Nevertheless, the resolution in the UNHRC was passed, at a special session of the 47-member human rights body. The resolution denounced the "violent crackdown on peaceful protests by security forces" which started after the death of Mahsa Amini. The resolution established a fact-finding mission into the allegations of human rights violations in Iran since September 16. China, Pakistan, Armenia, Eritrea, Cuba and Venezuela voted against the resolution. The two Gulf members of the Council, Qatar and United Arab Emirates, abstained and India gave them company. Earlier this month, the UN Security Council held an informal meeting on the Iranian protests. India did not give a statement at that meeting either. Two weeks later, on November 16, the UNGA's third committee voted on a draft resolution that referred to the death of Mahsa Amini and urged Iranian officials to "cease the use of excessive force against peaceful protesters, including women and children". India had voted 'No'.

It is indeed an Indian Govt's dilemma. From an economic perspective, Iran is the second-largest supplier of crude oil to India. India buys more than 4,25,000 barrels per day. India happens to be one of the largest foreign investors in Iran's oil and gas industry. The government wants to appease the Iranian rulers so as not to disturb its relations with them and so would not mind standing against the world at large in supporting hijab whereas back home it is doing the exact opposite. The Karnataka government led by the BJP is out to enforce 'hijab' ban and it does not mind crushing the pro hijab protesters. This is political expediency at its best where only interest matters. The govt doesn't mind looking regressive to the world, it is sheer convenience that is at play.

Remembering demonetization

Demonetisation was successful in curbing the informal economy and insulating the country from the neighbour's financial mischiefs

Reportedly, there are some 50 petitions pending in the country's courts protesting the demonetization of currency notes that was implemented on November 8, 2016; we just passed its eighth anniversary. Understandably, this move by the Narendra Modi government continues to generate much talk. In all, I have witnessed three demonetizations and therefore feel qualified to comment on the subject. In 1946, the old 1000-rupee note was demonetized. In 1978, high denomination notes were rendered invalid. We are today debating the 2016 decision.

In the pre-Modi era, it was widely believed that approximately 50 per cent of the Indian economy generated in the country could not be tapped at all for purposes of development. The black money had to be spent in less productive activities like land deals, property transactions and what not. Such money had to be spent quickly in order to keep it away from thieves and from income tax vigilance; its mention in any legal document was not possible. The tax-evaded money could neither be legally invested nor safely saved for even one's children, not to speak of national development. In brief, black was money only for the time being, in contrast to the bankable money, which was actual wealth.

What was unusual about Indian black money was that it was reported to be manufactured in our neighbouring countries. For example, superannuated Bihari cows used to have a ready market at fancy prices. West Bengal traders used to buy our toothbrushes readily; more especially if one did not write a bill and accepted cash. In the event the notes paid happened to be jaali (counterfeit) one would have been informed at which shop one could change it back to a valid note. When the thunderbolt of the 2016 demonetization burst upon India, everyone up to the upper middle class was able to change their cash. Those who were hit were the people who had hoarded large sums of black



money and could not change their notes. On the morrow of the occasion, many an economist or an intellectual began using the term "informal economy" for the black economy, because it is inappropriate for a respectable person to plead for something illegal.

The result of the action was to get rid of the hoarded cash lying wastefully. However, its greatest service was to interrupt for a long time, if not forever, the printing of Indian currency notes in neighbouring countries. Simultaneously, smuggling of goods was significantly reduced. Nevertheless, demonetization would have been a fleeting event, had it not been followed by the introduction of the Goods & Services Tax (GST).

I would like to bring in a personal experience in this particular regard. The sale of our toothbrushes increased within a fortnight. It was indeed a welcome surprise. Upon thinking further, we realized that quite a few of our competitors might not have maintained systematic records. Some of them were making brushes by simply sticking nylon into the plastic handles; they had brought these in on a friendly basis from, say, China. The history behind all this was that

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IN THE PRE-MODI ERA, IT WAS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT APPROXIMATELY 50 PER CENT OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY GENERATED IN THE COUNTRY COULD NOT BE TAPPED AT ALL FOR PURPOSES OF DEVELOPMENT

toothbrush manufacturing was for decades, reserved for the small scale sector. In short, overnight, an informal activity turned into a formal sector one. Apart from sales tax, the additional fear was that from the GST website and the income tax department could also monitor how much of what product was being sold by whom.

An incidental but a substantial advantage that emerged from the introduction of the GST was the drastic reduction in lorry transport time. Post-GST, an interstate lorry no longer has to stop at every state border. The lorry's photograph and registration are recorded by CCTV. Earlier, the vehicle had to queue up at the state border to obtain clearance by the states' sales tax authorities. Up to 40 per cent travelling time has thus been saved.

Without the GST, the demonetization move of eight years ago would have been say, a birth without a life to follow up. And without demonetization, the GST might have been a life without a birth. Yet another advantage of GST has been the abolition of most other indirect taxes, starting from the excise duty. Imagine the expenditure saved to the tax-



PRAFULL GORADIA

payer on the one hand and the governments, beginning with the Centre, and ending with the states, small and big. As a guess, at least one-third of India's lorry time would have been saved. Above all, the tax has taken India towards its goal of one country one tax. Moreover, the demonetization has helped India avoid its exploitation by its neighbours. The veteran political analyst and economist S. Gurumurthy has likened the 2016 demonetization to a "financial Pokharan", i.e., a nuclear strike against not only black money, but covert financial war against the nation.

Assuming that in the pre-Modi era, 50 per cent of India's economy was black; at least half this amount is currently being ploughed back into the economy as white money. In that sense, India's economy has become 25 per cent larger spontaneously. It is also a necessary step towards making India a more modern economy, which is the first necessary step, if we aspire to make the rupee into a convertible currency.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SANJAY RAUT'S BAIL HEARING

Sir—As per report the single bench of the Bombay High Court on Friday November 25 recused itself from hearing the Enforcement Directorate's plea seeking cancellation of bail granted to Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut and his aide Pravin Raut in a money laundering case. The ED had approached the HC seeking cancellation of bail granted to the Rajya Sabha MP and his aide by a special court on November 9.

The Central probe agency had sought an interim stay on the bail order, which the High Court had refused. When the matter came up for hearing, the single bench of Justice M S Karnik said, "It would not be appropriate for me to take up this matter not before me." The matter will now be placed before a new bench. Sanjay Raut was granted bail by special PMLA judge M G Deshpande, over a hundred days after he was arrested in the money laundering case related to redevelopment of Patra Chawl in suburban Goregaon. The special court, in its order, had termed the Rajya Sabha member's arrest as "illegal, without reason". With this all is not well.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

WOES OF CONGRESS PARTY

Sir—Obviously, the woes of the Grand Old Party are far from over as a couple of its leaders are hell bent upon cutting the branch they are presently sitting on given that the party veteran and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has renewed his blitzkrieg against his bete noire and DY CM Sachin Pilot by calling him a 'traitor' and even going to the extent of accusing him of hatching a conspiracy in collusion with the BJP with a view to toppling the Congress government in Rajasthan. Down playing these charges however, Mr Pilot reminded that such a behaviour was unbecoming of a senior and experienced leader like Mr Gehlot and that the priority now should be given to Rajasthan where the assembly elections are due next year. In the same vein, he advised Ashok Gehlot to concentrate on Gujarat where the polls are round the corner and he (Mr Gehlot) is an

Mass shootings in the USA



The horrifying shooting inside a Walmart store at Chesapeake, Virginia a few days ago yet again underscores the growing gun culture in the US. Though the nerve-racking incident reignites the debate over gun-control in America, realistically it is unlikely to result in any significant reforms, as the US has a deep and enduring connection to guns, integrated into the fabric of American society. Sadly and unsurprisingly mass shootings in the US have become a common affair, and it raises again the most

obvious question that has been discussed and debated many times in the past: "why can't America stop the scourge of gun violence?"

Distressingly enough, it cannot for the reason that gun violence in the US is symbolic of a broken political system that fails to protect its own citizens. Frequent mass shootings are a stain on the country's international reputation. In a broader sense, the failure to implement bold measures against gun violence is seen as a dysfunctional system of a government incapable of protecting its own citizens, including children. In fact, Pew Research Center's survey reveals the fact that an average 83 per cent of Americans have said that the US is no longer a good model of democracy to follow. This makes for depressing reading and seemingly makes it incumbent on the Biden administration to take immediate action on gun control and the need for gun reform.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

THE SPIRIT OF CONSTITUTION

Sir—"The Constitution is not a mere lawyer's document, it is a vehicle of life and it's spirit is always the spirit of age - Father of Indian Constitution." Every year India witnesses November 26 as the Constitution day, also to honour the law minister and architect of independent India, Dr BR Ambedkar who played a pivotal role in drafting the constitution of India. Samwidhan Diwas aims to highlight the importance, of the Indian constitution.

Our Transformative Constitution teaches us about making decisions with a lot of patience among people from diverse communities. It is embedded with vision and reflection of the future. People of India are custodian of the longest written Constitution. It empowers citizens, and citizens empowers Samwidhan too by respecting it religiously. The Constitution is nobody's preserve but it is everybody's preserve.

Tashi Baheti | Ujjain

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

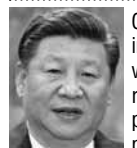
Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

The history of India is not just about slavery...The history of India is about emerging victorious, it is about the valour of countless greats.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



China would be willing to work together with North Korea for regional and global peace, stability and prosperity.

Chinese President — Xi Jinping

I think the thing that Trump was most perturbed about (was) me asking him to be my vice president...Trump started by screaming at me at the table, telling me I'm going to lose.



Rapper — Kanye West



The situation we were in and from there to reach 307 is a commendable total. Definitely, some things didn't go our way today but it's a learning curve, we can introspect, comeback with new ideas in the next game.

Indian cricketer — Shreyas Iyer

During the Congress rule in Gujarat (before 1995), communal riots were rampant. Congress used to incite people of different communities and castes to fight against each other.



Union Home Minister — Amit Shah

FIRST COLUMN

CYCLING FOR NATURE,
WITH SEED BALLS

Seeds can be conserved in balls
which can help raising trees




ALKA GADGIL

As monsoon sets in, we head to the wild for seed bombing of native fruits like mango, jambul and jackfruit, said Makarand Vaingankar, an owner of a medical store, and Yashvant Bhosale, a treasury officer from Sindhudurg district in Maharashtra. In dry areas, the shape of the seed ball gives enough shade to conserve moisture. Eventually, the seeds begin to germinate, and the ball breaks apart. The small pile of crumbles leads to a rooting system. The plants then mature and produce their own seeds and provide shelter once the second-generation seeds fall to the ground, they said.

