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HAPPY DIWALI

NEW DELHI, MONDAY OCTOBER 24, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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REAL EXTEND
LEAD AT TOP
OF LA LIGA
11 SPORT

Centre divests Cong of Lakshmi on Diwali eve

FCRA licences of RGF, RGCT cancelled; Cong says bid to divert public attention

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a Deepawali 'gift' to the Congress, the Centre has cancelled the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licences of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust (RGCT), headed by former Congress president Sonia Gandhi. The two entities will now not be able to accept foreign donations to carry out their activities.

The Union Home Ministry took the decision on Saturday evening after the probe initiated by it in July 2020 pointed to a series of irregularities and violations in accepting foreign donations by the two NGOs.

The Home Ministry has sent notices informing about the cancellation of the FCRA licence to the office-bearers of the RGF and RGCT, said officials. Sonia Gandhi is the chairperson of both NGOs and other trustees include former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, former Finance Minister P Chidambaram, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi



Vadra, Montek Singh Ahluwalia and Suman Dubey.

Set up in 1991, the RGF works in the health and education sectors primarily with women and children and also provides disability support. The RGF came under the scanner in July 2020, when the

MHA set up an inter-ministerial committee headed by an Enforcement Directorate (ED) officer to investigate three Gandhi family foundations — RGF, RGCT and Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust — for alleged violations of the money laundering Act, Income Tax Act and FCRA. The committee comprised officers from the

Home and Finance Ministries and the CBI. In 2015, BJP leader Subramanian Swamy filed a complaint with the Urban Development Ministry on the alleged illegal use of prime land captured by the RGF. The prime land was allotted to the Congress Party AICC and occupied the building meant for the Congress Party.

Many corporates have given huge donations to the RGF and RGCT under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme and the NGOs have also received foreign

donations from various sources, including many Embassies working in India.

BJP president JP Nadda had accused these NGOs of accepting money from various Embassies including from China, and fugitives like Zakir Naik and Mehul Choksi. Nadda had also alleged that money from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund was diverted to the RGF.

According to the RGF's annual report of 2005-06, which is available on its website, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China is listed as one of its donors under "partner organisations and donors". The BJP had also raised a question that whether the funds received by the RGF were a "bribe" for lobbying for a free-trade agreement between India and China.

Reacting to the development, the Congress on Sunday hit back at the Centre saying the move was aimed at diverting public attention from the main issues being faced by the country. "They (Centre) recycle old charges against the RGF and RGCT. This is to defame the Congress and divert public attention from issues of day-to-day concern to them," said Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh. "The economy is in deep crisis caused by spiralling prices, unemployment and a falling rupee," he said.

(Related reports on P4)

Kerala Guv asks 9 VCs to quit by 11.30 AM today

Higher Edu Min says bid to create anarchy in higher education sector in the State

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

In an unprecedented move that is bound to intensify the ongoing feud between Raj Bhavan and the State Government, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Sunday evening directed all the nine Vice-Chancellors of the State-owned universities to submit their resignations before 11.30 AM on Monday.

The directive, issued through the social media handle of the Governor, comes within hours of the CPI(M) announcing a statewide agitation against the high-handed behaviour of the Governor.

"Upholding the verdict of Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 21.10.22 in Civil Appeal Nos.7634-7635 of 2022 (@SLP(c)Nos.21108-21109 of 2021) Hon'ble Governor Shri Arif Mohammed Khan has directed Vice-Chancellors of nine varsities in Kerala to tender resignation.

"Letters directing Vice-Chancellors of nine universities of Kerala to tender their resignation by 11:30 AM on 24 October 2022, have been issued. The letter is also



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○ Letters directing Vice-Chancellors of nine universities of Kerala to tender their resignation by 1130 AM on 24 October

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○ The letter was also emailed to V-Cs and Registrars of varsities concerned

○ Supreme Court declared null and void the appointment of MS Rajasree as the Vice-Chancellor of APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University as the appointment was in violation of the University Grants Commission's guidelines

emailed to V-Cs and Registrars of varsities concerned", said the messages posted by Public Relations Officer, Raj Bhavan.

On Friday, the Supreme Court declared null and void the appointment of MS Rajasree as the Vice-Chancellor of APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University as the appointment was in violation of the University Grants Commission's (UGC) guidelines.

The Governor's directive caught the establishment off guard as there was no time for it to approach the court for a

stay with Monday being a Diwali holiday for the courts. The Governor, while addressing a meeting at Ernakulam on Saturday said in his speech that the Constitution as well as the Supreme Court, have made the role of the Governor clear.

Reacting to the Governor's directive to the Vice-Chancellors, MV Govindan, State Secretary of the CPI(M), said it was a "mad" decision by the Centre-appointed Governor.