Both Vaingankar and Bhosale have been members of Kanak Riders Kankavli, a cycling group, for seven years now. The group has been involved in raising awareness about environmental conservation among students and youth through cycling.

“We use social media to raise our voice against the destruction of biodiversity. We hold meetings with schoolchildren and college students from the Kankavli area about these issues. I am worried, what kind of world will we be leaving behind for children,” added Bhosale.

On Sundays and holidays, the group plans to cover 100 km in a day on cycle. Many students, youth, and their parents join their venture. This has led to a renewed interest in cycling among the population.



While sharing significant moments they experienced while cycling, the group said: “Recently we visited Vravade dam in Kankavli, which is a reserved area. We waded through a thick green cover to reach the dam.” The clouds have descended, and it was a beautiful moment.”

Ever since the group decided to uncover the hidden places in the region, cycling has not only increased environmental awareness among the population but also their health. “A person who had asthma came for a ride with us. There was a steep ascent on our way. He cycled for some time, halted, and used his inhaler, and then he joined again. We were stressed, but he did not give up. Six months have passed since then. He does not use an inhaler anymore and rides for 100 km without any hassle,” said Bhosale.

The group faces a lot of challenges while carrying out their campaign. When they plant trees in open spaces, people from the neighbourhood are often very unsupportive. People ask what we are doing in their precinct. Some have a very myopic view and think that trees are a menace because they get in the way. Even temple authorities object to seed bombing in their vicinity, said the group.

Reflecting on their future plans, the group shared how, despite challenges, they had come together to form an association and approach the administration to find solutions to the growing environmental concerns. Informing about their next campaign, the group said, Murdeshwar Temple is amidst a thick jungle, and there are water bodies around it. But people are defacing the flora and fauna by throwing litter. We will make the administration take note of it. We are also going to hold sessions in schools, colleges and offices across Sindhudurga district.

As a first step towards environmental sustainability, the group urges the masses to be more conscious of actions, as they put it, If you are travelling in the Monsoon, please take seed balls with you. The seeds shouldn't be discarded, as they can be used to make seed balls. Seeds of native varieties should be sown, not those of exotic species. If 10 seed balls are thrown, at least two will take root for sure.

(The writer is a development worker from Maharashtra: Charkha Features)

Under IBC, protecting minority shareholders

The soul of IBC mechanism lies in timely detection of stress in a firm and selling it as a ‘going concern’

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has proposed a framework to protect the interests of public equity shareholders in case of listed companies undergoing insolvency proceedings under the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). In 2016, the Modi Government enacted the IBC. This legislation overrides all other subsisting laws and gives a strong handle to the banks for resolving non-performing assets (NPAs) of lenders.

In 2017, it amended the Banking Regulation Act (BRA), giving RBI powers to force banks to act if they don't on their own. On February 12, 2018, the RBI issued a circular that provided a foundational basis for resolving NPAs. As per this circular, for accounts with aggregate exposure greater than Rs 2,000 crore, as soon as there was a default in the account with any lender, all lenders – singly or jointly – shall initiate steps to cure the default by preparing and implementing a resolution plan (RP). This needed to be done within 180 days from the date of default.


In case, the lenders fail to meet this deadline, they are required to refer the account to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) which would initiate proceedings under the IBC. The NCLT would get 180 days to complete the resolution process. A further 90 days is allowed in exceptional circumstances. Thus, the outer limit for consummating the process is 270 days.

The raison d'être of imposing this timeline and involving RBI to shepherd the exercise was to sell the NPA afflicted entity – as a going concern in an 'objective' and 'transparent' manner and maximise the realisation from sale.

Under the current process, existing shareholders get squeezed out as the CIRP results in huge equity dilution and even delisting—a situation arising consequent to the new acquirer's shareholding becoming 100 per cent pursuant to the CIRP process.

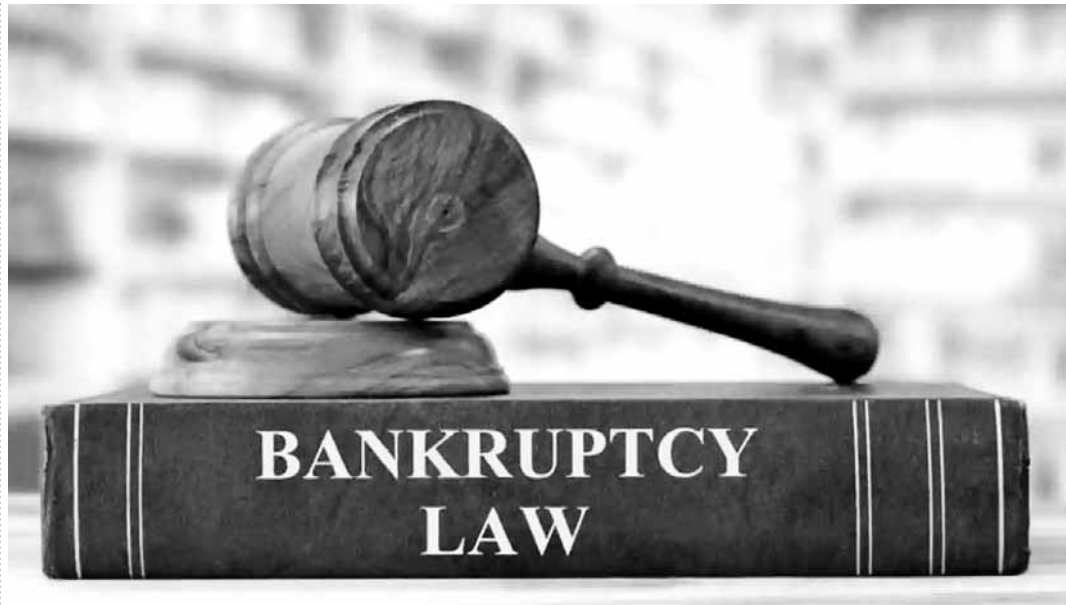
Under IBC, equity holders are considered owners of the insolvent company, and thus fall last in the resolution plan (RP) approved by the NCLT to receive any dues at the time of liquidation. They don't even get prior intimation and forget an opportunity to present their case to the committee of creditors (CoC), which steers the insolvency process even as the latter's rights are considered superior.

To address the concerns of public equity shareholders, Sebi has proposed they be given an opportunity to acquire a minimum of five per cent and up to 25 per cent in the new entity. The offer will depend on the shareholding the new acquirer gets as a result of the RP. If a new acquirer's shareholding becomes 100 per cent, the minimum offer required to be



THE RECOVERY BY FINANCIAL CREDITORS WAS A RECORD LOW OF 13.4 PER CENT OF THE ADMITTED CLAIMS DURING OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2021. MOREOVER, IN 363 MAJOR CASES, BANKS TOOK A HAIR-CUT OF 80 PER CENT ON AN AVERAGE

(The author is a policy analyst)



made for existing public shareholders will be 25 per cent and the minimum acceptance five per cent.

In the event there is no interest even for five per cent of shares, the resultant entity will be allowed to delist. If the acquirer's shareholding in the resultant entity becomes 75 per cent pursuant to the CIRP process, there will not be any requirement to make an offer to public investors as their holding will already be at 25 per cent.

The offer to acquire shares of the resultant entity (albeit consequent to the CIRP process) will not be available to associate companies, family members of promoter group companies, trusts managed by promoters, key managerial personnel, and directors, etc., as that will defeat the very purpose of helping small shareholders.

The price offered to these shareholders should be the same as the one agreed upon by the resolution applicant/new acquirer. The Sebi proposal is logical. It could give a fair opportunity to minority shareholders of the firm under CIRP process to be a partner and benefit from appreciation in share value as and when it runs profitable under the acquirer. It would also be in sync with a minimum of 25 per cent public float that the market regulator expects from a listed company. But, the situation on ground zero is different.

Even in well-run and profitable companies, the regulator is unable to enforce the 25 per cent norm.

The central government too remains keen to circumvent this norm as may be seen from its asking Sebi to exempt the IDBI bank from the public float requirement. By contrast, NPA afflicted firms under CIRP face heavy odds. They are struggling to prevent erosion of their asset value. Of the total 5,636 CIRPs, 3,637 have been closed. Of the closed cases, 1,703 have ended in liquidation.

The recovery by financial creditors was a record low of 13.4 per cent of the admitted claims during October-December 2021. Moreover, in 363 major cases, banks took a hair-cut of 80 per cent on an average (for some such as Videocon, it was even higher at 95 per cent).

When there is so much erosion in asset value and over 50 per cent of cases ended up in liquidation, any talk of rewarding minority shareholders is meaningless.

Under directions of the Supreme Court (SC), the RBI was forced to issue a revised circular dated June 7, 2019 in supersession of its February 12, 2018 order. It gives banks 180 days to come up with RP (in addition to 30 days to enter into an inter-lender agreement or ILA). If they do not, they are required to make an additional provision of 20 per cent. If they don't finalize the plan within 365 days, an additional 15 per cent provision has to be made.

Unlike the February 12, 2018, which mandates the bank to refer the account to NCLT at the end of

180 days, under the revised circular, there is no such compulsion on it. See it from another angle. If RP is not implemented within one year from the default date, the bank has to make provision of 50 per cent - 15 per cent normal ageing provision and 35 per cent additional (20 plus 15). At the end of 15 months, with normal ageing provision increasing to 40 per cent, the total provisioning requirement including 35 per cent additional, will be a steep 75 per cent.

Having provided for 75 per cent of loan amount in the balance sheet, where is the incentive for the bank to recover the money by initiating proceedings under the IBC?

In short, by taking away powers from the RBI and giving too much leeway to the banks under the June 7, 2019 circular, the SC intervention has rendered the IBC process dysfunctional. This apart, most of the NCLT rulings are challenged in the High Court and the SC, leading to inordinate delays in conclusion of CIRP proceedings and resultant erosion of asset value.

The soul of IBC mechanism lies in timely detection of stress in a firm and selling it as a 'going concern' so as to realize maximum value. Sebi's idea of protecting minority shareholders (in fact, all other efforts of the government to protect all creditors – financial and operational – through a spate of amendments in the law) will work only when the soul is preserved.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

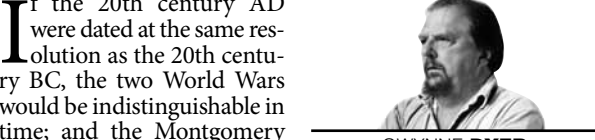
FRANKLY, I FAIL TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE COMMENT ON PRIME MINISTER MODI WAS EITHER RELEVANT, NECESSARY OR CONTEXTUAL. — EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON ARINDAM BAGCHI



...SOME EXAMPLES: PRESIDENT MUGABE IN ZIMBABWE IN 2001; PM MODI IN INDIA IN 2014; THIS IS A CONSISTENT PRACTICE THAT WE HAVE AFFORDED TO HEADS OF STATE, GOVERNMENT, FOREIGN MINISTERS. — US STATE DEPT DY SPOKESPERSON VEDANT PATEL

No massacre, no famine, just change in trade routes

Trade and climate had turned against Greenland Norse, so they most likely just moved back to Iceland, or even to Norway



GWYNNE DYER

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is The Shortest History of War)

and the year was 1021 AD.

I was always interested in the Norse, because I grew up in Newfoundland and that was already seen as the likeliest location of the region they called 'Vinland'. I read the sagas ('Erik the Red' and 'The Greenlanders'), which were rip-roaring tales of triumph and treachery but distinctly short on geographical and chronological detail.

Then in the 1960s Norwegian archaeologists discovered the remains of eight Norse longhouses on the L'Anse aux Meadows site. So the location was known, but still not the date. The explorers came from the new Norse settlements in Greenland, which had been founded in 985 AD, but nobody knew how much later they arrived

in Newfoundland.

So what the hell! Let's say it was the year 1000 AD. The Newfoundland Museum declared that the year 2000 was the millennium of the Viking settlement, the local tourist authorities went into high gear—and somebody at the Museum contacted me to write the script for the exhibition, because... well, because I was a journalist and a Newfoundlander.

I swallowed my doubts, named my price, and did the job. Not a bad job, actually, because I could play with the fact that the Norse in Newfoundland had both peaceful and violent contacts with the local indigenous people.

Those people, probably related to the extinct Beothuk of Newfoundland or the mod-

ern Innu of Labrador, were very distant descendants of the modern human beings who left Africa around 100,000 years ago, turned right, crossed all of Asia, and finally arrived in North America when the glaciers receded about 14,000 years ago.

The Norse, on the other hand, were the distant descendants of those who turned left when they left Africa, settled Europe—and eventually island-hopped across the Atlantic. After all those millennia the two streams of migration finally met up again in Newfoundland. So I called the exhibition 'Full Circle', and slid past the question of exactly when it happened.

But now we know. The ECHOES team figured it out by examining bits of wood

found on the L'Anse aux Meadows site that had clearly been cut with iron (European) axes. A huge solar flare in 993 AD left a spike in that year's tree rings, so just count rings out from there to the bark. The trees died in 1021.

The specific date of L'Anse aux Meadows doesn't really matter, of course, but the technique does. Cosmic-ray-induced surges in atmospheric radiocarbon concentrations are another new tool for figuring out the past, and that is now important work.

Two centuries ago our knowledge of the past barely reached back past classical Greece and Rome: say, 3,000 years. Now scientists are working hard to puzzle out past climate states ranging from hundreds to billions of years ago,

because understanding the patterns of the past may help us through whatever happens next. Every scrap of information may be valuable.

All very well, but why didn't the Norse settlement last? They abandoned their exploration of north-eastern North America because the 'cash crop' they were looking for in Vinland turned out to be much closer to home: ivory from the abundant walrus population that they could hunt in Disko Bay, only a thousand kilometres up Greenland's west coast.

They could feed themselves by farming and fishing, but it was the ivory that paid for all the things they needed to import from Europe (timber, iron and bronze, stained glass, etc.). Up to 5,000 peo-

ple lived in the Greenland settlements for more than four centuries, apparently quite happy to ignore 'Vinland'—and then they disappeared.

Where they went or how they died has been promoted as a great mystery, but the real reason is probably that the bottom dropped out of the European market for ivory in the early 15th century as abundant new supplies became available from Africa and Russia's new Arctic settlements.

The climate had also turned against the Greenland Norse (the 'Little Ice Age'), so they most likely just upped stakes and moved back to Iceland, or even to Norway. No massacre, no famine, just a change in the trade routes. It's not always dramatic.

Russian shelling continue across Ukraine as wintry warfare looms

AP ■ KHERSON

Shelling by Russian forces struck several areas in eastern and southern Ukraine overnight as utility crews continued a scramble to restore power, water and heating following widespread strikes in recent weeks, officials said Sunday.

With persistent snowfall blanketing the capital, Kyiv, Sunday, analysts predicted that wintry weather — bringing with it frozen terrain and grueling fighting conditions — could have an increasing impact on the direction of the conflict that has raged since Russian forces invaded Ukraine more than nine months ago.

But for the moment, both sides were bogged down by heavy rain and muddy battlefield conditions in some areas, experts said.

After a blistering barrage of Russian artillery strikes on at least two occasions over the past two weeks, infrastructure teams in Ukraine were fanning out in around-the-clock deployments to restore key basic services as many Ukrainians dealt with only a few hours of electricity per day — if any.

Ukrenergo, the state power



A woman stands among debris of the destroyed house after recent Russian air strike in Chasiv Yar, Ukraine on Sunday. Shelling by Russian forces struck several areas in eastern and southern Ukraine overnight as utility crews continued a scramble to restore power, water and heating following widespread strikes in recent weeks, officials said on Sunday. AP | PTI

grid operator, said Sunday that electricity producers are now supplying about 80% of demand. That's an improvement from Saturday's 75%, the company says.

The Institute for the Study of War, a think tank that has been closely monitoring devel-

opments in Ukraine, said reporting from both sides indicated that heavy rain and mud have had an impact — but wider freezing expected along the front lines in coming days could play a role.

"It is unclear if either side is actively planning or prepar-

ing to resume major offensive or counter-offensive operations at that time, but the meteorological factors that have been hindering such operations will begin lifting," it said in a note published Saturday.

ISW said Russian forces

were digging in further east of the city of Kherson, from which they were expelled by Ukrainian forces more than two weeks ago, and continued "routine artillery fire" across the Dnipro River.

In the eastern Donetsk region, five people were killed in shelling over the past day, according to governor Pavlo Kyrylenko. Overnight shelling was reported by regional leaders in the Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk areas to the west.

Kharkiv governor Oleh Syniehubov said one person was killed and three wounded in the northeastern region.

A day earlier, a long column of cars, vans and trucks caravanned away from the recently liberated city of Kherson after intense shelling in recent days and amid concerns more pummeling from the Russian forces nearby could loom again in coming days.

"The day before yesterday, artillery hit our house. Four flats burned down. Windows shattered," said city resident Vitaliy Nadochyi, driving out with a terrier on his lap and a Ukrainian flag dangling from a sun visor.

Nepali Cong emerges single largest party with 53 seats

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The ruling Nepali Congress led by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba on Sunday maintained its lead as the single largest party by winning 53 seats in the parliamentary polls held to end the prolonged political instability that has plagued the Himalayan nation.

Elections to the House of Representatives (HoR) and seven provincial assemblies were held on November 20. The counting of votes started on Monday.

The Nepali Congress has won 53 seats and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML) secured 42 seats in the elections. The CPN-Maoist has emerged as the third largest party with 17 seats while the CPN-Unified Socialist has bagged 10 seats.

The newly-formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) and pro-Hindu Rastriya Prajatantra Party have won 7 seats each. Independent and other smaller parties have emerged victorious on 21 seats. Out of the total 165 seats under direct voting, the results on 8 seats are still awaited.

The ruling five-party alliance has won 85 seats, against 55 seats won by the alliance led by CPN-UML. The ruling alliance includes the



Nepali Congress led by Prime Minister Deuba, CPN-Maoist led by Pushpakamal Dahal Prachanda, CPN-Unified Socialist headed by Madhav Nepal, Mahantha Thakur's Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janamorchha led by Chitra Bahadur.

Under the proportionate voting method, the CPN-UML got the first position, securing more than 2.5 million votes and the Nepali Congress received 2.3 million votes. The CPN-Maoist and RSP have secured one million each. In the 275-member House of Representatives, 165 will be elected through direct voting, while the remaining 110 will be elected through a proportional electoral system. A party or a coalition needs 138 seats for a clear majority.

Besides Prime Minister and Nepali Congress president Deuba, three former prime ministers Prachanda, Oli and Madhav Nepal have also been elected to parliament.

Deuba and Prachanda met at the Prime Minister's residence in Baluwatar on Saturday and agreed to continue their ruling five-party alliance as part of a new majority government in the country.

Former prime minister and senior leader of CPN-Unified Socialist Jhulanath Khanal has lost the election. CPN-UML's Mahesh Basnet defeated Khanal, who contested from Ilam constituency No 1. Ex-prime ministers Lokendra Bahadur Chand, a senior leader of the pro-Hindu Rastriya Prajatantra Party, and Baburam Bhattarai did not contest the election.

China grants free fuel to Lanka's farmers, fishers

PTI ■ COLOMBO

China said on Sunday that it has donated 10.6 million litres of diesel to Sri Lankan farmers and fishermen to facilitate their work in the most affected sectors of agriculture and fishery.

The vessel carrying the fuel donation was received by Sri Lanka's Minister of fisheries Douglas Devananda here on Sunday.

"The 10.6 million litres of diesel donation by China will be provided free of cost to 2,32,749 farmers for harvesting 3,42,266 hectares of paddy fields, 20 litres per hectare," the Chinese Embassy in Colombo tweeted.

Also 3,796 fishing vessels below 40 feet would receive 1,000 liters per vessel, the embassy added.



"Thankful to the government of China for the donation of 9,000 MT of diesel fuel towards strengthening food security in Sri Lanka," Minister of Power and Energy Kanchana Wijesekera said in a statement.

Both farming and fishing sectors have been complaining of fuel scarcities affecting them badly after the government started rationing fuel issues since the beginning of August.

Rationing brought an end

to the miles long fuel queues experienced in the island from May to July. However, the business sectors were raising objections claiming that the allocations were inadequate.

From the time the Sri Lankan economy crashed at the beginning of this year, the fuel and essential supplies were ensured by dedicated Indian credit lines.

The Indian assistance in the forex crisis which caused the economic impasse was worth USD 4 billion.

Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people, plunged into financial and political turmoil earlier this year as it faced a shortage of foreign currencies.