"The BJP knows too well that it is going to lose the 2024 Lok Sabha election and the

party would never come to power in India again. Hence it is making use of the Governor to get RSS and Sangh Parivar elements appointed as Vice-Chancellors in universities. We will not allow the writ of the Governor in Kerala. He is acting as an RSS worker," said Govindan.

Minister for Higher Education R Bindu, who is also the spouse of CPI(M) leader Vijayaraghavan said it was unfortunate that the Governor was acting in a most undemocratic manner.

"This is an effort to create total anarchy in the higher education sector in the State. The Kerala Government will face this situation and protect the education sector from the attacks of the Sangh Parivar," she said. Former Education Minister ET Mohammed Basheer MP, too, said the Governor's action was not with good intentions. "At no point of time democracy has come under severe threat and pressure like this," he said.

But K Ramkumar, senior advocate and constitutional expert, is of the view that the Governor is within his right to ask for the resignations of the Vice-Chancellors. "Though the October 21 verdict by the Supreme Court was on the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor of the technical university, the same verdict is applicable to others, too, as all of them were appointed in violation of UGC guidelines," said Ramkumar.

Values inculcated by Lord Ram inspiration for 'sabka saath, sabka vikas', says Modi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the historic Deepotsav celebrations on Diwali eve on Sunday, and said that the values that Lord Ram instilled in his words, thoughts, governance, and administration are the inspiration for 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', and the basis of 'Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'.

The event also saw Aayodhya setting a new Guinness World Record for lighting the maximum number of earthen lamps — over 15 lakh — on the banks of the Sarayu River.

Modi said that this Diwali has come at a time when India has completed 75 years of its Independence and the country is celebrating 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. "In this 'Azadi Ka Amrit Kaal', it is the resolve like that of Bhagwan Shree Ram which will take the country to new heights," he said.

Modi said that one can find the inspiration of 'Sabka Saath



Prime Minister Narendra Modi worships Lord Ram, in Aayodhya on Sunday

PTI

Sabka Vikas' and the principles of 'Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas' in Lord Rama's words and thoughts, in his rule and

his administration.

"For every Indian the principles of Shree Ram are the aspirations of a developed

India. It is like a lighthouse that provides inspiration to achieve the most difficult targets," he said. *Continued on Page 2*

Delhi air quality poor, could turn severe on Diwali

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality was recorded in the 'poor' category for the eighth consecutive day on Sunday but could turn "severe" on Diwali due to emissions from fire-crackers and an increase in the share of smoke from stubble burning because of wind speed and direction.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data showed that Delhi recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 259 on Sunday, which was the lowest for the day before Diwali in seven years.

Taking note of the air pollution, the Delhi administration issued an order banning private construction in Anand Vihar and adjoining areas till further orders in view of the rising air pollution levels there.

The data showed the AQI of Anand Vihar stood at 376 under the 'very poor' category, while the RK Puram station also recorded the AQI of 305,

which also falls in the 'very poor' category.

The NSIT Dwarka station reported the AQI of 318. North Campus (Delhi University) also reported AQI of 323.

Most of the stations in the city recorded the AQI in the 'poor' category including, Ashok Vihar (282), Aya Nagar (205), Bawana (277), CRRI Mathura Road (275), Dwarka Sector 8 (266), ITO (257), Major Dhyani Chand National Stadium (276), Mundka (294), Narela (267), Nehru Nagar (297), Patparganj (278), Punjabi Bagh (280), Shadipur (232), Sirifort (276), Sonia Vihar (279), Vivek Vihar (290), and Wazirpur (288), the CPCB data stated.

Diwali will be celebrated across the country on Monday and experts have warned, the AQI could even turn "severe" due to emissions from fire-crackers.

Smoke from stubble burning and other factors could be contributors too.

Continued on Page 2

Punjab Speaker to give ₹1L each to panchayats of villages that shun stubble burning

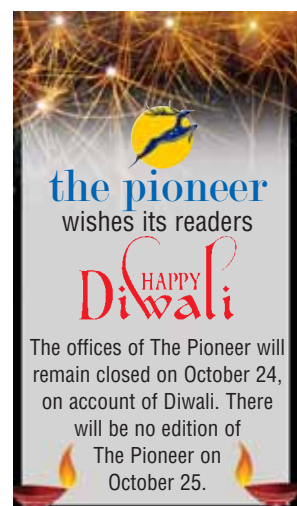
PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Acting on the age-old adage of "small steps make big difference", Punjab Vidhan Sabha Speaker and Kotkapura MLA Kulter Singh Sandhwan on Sunday announced that he would reward the villages in his constituency who give up the practice of burning stubble.

Sandhwan, in an apparent attempt to discourage the farmers from burning the paddy residue and to save the environment, took a unique initiative by promising to give ₹1 lakh to every village panchayat in his segment where farmers shun the practice. "The amount will be given from my discretionary quota," he said.