Due to this, the country has been unable to afford key imports, including fuel, fertiliser and medicine, leading to serpentine queues.

AP ■ LOPBURI

A meal fit for monkeys was served on Sunday at the annual Monkey Feast Festival in central Thailand.

Amid the morning traffic, rows of monkey statues holding trays were lined up outside the compound of the Ancient Three Pagodas, while volunteers prepared food across the road for real monkeys — the symbol of the province around 150 kilometers (93 miles) north of Bangkok.

Throngs of macaque monkeys ran around, at times fighting with each other, while the crowds of visitors and locals grew.

As the carefully prepared feast was brought toward the temple, the ravenous creatures began to pounce and were soon devouring the largely

vegetarian spread.

While the entertainment value of the festival is high, organisers are quick to point out that it is not just monkey business.

"This monkey feast festival is a successful event that helps promote Lopburi's tourism among international tourists every year," said Yongyuth Kitwatanusont, the festival's founder.

"Previously, there were around 300 monkeys in Lopburi before increasing to nearly 4,000 nowadays. But Lopburi is known as a monkey city, which means monkeys and people can live in harmony."

Such harmony could be seen in the lack of shyness exhibited by the monkeys, which climbed on to visitors, vehicles and lampposts. At

times the curious animals looked beyond the abundant feast and took an interest in other items.

"There was a monkey on my back as I was trying to take a selfie. He grabbed the sunglasses right off my face and ran off on to the top of a lamp-post and was trying to eat them for a while," said Ayisha Bhatt, an English teacher from California working in Thailand.

The delighted onlookers were largely undeterred by the risk of petty theft, although some were content to exercise caution.

"We have to take care with them, better leave them to it. Not too near is better," said Carlos Rodway, a tourist from Cadiz, Spain, having previously been unceremoniously treated as a climbing frame by one audacious monkey.

Railway workers in Austria to strike after failed pay talks

AP ■ BERLIN

Railway workers in Austria are set to hold a one-day strike on Monday after a failed round of talks in pay negotiations.

The Austria Press Agency reported on Sunday that both sides said the fifth round of talks on pay for some 50,000 employees of about 65 railway operators, including the main national operator OeBB, had failed.

That means that there will be no regional, long-distance or night trains on Monday, and that only buses and other pub-

lic transport run by municipal authorities will run.

Labor union vida has called for an extra 400 euros (USD 416) per month for railway employees, which it says is equivalent to an average 12 per cent increase.

Employers have said that would amount to a 13.3 per cent raise and is too much. OeBB said employers were offering an 8.44 per cent increase and strongly criticized the strike.

Like many other countries, Austria has seen inflation surge this year following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Mexican asylum seekers set their sights north on Canada

AP ■ MONTREAL

Pedro Meraz says living in Colima, Mexico, was like living in a war zone, with shootings, burning cars and dismembered bodies being left outside of schools.

When his wife Rocío Gonzalez, a 28-year-old lawyer who worked with abused women, began receiving death threats from a cartel and the local authorities ignored her pleas for assistance, they knew they had to leave.

"They knew where we lived and what car we drove," said Meraz, 41, who taught at The University of Colima, near the Pacific Coast and about 300 miles (485 kilometers) west of Mexico City.

"Feeling that you are going to lose your life, or one of your daughters, I don't mind start-

ing from scratch."

The family is part of a surge in the number of Mexicans who have requested asylum in Canada this year. Due to the relative ease of obtaining asylum in Canada compared to the US, visa-free travel between Mexico and Canada, and the threat of violence back home, more than 8,000 Mexican nationals have sought refugee status in 2022. That's almost five times as many as last year and more than twice as many as in 2019, the last year before the Covid-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions that accompanied it.

The vast majority of them are flying in to Montreal, which has many direct flights to and from Mexico.

Among them is Viviana Tapia Gonzalez, a human rights activist and mother of four



from Aguascalientes, about 265 miles (425 kilometers) northwest of Mexico City, who said she left Mexico in January after being attacked by the military. She said her work with the families of missing and murdered women and girls made her a target.

"Death threats were constant," she said. "I thought it was the last option I had to be safe. I work for many causes

and help many people. I did not want to stop helping, but I must also protect (and) take care of myself."

Tapia Gonzalez has been living in a Montreal women's shelter while awaiting a decision on her asylum claim, which she fears might get rejected.

If her claim is turned down, she wouldn't be alone.

In the first nine months of 2022, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, an independent tribunal that investigates and decides asylum cases, finalized more than 2,700 claims by Mexican asylum seekers. Of those, 1,032 were accepted, 1,256 were rejected; and the remaining 400-plus were either abandoned, withdrawn, or had other outcomes, said Christian Tessier, an IRB spokesperson.

Reviving a memory: Designer re-creates Diana's dress

AP ■ LONDON

This is a dress with a story, and Elizabeth Emanuel wants to tell it.

Shocking pink with a plunging, ruffled neckline and body-hugging shape, the gown was designed by Emanuel for Lady Diana Spencer to wear at a Buckingham Palace party a few days before her marriage to Prince Charles in 1981.

It was a visual coming-out event for the future princess, until then largely known for her conservative sweater-and-pearls look.

"This was definitely not a wallflower dress," said Emanuel, who also co-designed Diana's wedding gown.

"This was a dress to be seen in and celebrated." It was also soon forgotten. In an era

before smartphones put a camera in everyone's pocket and social media made private events public, the dress was mostly seen by the party guests, including Queen Elizabeth II, Princess Grace and Nancy Reagan, but no one else.

Emanuel doesn't know where it is, or even if it still exists.

So she has re-created it, out of bolts of shiny, satin taffeta cut and stitched to match the dramatic sketches she made more than 40 years ago.

Acting on an idea that took shape during Britain's long coronavirus lockdowns, she did it for herself, for her archive.

But also because she wanted to show another side of Diana, who Emanuel believes has been misrepresented by



"The Crown," the popular Netflix series that has brought the story of the princess and her ill-fated marriage to a new generation.

A fan of the series' first three seasons, Emanuel said she found it hard to watch the last

two because of the way Diana was depicted.

Creating a bespoke dress is a long process, requiring multiple fittings that give client and dressmaker lots of time to talk.

And throughout the hours

they spent together, Diana came across as a happy, vibrant young woman, not the shrinking girl "The Crown" portrays as being buffeted by events beyond her control, Emanuel said.

"She wasn't like that," Emanuel said.

"She was always very upbeat. And, you know, I like to feel that we were close enough that if she was having huge issues that we might have been aware of it at the time, because those fittings are fairly intimate."

One of the things the series does right is retrace Diana's style journey, from the cardigans and bows she wore when she first stepped into the public eye, to frothy ballgowns with frills and flounces and finally to her becoming a glob-

al fashion icon in Versace, Dior and Chanel.

Diana grew up in the country, looking to her older sisters for fashion cues.

This was a world of hunting, shooting and fishing, where Barbour coats and Wellington boots were everyday wear.

It was a culture where no matter how much you cared about your appearance, you had to seem like you weren't trying too hard.

Diana brought that style sense with her when she moved to London after leaving school and soon became the archetype of the Sloane Ranger, the media name for the wealthy young people who lived near London's Sloane Square and cultivated the look of bohemian aristocrats.

Siddharth Chauhan's 'Amar Colony' wins special jury prize at Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Debutant director Siddharth Chauhan's feature film "Amar Colony" has won the special jury prize at the 26th Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, the makers said Sunday.

According to a press release, the movie is the only Indian title which was showcased in the 'First Feature Competition' at the festival, held annually in Estonia's capital Tallinn.

Starring Nimisha Nair, Sangeeta Agrawal and Usha Chauhan, the Shimla-set "Amar Colony" revolves around three women going through their mundane lives, representing the human condition, in a chawl.

Chauhan said he is excited about the film winning an award at the prestigious gala where the movie had its world premiere.

"I am so overwhelmed with the love which the European audience and POFF (Festival) have shown towards our film. I really didn't expect such a response to my film! I want to thank the jury for considering us worth it," the director said in a statement.

Therese Malvar, the co-juror for the 'First Feature Competition', said the jury presented the honour to "Amar Colony" for originality of vision.

"This film delighted us with a bold and innovative presentation of a small town community whose frank sensuality and unabashed pursuit of urges, both human and divine, are set against the resonant backdrop of a culturally rich and deeply personal setting. "The director daringly takes us by the hand and leads us on a journey to his world, introducing us to his characters and their lives with affection and often with humor," Malvar said.

"Amar Colony" winning the Special Jury Award is a dream come true. Siddharth Chauhan is a filmmaker to watch in the years to come," added producer Nisheeth Kumar of Indie Film Collective.

‘Will continue protests till polls announced’

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's ousted prime minister Imran Khan announced to continue his protest until new elections were announced. Elections are not due in Pakistan until the term of the current National Assembly gets over in August 2023.

"The movement of Haqeeqi Azadi will continue until genuine freedom is achieved," he said, adding that the moment would come once new elections were held.

Khan was ousted from power in April after losing a no-confidence vote in his leadership, which he alleged was part of a US-led conspiracy targeting him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China, and Afghanistan. The US has denied the allegations.

He is the only Pakistani prime minister to be ousted in a no-confidence vote in Parliament. The term of the current National Assembly will end in August 2023.

Meanwhile, top leaders of



Pakistan's ruling coalition on Sunday termed former premier Imran Khan's decision to resign from the provincial assemblies as acceptance of his failure to force the government to announce early elections. The reaction came after 69-year-old Khan announced to resign from provincial assemblies as he withdrew a threat to march on capital Islamabad by saying that it would result in destruction.

Khan made the announcement in his first in-person address to the party workers in Rawalpindi after the failed assassination bid on his life earlier this month.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said that the

announcement showed the frustration of Khan. "The decision to leave the assemblies has been taken as a face-saving to avoid defeat," he said.

"It is possible that he (Khan) will not follow the decision; it is also possible that he will come to the parliament," he added.

Khan along with more than one hundred lawmakers resigned from the National Assembly in April after his government was toppled through a no-confidence vote. But his provincial lawmakers are still part of the system.

Khan on Saturday claimed that there were three shooters involved in the failed assassination attempt on him during a protest march in the eastern city of Wazirabad earlier this month. The chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party suffered bullet injuries in the right leg when the gunmen fired at him in Punjab's Wazirabad area on November 3, where he was leading the march against the government to press for snap elections.

Pak authorities arrest PTI Senator for tweets against military officials

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

ily were shared on social media, and the same assumption-based data was presented in an exaggerated manner on different platforms.

"It is totally untrue and based on blatant lies and malice," the statement read, adding that the assets of Gen Bajwa, his wife and the rest of his family had been declared to the Federal Board of Revenue.

A "false impression" was being given that these assets were acquired by the father-in-law of Gen Bajwa's son during his six-year tenure, it said.

The Army chief and his family regularly file their tax returns, the statement said.

"Like every citizen, the Army chief and his family are answerable to the tax authorities for their assets," the statement added.

The FactFocus website, which describes itself as a "Pakistan-based digital media news organisation working on data-based investigative news stories", shared the alleged wealth statements of Gen Bajwa and his family from 2013 to 2021 on its page last week.

Pakistan authorities on Sunday arrested a Senator of Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party for allegedly using abusive and threatening language against senior military officials.

Azam Swati was taken into custody by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for the second time in less than two months for tweets against army leaders. He was previously arrested by the FIA in October.

A first information (FIR) report was registered under Prevention of Electronic Crime Act 2016 (Peca) by the FIA on the complaint of the state through Islamabad Cyber Crime Reporting Centre (CCRC) Technical Assistant Aneesur Rehman.

The FIR stated that Swati and three other Twitter accounts — @WolfIAK, @HaqeeqatTV_20 and @Azaadi99 — "with malafide intentions and ulterior motives, started [a] highly obnoxious campaign of intimidating tweets [...] against state institutions" and senior government functionaries.

UK marks 26/11 Mumbai attacks anniversary

PTI ■ LONDON

Sombre musical, floral tributes and anti-terrorism protests in the UK commemorated the 14th anniversary of the Mumbai terror attacks that claimed 166 lives in 12 coordinated strikes across the city.

The High Commission of India in London hosted a special homage on Saturday, replete with a photography exhibition and snapshots from November 26, 2008, a shrine to the victims and tributes attended by members of the Indian diaspora and senior parliamentarians.

A film depicting the message of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, voices of many Mumbaikars and foreign tourists caught in the attacks, including at the city's iconic Taj Palace Hotel, was followed by a violin recital by musician Sunita Bhuyan.

"These were real people, with real families with real hopes and aspirations, all of which were cut short," said Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami, in his

address to the gathering.

"We salute the police personnel, the members of the National Security Guard (NSG) who lost their lives doing their duties. Let us also remember the many who lost their lives doing what was daily for them... Every one of us remembers and commemorates on this day the courage, fortitude and resilience of Mumbai and every citizen of the world who has known terror and has had to see it in its face and has not blinked but has started back," he said.

The theme of the commemoration was around "never forget, never forgive and never again" and also included messages from Britain's members of Parliament from across party lines.

"There is one strong message that we must all take away: that terrorism will never win because we will always stand in the face of terrorism and perpetrators of terrorist activities. That is the one thing that unites us all," said Priti Patel, Indian-origin Conservative Party MP and former UK Home Secretary.

2nd Israeli, wounded in Jerusalem blasts, dies in hospital

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's daughter made a public appearance again, this time with missile scientists and more honorific titles as her father's "most beloved" or "precious" child. She's only about 10, but her new, bold photos are deepening the debate over whether she's being primed as a successor.

The daughter, believed to be Kim's second child named Ju Ae and about 9 or 10 years old, was first unveiled to the outside world last weekend in state media photos showing her observing the North's intercontinental ballistic missile launch the previous day with her parents and other older officials. The daughter wearing a white puffy coat and red shoes was shown walking hand-in-hand with Kim past a huge missile loaded on a launch truck and watching a soaring weapon.

Italian rescuers search for missing in island landslide

AP ■ MILAN

Rescuers dug through mud for a second day Sunday in the search for people lost in an enormous landslide on the Italian resort island of Ischia.

One body was recovered on Saturday and about a dozen people, including children, were reported missing in the port town of Casamicciola, feared buried under mud and debris that firefighters said was six metres (20 feet) deep in some places.

Small bulldozers were being used to clear debris, and Italian media said digging was continuing by hand in some places and that teams of divers had been brought in.

"We are continuing the search with our hearts broken, because among the missing are also minors," Giacomo Pascale, the mayor of the neighbouring town of Lacco Ameno, told RAI state TV.

The massive landslide before dawn on Saturday was triggered by exceptional rainfall, and sent a mass of mud and debris hurtling down a mountainside toward the port of Casamicciola, collapsing buildings and sweeping vehicles into the sea. By Sunday, 164 people were left homeless by the events.

One widely circulated video showed a man, covered



A caterpillar removes mud and debris after heavy rainfall triggered landslides that collapsed buildings and left as many as 12 people missing, in Casamicciola, on the southern Italian island of Ischia on Sunday. Authorities said that the landslide that early Saturday destroyed buildings and swept parked cars into the sea left one person dead and 12 missing AP | PTI

with mud, clinging to a shutter, chest-deep in muddy water.

The island received 126 mm (nearly five inches) of rain in six hours, the heaviest rainfall in 20 years, according to officials. Experts said the disaster was exacerbated by building in areas of high risk on the mountainous island.

"There is territory that cannot be occupied. You cannot change the use of a zone where there is water. The course of the water created this

disaster," geologist Riccardo Caniparoli told RAI. "There are norms and laws that were not respected."

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni convened a Cabinet meeting for later Sunday to declare a state of emergency on the island. "The government expresses its closeness to the citizens, mayors and towns of the island of Ischia, and thanks the rescue workers searching for the victims," Meloni said in a statement.

Iran leader praises force tasked with quashing protests

AP ■ BAGHDAD

Iran's supreme leader praised paramilitary volunteers tasked with quashing dissent on Saturday in a televised address as dozens of eye doctors warned that a rising number of demonstrators have been blinded by security forces during anti-government protests.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei addressed members of the Basij, the volunteer paramilitary wing of the elite Revolutionary Guard, and reiterated unsupported claims that protesters demonstrating

countrywide are "tools" of the U.S. And its "mercenaries." "(The) Basij should not forget that the main clash is with global hegemony," Khamenei said, referring to the U.S. The address marking Basij week in Iran echoed previous statements lambasting protests as a foreign plot to destabilize Iran.

PUBLIC NOTICE

TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN
My client Mr. Srinivasan T G son of Late Sh. Gopalan TK resident of V-18/3, DLF City, Phase-III, Gurugram, Haryana has entered into Agreement to Sell dated 19th May, 2022 with Mr. Winnie Nagpal son of Late Sh. Naveen Kumar Nagpal resident of X-24, DLF City, Phase-II, Gurugram, Haryana-122002 (permanent resident of Milton Keynes, United Kingdom) with respect to the purchase of residential Property No. X-24, DLF City, Phase-II, Gurugram-122002 (Haryana) and the seller didn't turn up for registration of sale document on the stipulated date.

This public notice is being given to caution the public in large that anyone who intend to purchase the above subject property may be doing at their own risk and responsibility.

Gajender Yadav
(Advocate)
Chamber No.59, Distt. Court,
Gurugram (Haryana) Mob: 9311707317

ANDHRA ASSOCIATION, DELHI (REGD.)
ADD: 24 – 25, LODHI INSTITUTIONAL AREA, NEW DELHI – 110003
Website: www.andhraassociationdelhi.com
E-mail: andhraassociationdelhi@gmail.com
Tel: 24623946, 24649056, 43755078

PRE - ELECTION PUBLIC NOTICE
All the members of Andhra Association, Delhi are hereby notified that the Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of Andhra Association, Delhi shall be held on 26-02-2023 (Sunday). The venue and the time of the AGM shall be informed separately along with agenda. The elections to the working committee of the Andhra Association, Delhi, the Andhra Association, Delhi Trust and Executive Committee of Branches of Andhra Association, Delhi shall be held on 12-03-2023, (Sunday).

Any person belonging to Andhra community, residing in NCT of Delhi and above the age of 18 years is eligible to become a member of Andhra Association, Delhi. Telugu persons intending to become members by fulfilling the above criteria, can obtain the prescribed membership form available free of cost in Andhra Association office on all working days except Sundays and Gazetted Holidays between 3 PM to 7 PM up to 04-01-2023. The applicant is required to fill the prescribed membership form and submit the same upto 04-01-2023 before 8 PM except Sundays and Gazetted Holidays alongwith two recent photographs, attested copies of photo Id proof and proof of residence, pay the subscription against receipt and sign the membership register kept for this purpose. The existing annual members whose membership may have lapsed can also renew their membership by depositing arrears up to 04-01-2023 before 8 PM except Sundays and Gazetted Holidays with two recent photographs, attested copies of photo Id proof and proof of residence alongwith application forms. The draft eligible Membership list/voters' List/Electoral Roll shall be made ready and will be kept in Andhra Association office 5th floor for verification of members from 23-01-2023 to 25-01-2023 so that discrepancies/errors if any, observed in the draft list can be corrected between 3 PM to 7 PM. The new members enrolled upto 04-01-2023 are eligible to participate in the AGM / Elections alongwith the existing members.

The changed addresses if any, and other rectifications in the electoral roll can also be got corrected by the existing members in the office of Andhra Association, between 3 PM to 7 PM on the above 3 days i.e from 23-01-2023 to 25-01-2023 by submitting two recent photographs, attested copies of photo Id proof and proof of residence. After this, no further alterations shall be permitted in the Voters' list.

Those members who intend to have the Identity card being issued by Andhra Association, can also fill the prescribed Proforma available at the Andhra Association office and submit the same along with two recent stamp sized photographs, attested copies of photo Id proof and proof of residence.

Notice for the Annual General Body Meeting followed by elections will be issued to all the eligible members in due course.

Sd/-	Sd/-
Place: New Delhi	KOTAGIRI SATYANARAYANA
Date: 25-11-2022	President

Indian student dies after pickup truck hit in Canada

PTI ■ TORONTO

A 20-year-old Indian student Awas killed after he was hit and dragged by a pickup truck while crossing a road on a cycle here, according to a media report. Though the police have not yet identified the victim, news website cbc.ca in a report published on Friday quoted the victim's cousin Parveen Saini as saying that Kartik Saini came to Canada from India in August 2021. Parveen Saini spoke from Karnal, Haryana, where their family is from, the report said. The family is hoping that Kartik's body will be sent to India as soon as possible for proper burial, Parveen said.