Punjab has witnessed a nearly three-fold jump in farm fire incidents in the past 10 days with a total number of such cases crossing the 2,600-mark, so far, this season.

Continued on Page 2



CAPSULE

ISRO SCRIPTS HISTORY, LAUNCHES LVM3-M2

Sriharikota/Bengaluru: Indian Space Research Organisations' heaviest rocket LVM3-M2 on its maiden commercial mission on Sunday successfully placed 36 broadband communication satellites of a UK-based customer into the intended orbits, the space agency said, describing the mission as 'historic'. **P5**

K'TAKA DY SPEAKER MAMANI PASSES AWAY

Bengaluru: BJP Legislator and Deputy Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly Vishwanath Chandrashekar Mamani, also known as Anand Mamani, passed away at a private hospital here, family sources said.

RISHI SUNAK DECLARES CANDIDACY FOR UK'S PM

London: Indian-origin former chancellor Rishi Sunak on Sunday formally declared his candidacy to contest the Conservative Party leadership election to replace Liz Truss as British Prime Minister and fix the economy.

KARNATAKA MIN SLAPS WOMAN, APOLOGISES

Chamarajanagar: Karnataka Housing and Infrastructure Minister V Somanna apologised on Sunday after he allegedly slapped a woman who approached him with a plea to redress her grievance. The incident took place when the Min was participating in a ceremony at Hangla village. **P4**

Xi creates history with third term as President

Just as China cannot develop in isolation from world, the world needs China for its development: Jinping

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday created history, becoming the first leader of the ruling Communist Party after party founder Mao Zedong to get re-elected for an unprecedented third term in power with the prospect of ruling China for life. Xi was elected Sunday morning as General Secretary of the Communist Party for a 3rd five-year tenure by the Central Committee, which was constituted a day earlier by the once-in-a-five-

year Congress. The Central Committee session, presided over by Xi, was attended by 203 members of the 20th CPC Central Committee and 168 alternate members, an official communique here said.

The Central Committee also approved a 24-member Political Bureau which in turn elected a seven-member Standing Committee, which is packed with Xi's supporters.

Addressing the media, Xi said, "Just as China cannot develop in isolation from the world, the world needs China for its development. The Chinese economy has a great reliance potential and latitude. Its strong fundamentals will not change and it will remain on a positive trajectory over the long run. China will open its doors wide." **Details on page 9**

Kohli conjures up magical knock to script India's sensational win over Pakistan

I have no idea how that happened, says King Kohli

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Virat Kohli, the long lost conqueror, sang a perfect redemption song on the grandest stage with a magical knock that engineered India's colossal four-wicket win over arch-rivals Pakistan at the MCG, packed with 90,000 boisterous fans, here on Sunday.

"King Kohli", as his fans call him, conjured up a memorable unbeaten 82-run knock to anchor a chase of 160 which became tricky after India were



India's Virat Kohli, center, is escorted from the ground by his teammates after Team India won the T20 World Cup cricket match against Pakistan in Melbourne, Australia on Sunday

AP | PTI

left in tatters at 31 for 4. Hardik Pandya, the most important cog in India's T20 wheel, struck 40 off 37 balls in a partnership of 113 for the fifth wicket.

Kohli's ability to win matches for India had come under the scanner due to a prolonged lean patch and with his knock he proved that he remains one world best chasers in world cricket — something that his captain Rohit Sharma acknowledged after the heart-stopping game.

"Well, it's a surreal atmosphere. I honestly have no words. I have no idea how that happened," Kohli said after his incredible knock. "Hardik kept telling me, just believe we can stay till the end. I'm lost for words."

Continued on Page 2

Ayodhya sets world record by lighting over 15 L diyas

KAMLESH SRIVASTAVA ■ AYODHYA

Over 15 lakh oil lamps were lit and kept burning for 45 minutes as Ayodhya set a new Guinness World Record for lighting oil lamps as part of the Diwali celebration. "We had set a target to light 15 lakh diyas at one place to break the Guinness World Record and we have achieved that target," Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said. Last year, the city witnessed a record by lighting over nine lakh diyas. Yogi said over 15 lakh diyas were lit at Ram ki Pauri, at the banks of river Saryu. "In total, over 17 lakh lamps were lit across Ayodhya where people lit oil lamps at temples and at their shops as a mark of Diwali celebration. Senior government offi-

cial Nitish Kumar said that over 22,000 volunteers, majority of them college students, worked tirelessly to ensure that the lamps burnt for the prescribed time so that the Guinness record could be broken. The volunteers vouch that it was a challenge for them to ensure that these lamps glowed for at least 45 minutes as this is mandatory for breaking the Guinness record. "It was a tough job. First, we drew the pattern with chalk and then placed diyas and filled them with oil. It was a back-breaking exercise but I loved it," said Shruti Sinha, an undergraduate student. Another student, Anita Chauhan, said: "We have been working for the last three days and have arranged the diyas in a systematic manner. Training was given to us as to how to light the diyas without dis-