Drive-by shooting injures 2 at funeral at US church

AP ■ NASHVILLE

A drive-by shooting in Nashville injured two people as they and others were walking out of church from the funeral of a woman who was fatally shot earlier this month, according to police.

Metro Nashville Police Department spokesperson Don Aaron said the Saturday afternoon shooting occurred outside New Season Church, where a funeral service had just ended for 19-year-old Terriana Johnson. The hearse was parked out front with the rear door open and people were filing out of church as the shots began, Aaron said.

Police say they are on the lookout for a black late-model



Honda Civic with a temporary tag, from which one shooter or more fired as the car passed by, hitting an 18-year-old woman in the leg and a 25-year-old man in the pelvis. Neither were considered life-threatening injuries, Aaron said.

Some attendees of the funeral services for Johnson — who was not a member of the church that was hosting — were armed and fired back at the car, Aaron said.

The shooting occurred before Johnson's body was brought out of the church, according to police, and her burial took place later in the afternoon.

Authorities remain on the lookout for a 17-year-old charged with criminal homicide in Johnson's fatal shooting on November 14 at Watkins Park. Police allege that the teen opened fire on a car in which Johnson was riding after Johnson and the suspect's sister were involved in a fight moments earlier.

Aaron said the shooting "appears to be some type of beef between two groups of people," but not necessarily between members of the two families.

Venezuela Govt, opponents resume talks; US eases sanction

AP ■ MEXICO CITY



Guaidó, marked the resumption of long-stalled negotiations meant to find a common path out of the South American country's complex crisis. The U.S. Government, in response, agreed to allow oil giant Chevron to pump Venezuelan oil.

The broad terms of the agreement for the United

Nations-managed social fund were announced by the head of a group of Norwegian diplomats guiding the negotiations.

Venezuelan resources held in the international financial system will be directed to the fund, though neither side in the talks nor Norway's facilitator, Dag Nylander, said whether the U.S. Or European governments have agreed to allow frozen assets to be funneled to the new mechanism.

"In line with UN norms and procedures, (the fund's) objective would be to support the implementation of social protection measures for the

Venezuelan people," Nylander said. "The parties have identified a set of resources belonging to the Venezuelan state frozen in the international financial system to which it is possible to progressively access, understanding the need to obtain the authorizations and approvals" from foreign institutions and organizations.

A U.N. Report published earlier this year estimated humanitarian needs at \$795 million to help about 5.2 million people in Venezuela through health, education, water and sanitation, food and other projects.

Govt can't violate privacy of citizens: MoS IT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government will not be able to violate the privacy of citizens under the proposed data protection law as it will get access to personal data only in exceptional circumstances like national security, pandemic and natural disasters, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said.

Speaking during an online discussion, the minister said the National Data Governance Framework Policy has provision for handling anonymisation of data -- which is not part of the draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill 2022.

Chandrasekhar also said the proposed Data Protection Board -- which will adjudicate matters related to data protection -- will be independent and will not have any government officer on the board.

While responding to questions around privacy on Twitter Live on Saturday evening, the minister rephrased the question of a participant to clarify the stand of the government and provisions in the draft DPDP Bill 2022.

"Let us say that the government wants to essentially violate the privacy of citizens with this law. Is it possible? That's the question. The answer is no. The bill and laws

lay out in very clear terms what are the exceptional circumstances under which the government can have access to the personal data of Indian citizens.... National security, pandemic, healthcare, natural disaster.

"These are exceptions. Just like freedom of speech is not absolute and is subject to reasonable restriction, so is the right to data protection," Chandrasekhar said.

The draft DPDP Bill has exempted certain entities notified as data fiduciaries by the government from various compliances, including sharing details for the purpose of data collection.

The provisions from

which government notified entities will be exempted deal with informing an individual about the purpose for data collection, collection of children's data, risk assessment around public order, appointment of data auditor, among others.

The bill proposes to exempt government notified data fiduciaries from sharing details of data processing with the data owners under the "Right to Information about personal data".

The draft DPDP Bill also bars individuals from sharing unverifiable and wrong information with data handling entities, which some people believe will deter anonymisation

on internet platforms, especially on social media.

The minister further said the National Data Governance Framework has provisions to deal with anonymous data while the scope of the DPDP Bill is limited to personal data protection only.

"We have a National Data Governance Framework Policy that is to deal with the entire non-personal data and anonymised data space. This (DPDP Bill) is a very narrow well defined legislation to do with digital personal data protection.

"The anonymised data, standards of anonymisation, the use of anonymous data, etc are all going to be decided by

the India Data Management Office (IDMO) under MeitY," Chandrasekhar said.

He said before IDMO's launch, there will be again a conversation about the non-personal data framework.

The minister said the Data Protection Board (DPB) will be an independent body and it says so in the bill -- 'independent of the government'.

"You will not find people like me or bureaucrats sitting on the Data Protection Board. It is important to understand that DPB is not a regulator. DPB is an adjudication mechanism to adjudicate a breach that has occurred. It is independent as the government will not be on the board,"



Chandrasekhar said.

He added that the DPB will have an oversight of the high court because all of its decisions will be scrutinised by the court system.

"The punitive consequences of data breaches that



we have mentioned in the bill should act as deterrent, catalyse the behavioural change in all data platforms in the way they look at personal data of Indian citizens. They will look at it with more responsibility," the minister said.

Rupee should stabilise once US reduces speed of its rate increases: Economics Nobel winner

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Douglas W Diamond, winner of this year's Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, says it is difficult to predict exchange rates but the rupee should stabilise once the US "reduces the speed of its rate increases".

In an email interview to PTI, the American economist also said that when the US raises exchange rates unexpectedly, the dollar tends to appreciate and things will normalise when interest rates are closer to each other in the US and India.

Diamond, a Merton H Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, shared the Nobel Prize with former US Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke and US-based economist Philip H Dybvig for their research into the fallout



from bank failures.

According to the Nobel panel at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, their research has shown "why avoiding bank collapses is vital".

Asked about the continuous fall of the Indian rupee against the USD dollar, Diamond says, "It is difficult to predict the exchange rates. When the US raises rates unexpectedly, the dollar tends to appreciate. Once the US reduces the speed of its rate increases, the rupee should

stabilise."

On Friday, the rupee appreciated 16 paise to 81.54 against the US dollar.

Diamond, who had once observed that delegated monitoring allows savers to get access to safe and high returns, says bank monitoring works well when banks are well capitalised and there is little lending to bank insiders.

"I expect this to continue in the future. For savers to get high returns, a reasonable amount of bank competition is needed as well," he argues.

Diamond, who had collaborated with former RBI governor Raghuram G Rajan on theory of banking in 2001, says one of their conclusions was that banks need to be a bit fragile to discipline them.

"This remains true. Short-term debt provides discipline because banks must continue to appear healthy to retain

their funding. This possible loss of funding does make them fragile," he says.

The research paper of Diamond and Rajan on 'Liquidity Risk, Liquidity Creation, and Financial Fragility: A Theory of Banking' was published in the Journal of Political Economy.

Diamond is known for his research in financial intermediaries, financial crises and liquidity. His research agenda for the past 40 years has been to explain what banks do, why they do it and the consequences of these arrangements. His selection for the Nobel was basically for his research towards enhancing the understanding of the role of banks in the economy, particularly during financial crises.

He says he was sound asleep at 3:40 am when he got the news of his win early October.

Cumulative recovery rate under insolvency resolution fell to 30.18% in Sept qtr: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The cumulative recovery rate under the insolvency resolution processes of debt-ridden companies declined to 30.18 per cent at the end of the September quarter, indicating that lenders took more haircut on their exposure, shows a study.

The recovery rate has fallen steeply from a peak of 43 per cent in Q1 FY20.

Of the Rs 7,90,626.2 crore claims from the financial creditors admitted by various benches of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), only Rs 2,43,452.5 crore or 30.18 per cent have been recovered till the end of Q2 FY23, as per an analysis of IBBi data done by Care Ratings.

The overall recovery rate implies a haircut of around 70 per cent for the lenders.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) is a key institution in implementing the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which provides for market-linked and time-bound resolution of stressed assets.

The cumulative recovery rate has been on a downtrend, falling from 43 per cent in Q1 FY20 and 32.9 per cent in Q4 FY22 as larger resolutions have already been executed and a significant number of liquidated cases were either Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) cases and/or defunct with high resolution time, the report said.

There has also been a fall in the number of cases going to/admitted by the NCLT since H2 FY21.

Since the implementation of the IBC in 2016, close to 5,893 companies have been



admitted by various NCLT benches. Out of those cases, operational creditors filed 3,008 cases, a little over 50 per cent, and financial creditors filed 2,531 cases or around 45 per cent. The share of corporate debtors has continued to remain the lowest at around 3 per cent as of September 2022.

The share of the various sectors has largely remained constant compared with the previous period, with the manufacturing sector accounting for the highest at



39 per cent of the overall cases, followed by real estate (21 per cent), construction (11 per cent) and trading (10 per cent).

The status of the cases has largely remained constant compared with the previous period. Of the total 5,893 cases admitted as of September 2022, only 9 per cent ended in resolution. Of the total admitted cases, as much as 1,807 ended in liquidation (31 per cent), according to the study.

NITI Aayog VC expresses concern over revival of old pension scheme, says it will burden future taxpayers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery on Sunday expressed concern over the revival of Old Pension Scheme by some states, saying it would burden future taxpayers at a time when India needs to focus on fiscal prudence and promoting sustained growth.

In an interview to PTI, Bery also underlined the need for enhancing capital expenditure and creating a space for the private sector through fiscal consolidation.

"I am slightly more worried about the return to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). I think that is more of a concern because the cost will be borne by future taxpayers and citizens, not the present," he said.

The OPS, under which the

entire pension amount was given by the government, was discontinued in 2003 from April 1, 2004.

Under the new pension scheme, employees contribute 10 per cent of their basic salary towards pension while the state government contributes 14 per cent.

"I think political parties have to exercise discipline, since we are all working for a common cause of growth of the Indian economy, and for India to become a developed economy, you know the long-term (objectives) needs to be balanced against the short-term (objectives)," Bery said. Two Congress-ruled states, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, have already decided to implement OPS while BJP-ruled

Himachal Pradesh has promised to restore the scheme if voted to power in the state.

Jharkhand too has decided to revert to OPS, while Aam Aadmi Party-ruled Punjab recently approved the reimplement of OPS.

Bery further explained that in general, state borrowing is effectively limited by the RBI so states don't threaten the overall financial stability.

"Within this debt limit, duly elected state governments are free to make their own choices on taxation and expenditure priorities, and to bear the political consequences of these choices," he said.

According to Bery, currently RBI floats state debt on a club basis, so more prudent states don't benefit from their discipline and this is unlike the

situation in advanced countries, where states and local bodies' borrowing costs are based on their own creditworthiness.

"India should consider moving toward greater market discipline of state finances as is the case for the union government. This will take a considerable period to become a reality but preparatory thinking could begin," the NITI Aayog VC suggested.

Noting that the government pension issue is different because the announcement benefits the government of today, while the costs are imposed on future governments (and citizens), he said, "this is why political parties need to enter the picture, to safeguard the interest of future governments against the temptations faced by the incumbent."

Asked when the government think tank will come out with the official poverty line, he said the Aayog is comfortable with the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) last year by utilising 12 key components which cover areas such as health and nutrition, education and standard of living.

"We will be in a position to calculate a new poverty line once there is a Consumer Expenditure Survey, which I think Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) is now expecting will come out in 2024," he said.

In 2021, MOSPI had decided not to release the Consumer Expenditure Survey results of

2017-18 due to data quality issues.

According to the ministry, the reference period for the next Household Consumer Expenditure Survey is 2022-2023. On his suggestion for the upcoming Budget, Bery said since 2019, there has been continuity in the direction of the Budget, which is to focus on capital expenditure, cleaning up the tax system and trying to return to some kind of fiscal consolidation trajectory.

"So what we need to do in the next two years is to start creating space for the private sector through fiscal consolidation," he said.

While stressing that there is a need to maintain the thrust on infrastructure particularly in instruments like PM Gati

Shakti-National Master Plan to get more efficiency out of infrastructure, he said the commitment to disinvestment will also be required.

"We need a private investment boom focussed on the green economy," he said, adding there is also a need to increase investment rates in the country. The 2023-24 Budget will be presented in Parliament



on February 1.

The NITI Aayog VC pointed out that the Russia-Ukraine war has put pressure on the fertiliser sector and to a lesser extent on the petroleum sector.

He also opined that because of high inflation and US Federal Reserve raising interest rates, the Reserve Bank of India had no choice but to tighten its monetary policy.

FPIs flock to Indian mkt; buy shares worth ₹31,630 cr in Nov

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors have rediscovered their liking for Indian equities, making a net investment of Rs 31,630 crore in November on hopes of an end to the aggressive rate hikes, and positivity about overall macroeconomic trends.

According to experts, after remaining net sellers in August and September, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) are unlikely to be major sellers going forward.

Rising expectations of aggressive rate hike cycles nearing an end on relatively easing inflationary curve, better than expected US macroeconomics data and resilience of the Indian economy compared to global counterparts are also driving FPI inflows.

According to data available with the depositories, FPIs invested a net sum of Rs 31,630 crore in equities during November 1-25. In comparison, there was a net outflow of Rs 8 crore and Rs 7,624 crore in October and September, respectively.

In August, FPIs were net buyers to the tune of 51,200 crore and they purchased equities worth nearly Rs 5,000 crore in July.

Prior to this positive trend, FPIs remained net sellers for nine straight months starting October 2021 amid a continuous rise in the dollar.



Going ahead, FPI flows are expected to remain volatile in the near term given the geopolitical concerns, Shrikant Chouhan, Head - Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities, said.

So far this year, the total outflow by FPIs in equities stood at Rs 1.37 lakh crore.

The spurt in net inflows in November could be attributed to recent surge in equity markets, stability in the Indian economy compared to its global counterparts and stabilisation in the rupee, Morningstar India Associate Director - Manager Research Himanshu Srivastava said.

In a reflection of bullish market sentiments, Sensex and Nifty scaled lifetime highs for the second straight session on November 25.

On the global front, lower than anticipated rise in inflation in the US raised hopes that the Federal Reserve may not go for further aggressive rate hikes, which also eased recessionary concerns in the US. This helped improve sentiments and direct-

ed foreign flows towards Indian shores, Srivastava said.

In terms of sectors, FPI buying was seen in financial services, IT, autos and capital goods.

"FPIs are unlikely to be major sellers, going forward since their earlier policy of continuous selling in banking have cost them heavily. When FPIs were sellers earlier, Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) were buyers and they gained from the FPI policy of sustained selling," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Srivastava said that inflation numbers as well as the US Federal Reserve's policy stance will continue to be the most important factors for FPIs to consider when investing in global markets, including India.

Furthermore, they will be closely monitoring how India's economic environment evolves, as well as how Indian equities compare in terms of valuation and risk-reward profile to other comparable markets, he said.

Kirit Parikh panel likely to recommend price cap for ONGC gas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A government-appointed gas price review panel, led by Kirit Parikh, is likely to recommend price caps for natural gas produced from legacy fields of state-owned firms to help moderate CNG and piped cooking gas rates, while keeping the pricing formula for difficult fields unchanged.

The panel, which was tasked with suggesting a "fair price to the end-consumer" while ensuring "market-oriented, transparent and reliable pricing regime for India's long-term vision for ensuring a gas-based economy", may opt to suggest two different pricing regimes, officials said.

For the legacy or old fields of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) -- where the cost has long been recovered and which are currently governed by a formula that uses rates in gas-surplus nations such as the US, Canada and Russia -- the committee is likely to recommend a floor or minimum base price and cap or ceiling rates.

This would ensure that prices do not fall below cost of production, as they did last year, or do not spike to record levels as currently.

Gas from legacy fields is sold to city gas distributors who had to raise rates of CNG and piped cooking gas by over 70



per cent after prices went up from USD 2.90 per million British thermal unit till March to USD 6.10 in April and further to USD 8.57 last month, reflecting a surge in global rates. This rise in rates, which narrowed the gap between CNG and polluting diesel, had prompted the review.

For the gas from difficult fields such as those lying in deepsea or which are in high-pressure, high-temperature zones, the committee is likely to suggest not tinkering with the existing mechanism of paying them higher rates based on a different formula to compensate for the greater risk and cost involved, officials said.

This would ensure that explorers, who are seeing a surge in cost of services due to the spike in global energy rates, are not put at a disadvantage.

This way the concerns over investments in exploration and production (E&P) being hit would also be addressed, they said, adding that market-driven pricing would also encourage new investments and attract



global players.

KG-D6 fields of Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner bp plc of UK are governed by the pricing formula for difficult fields. Rates for difficult fields from October 1 is USD 12.46 per mmBtu.

The panel headed by former planning commission member Kirit S Parikh is in the final stages of finalising its report. It would be submitted to the government in the next few days, the officials said, adding the cap for the legacy fields is likely to be higher than USD 4.75 per mmBtu cost of production and the floor could be set at USD 3.50.

The oil ministry will process the recommendations before moving the Cabinet for approval for changes in the existing gas pricing regime.

Natural gas is a fossil energy source that is formed deep beneath the earth's surface. It is used to generate electricity, produce fertiliser and petrochemicals, converted into CNG to run automobiles and piped to household kitchens for cooking and heating.

Housing sales in Gurugram jump over 3-fold to 24,482 units during Jan-Sept



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Housing sales in Gurugram jumped more than three-fold on an annual basis to 24,482 units during January-September this year on higher demand for residential properties across all price categories -- affordable, mid-income and luxury, according to Anarock.

Housing sales in Gurugram stood at 7,725 units in the year-ago period.

Noida saw a 52 per cent increase in sales to 5,040 units in the first nine months of this year compared to 3,315 units in the corresponding period of the previous year, as per data compiled by Mumbai-headquartered property consultant Anarock.

Sales in Greater Noida rose 46 per cent to 8,651 units during January-September 2022 from 5,925 units earlier.

Ghaziabad witnessed a 54 per cent rise in housing sales to 5,395 units from 3,510 units

in the corresponding period of 2021. Sales in Faridabad jumped nearly three-fold to 2,890 units from 1,018 units.

Overall, Anarock data showed that sales in the Delhi-NCR market more than doubled to 49,138 units during January-September from 22,478 units in the year-ago period. Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad are in Uttar Pradesh, while Gurugram and Faridabad are part of Haryana.

When contacted, Anarock Vice Chairman Santhosh Kumar attributed the sharp rise in housing sales in Gurugram to various factors, including lower base effect and strong revival in demand.

"Last year, builders launched less projects as demand was muted because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, there has been a significant increase in supply across all segments of the housing sector, be it affordable or ultra luxury," he said.

IND VS NZ: RAIN PLAYS SPOILSPORT AGAIN



PTI ■ HAMILTON

The elegant Shubman Gill and the marauding Suryakumar Yadav briefly entertained a sizeable Sunday crowd before inclement weather yet again played spoilsport and forced abandonment of the second ODI between India and New Zealand, here Sunday.

India were 89 for 1 in 12.5 overs when a second stoppage sealed the fate of the game as there was no possibility of having a minimum 20-over per side match within the stipulated cut-

off time. The match was reduced to 29-overs-a-side as the first interruption caused a four-hour break. India were 22 for no loss in the fifth over at that time.

After resumption, the visitors lost skipper Shikhar Dhawan (3 off 10 balls) trying to up the ante. Gill (45 not out, 42 balls) and Suryakumar (34 not out, 25 balls) added 66 effortless runs under eight overs before heavens opened up once again. Gill had four boundaries and a pulled six off Matt Henry while Suryakumar hit three different sixes — slog sweep over

mid-wicket, reverse sweep behind square and a pull-shot to carry his T20I form into the longer format. The short six-game white ball series against New Zealand has been one of the most rain-interrupted series of recent times. The first T20 in Wellington was also abandoned without a ball being bowled.

Even the third T20I match in Napier was a rain-marred. The final match of the series will be held in Christchurch on November 30.

International teams usually tour the New Zealand between

December and March and poor scheduling where the vagaries of weather wasn't factored in, has spoilt the limited overs series.

The ongoing series is being held during receding monsoon and there won't be any take-aways from the series where no player got enough opportunity to get into the groove. There isn't a big sample size of performance to evaluate but Surya certainly has been a shining star and Gill with his phenomenal talent is making a serious case for himself for a permanent place in the ODI playing eleven.

Irritating to see matches being affected by rain: Gill

PTI ■ HAMILTON

Rain-affected matches are an irritant for both players and the paying public, and hence, having closed roof cricket stadiums won't be a bad option, feels young India opener Shubman Gill.

In a six-match white-ball series in New Zealand, two matches (1st T20I in Wellington and Sunday's ODI) were abandoned and one game (Napier T20I) was decided on Duckworth-Lewis method.