turbing symmetry." She said the big challenge was to ensure that these lamps glowed for at least 45 minutes as this was mandatory for breaking the Guinness record. "We ensured that oil was put continuously in the lamps so that they did not extinguish," Anita said. Earlier, the scene of Treta Yuga came back to life again on Sunday when 'Lord Ram', along with 'Sita' and 'Laxman', touched the grounds on the Pushpak Viman after completing 14 years of exile. People waited with bated breath to welcome 'Lord Ram' with the same zeal, devotion, and enthusiasm that the city would have witnessed when Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after defeating Ravan. Chants of 'Jai Shri Ram' kept on reverberating in the atmosphere as the Deepotsav started at its scheduled time.

TN cylinder explosion: Police recover 'low-intensive' explosives from victim's house

PTI ■ COIMBATORE

The Tamil Nadu police on Sunday recovered "low-intensive explosive material" from the house of a man killed in a cylinder explosion in a car here and said material like potassium nitrate that were seized were meant for "future" use. Hours after the incident occurred early today, state police chief C Sylendra Babu said there has been "good progress" in the probe and stated that the possibility of a National Investigation Agency (NIA) inquiry into the matter will be known after the conclusion of the investigation. The deceased identified as Jemisha Mubeen, 25, had been earlier enquired by the NIA but there has been no case against him nor has there been any "adverse notice," the top official said. Mubeen was charred to



death when a gas cylinder in a car in which he was travelling exploded in a communally sensitive area in the city this morning, prompting the state's top cop to rush here and take stock of the situation. Addressing reporters later in the day, Babu said a case has been registered at the Ukkadam police station in connection with the incident and a probe was on. "We found in that vehicle nails, marbles and other stuff which are being examined by the forensic department. Following a search at his

house we recovered some low intensive explosives--potassium nitrate, aluminium powder, charcoal, sulphur-- used in making country bombs," he said. These seemed to be meant for some "future" plans, he said but added only a thorough probe will reveal what that could be. There are no cases against the deceased but those having link with him over the past few years have been brought under the probe ambit, Babu added. Asked if the NIA had earlier held "searches" against Mubeen, the top official replied in the affirmative. "Some enquiry happened.. (there was) no adverse notice (against Mubeen)," he said. Security has already been beefed up across the state ahead of the Deepavali festival and extra vigil will be mounted in Coimbatore, he said.

The deceased was an engineering graduate, he said. "Chances are less" was his response to a question on the possibility of a suicide attack mission involving the deceased person. He lauded the probe teams for making rapid progress in the case within 12 hours of the incident and said each team was entrusted with a particular task in connection with the case. The incident took place near the Kottai Easwaran temple and all the shops in the vicinity were closed and a large number of police personnel have been deployed in the area. Being a communally sensitive area, a tense situation prevailed in the Ukkadam locality where the explosion happened in the early hours of Sunday. There were two cylinders and one of them exploded, the police chief had said earlier in the day.

Cong issues showcase notice to Telangana MP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Congress has issued a showcase notice to its Telangana MP, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, over a voice recording in which he allegedly sought support for his brother, who is contesting the Munugode Assembly bypoll as the BJP candidate. AICC General Secretary Tariq Anwar has sought a reply from Reddy within 10 days as to why disciplinary action should not be taken against him as per the provisions of the party Constitution. "Manickam Tagore, MP, in-charge Telangana, has brought to the notice of the Disciplinary Action Committee (DAC) that a voice recording is being heard

with you insisting on Jabbar Bhai, a Congress leader to support the BJP candidate for the Munugode Assembly byelection on the 3rd November, 2022 who happens to be your sibling against the Congress candidate Palvai Sravanthi," Anwar said in the notice that was shared with the media here on Sunday. The voice recording has gone viral on social media and prominent electronic and print media as well, said Anwar, Member Secretary of DAC, adding, "prima facie, it is an act of breach of party discipline." The bypoll in Munugode has been necessitated as sitting Congress MLA Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy, younger brother of Venkat Reddy, had quit and joined the BJP.

Southwest monsoon withdraws from country

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The southwest monsoon withdrew from the entire country on Sunday, a week later than normal. The normal date for its complete retreat is October 15, but in recent years the monsoon has overstayed till the third week of October. India witnessed a normal monsoon season for the fourth consecutive year with 925 mm rainfall which was 106 per cent of the long-period average (LPA) of 880 mm. "The Southwest Monsoon has withdrawn from the remaining parts of the country today, October 23, 2022," the India Meteorological Department said on Sunday