Gill, who scored 50 in the first game and was looking in good touch during his unbeaten 45 here, said that it does get frustrating at times.

"This is a decision (playing in indoor stadiums) to be taken by the boards. As a player and as fans, it is irritating to go in and out and see so many matches being affected by rain. But I don't know how I can take a stand for it as it is a big decision. "Obviously closed (retractable) roof (stadiums) would be good," the youngster told mediapersons.

The issue with rain-affected games is planning of the innings as 50 overs was curtailed to 29 overs on the day after a four-hour delay.



"It was very frustrating. You don't know how many overs so you can't plan your innings," Gill, who had hit a purple patch in 50-over cricket, said.

Gill is a strong contender for a place in the squad of 15 for next year's ODI World Cup but he said that he isn't looking that far ahead.

"I am not looking that far ahead and my aim is to make most of the opportunities that I am getting. That's what I am trying to do and make most of the opportunities that I get, trying to score big runs for the team," he stated.

There is something regal about Gill: Shastri

PTI ■ HAMILTON

India opener Shubman Gill has got an admirer in former head coach Ravi Shastri who feels the young batter has something "regal about him".

Gill has been in good touch in the ongoing ODI series. He scored 50 runs in the first match on Thursday and came up with an unbeaten 45 in the washed out second game on Saturday.

"It is great to watch him play. There is something regal about him. He is a quality player and he's going to be around for a long time (decade's time)," Shastri said on Prime Video.

"He has good work ethics, he trains hard, he's hungry and he loves this game. He will continue to play because his grooming is good, he is always grounded."

The 23-year-old Gill has

played 14 ODIs since making his debut in 2019 with 674 runs at an average of 61.27. He has also featured in 11 Tests and scored 579 runs.

Talking about Gill's performance on Sunday, Shastri said, "His emphasis today was in the timing of the ball. Sometimes when you are out of your depth, you want to get on with it by trying to hit the ball hard. He was in good control with good footwork."

PT Usha set to get elected as IOA chief unopposed

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The legendary PT Usha is set to become the first woman president of Indian Olympic Association (IOA) as she emerged as the lone candidate for the top post for the December 10 elections. The 58-year-old Usha, a multiple Asian Games gold medallists and a fourth-place finisher in the 1984 Olympics 400m hurdles final, filed her nomination papers for the top job on Sunday, along with 14 others from her team for the various posts.

The deadline to file nomination papers for the IOA elections ended on Sunday. IOA elections returning officer Umesh Sinha did not receive any nominations

on Friday and Saturday but 24 candidates filed nominations for various posts on Sunday. There will be contests for one post of vice president (female), joint secretary (female). There were 12 candidates in the fray for four executive council members.

The IOA polls will be held to elect one president, one senior vice-president, two vice-presidents (one male and one female), one treasurer, two joint secretaries (one male and one female), six other Executive Council members, out of which two (one male and one female) shall be from the elected SOMs.

Two members of the Executive Council (one male and one female) will be the Athletes' Commission representatives.

India ends campaign with 11 medals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reigning Asian champion Ravina displayed splendid tenacity to punch her way to gold in the 63kg category final as India ended the Youth Men's and Women's World Boxing Championships with 11 medals in La Nucia, Spain.

Ravina was up against Megan deCler of Netherlands in her final bout. In spite of not getting off to the best of starts, the Indian pugilist utilised her technical ability and quick movement to mount an impressive comeback against her Dutch opponent.

The fiercely contested bout finished in favour of the 2022 Asian Youth gold medallist Indian who won 4-3 by split decision after the bout was reviewed.

In the other final, Kirti (81+ kg)



lost 0-5 to 2022 European youth champion Cliona Elizabeth D'Arcy of Ireland to settle for a silver.

India was a dominant force at the event as the 25-member team bagged 11 medals — four gold, three silver and four bronze.

Overall, 17 Indians had qualified for the quarterfinals of the tournament which was more than any other country in this edition.

India won the highest number of medals — eight — in the women's section, followed by Kazakhstan (5) and Uzbekistan (4).

In the men's category, youth Asian champions Vanshaj (63.5kg), Vishwanath Suresh (48kg) grabbed a gold each while Ashish (54kg) took a silver.

This year's championships witnessed participation of close to 600 boxers from 73 countries.

There is still room for pure batsmanship in T20 cricket: Stead

PTI ■ HAMILTON

Unperturbed by criticism of their conservative approach to batting in the T20 World Cup recently, New Zealand coach Gary Stead on Sunday said there's "still room for pure batsmanship" in the slam-bang format.

The Black Caps failed to win a global ICC white-ball tournament once again when they lost to Pakistan by seven wickets in the semi-finals in Australia earlier this month after their batters failed to fire and managed a modest 152/4.

"I know there's a lot of chat around a number of players around the world in the T20 game but, in my opinion, many of the wickets we play on, it's not just about the game of crash bash the whole time," the 50-year-old told reporters.

"We have a couple of players with Devon (Conway) and Kane (Williamson) who probably put in that crafty kind of batsmanship as opposed to those crash-bash style from ball one. There is still a place for those players in my opinion."

"The World Cup in Australia actually showed a number of times that the batsmanship side of it comes into it."

England, who became the only team to hold both the ODI and T20 World Cups titles in the same cycle, have been successful with the template of playing fearless and aggressive cricket from ball one.

"You have to look at the resources within your group and then you got to look at what the gameplan is. Some teams are going down the method of boundary-hitting the whole time.

"But we showed in a couple of games that there's a different way of playing as well. The team selected are the best XV or XI that we had," the former Kiwi Test batter said, defending their strategy.

"For us, that's still the way we are playing the game. That may change again we have to keep



reviewing our style of play and making sure that we keep up with play."

Stead further said they had a par score against Pakistan in the semis, but it's their bowlers who let them down.

"It's more than just batting in T20 cricket, it's also your bowlers. Pakistan bowled exceedingly well at us, but we had a score that was potentially defendable. We just didn't start best with the ball in the game," he said.

SURYA, A HUGE FORCE

The Kiwi coach hailed India's latest white-ball sensation Suryakumar Yadav who sizzled with his powerful performances during the T20 showpiece.

"He makes it look terribly easy at times and extremely hard to bowl to because he can access both sides of the ground, he starts from ball one and puts you under enormous pressure.

"He's very innovative as well, his shots are a little bit different. He can look up to the field and have 2-3 options, it makes him very hard to defend against.

"He's a huge force in world cricket at the moment. He's probably one of the most sought-after wickets i would imagine in world cricket," he added.

Cricket an outdoor sport, should be played under sun as much as possible: NZ coach

PTI ■ HAMILTON

Retractable roof stadiums could be an option but there's no substitute to playing cricket under the sun as it makes the sport a spectacle, feels New Zealand coach Gary Stead.

Four matches in the recently-concluded T20 World Cup in

neighbouring Australia were washed out while the fate of three were determined by the Duckworth-Lewis method, leading to a debate whether indoor cricket should be explored by the boards.

"It's very difficult to have that in New Zealand, we don't have grounds to be able to do

that," the 50-year-old Stead said after the second ODI against India was abandoned because of persistent showers.

In the six-match white-ball series in New Zealand, two matches (1st T20I in Wellington and Sunday's ODI) were abandoned and one game (Napier T20I) was decided by DLS.

"I guess if there are grounds available then it has to be considered. I think it's a spectacle that everyone tries, is considered an outside game and played in the sun as much we can. I think you still want to make that happen wherever possible," the former Kiwi Test batter added.

England arrive for 1st Test series in Pakistan since 2005

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

England's cricket team arrived in Islamabad early Sunday to play its first Test series in Pakistan since 2005.

Led by Ben Stokes, England will kick off the tour in Rawalpindi -- an adjacent city to Islamabad -- which hosts the first Test from next Thursday. The second Test will be played at Multan from December 9-13 before England round off the tour with the final Test at Karachi from December 17-21.

England had played a seven-match T20 series in Pakistan prior to the T20 World Cup in Australia where it went on to beat Pakistan in the final.

England was due to tour Pakistan last year before the T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates but abandoned the tour due to security concerns after New Zealand had aborted its tour to Pakistan just minutes before the toss in the first ODI at Rawalpindi.

There were some concerns over England's Test tour to Pakistan after former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was wounded in Wazirabad, a district in eastern Punjab province, during his protest against the sitting government.

Pakistan had hosted England twice in a Test series at UAE over the last 17 years with foreign teams reluctant to travel to Pakistan after the Sri Lanka cricket team was attacked in Lahore in 2009.



The three-Test series will be part of World Test Championship where Pakistan is sitting in fifth place while England is seventh. Pakistan needs to win the three-Test series to keep its hopes alive for next year's final.

Pakistan will be without its key fast bowler Shaheen Afridi, who has been ruled out of the series due to knee injury. The home team has also dropped middle-order batter Fawad Alam and ace leg-spinner Yasir Shah due to poor form.

Uncapped fast bowlers Haris Rauf and Mohammad Ali have been called up to the

squad along with mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed, who is expected to make his debut during the series.

England also has injury concerns ahead of the first Test with fast bowler Mark Wood in doubt due to a hip injury. Stuart Broad has been given paternity leave from the tour as England will be banking on its experienced fast bowler James Anderson to trouble Pakistan batters.

England has included 18-year-old Leicestershire all-rounder Rehan Ahmed in the squad after originally drafting him as a net bowler for the tour.

UAE to host Afghanistan's home games for next 5 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The UAE will host Afghanistan's home games for the next five years, as per an agreement signed between the two cricket boards. The move was prompted by the political situation in Afghanistan which has not hosted international teams.

As part of the agreement, Test-playing nation Afghanistan will play UAE in a three-match T20I series in each of the five years. "We are happy to support the ACB in ensuring that they have a home for their cricket," general secretary of the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) Mubashir Usmani said in a statement.

"We are also thankful to the Afghanistan Cricket Board for

agreeing to play a series of T20I matches against UAE team each year. "This will provide our UAE team with invaluable exposure and help in their development," he added.

Until now, the Afghanistan team has been playing and conducting its training sessions on a series-by-series basis. The ECB would also provide logistic support to the ACB.

As per the ICC's Future Tours Programme (FTP), Afghanistan are set to host Australia, Pakistan and West Indies in three ODIs each, as well as Zimbabwe across formats, next year leading into the 2023 ODI World Cup. The matches will be played across venues in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah.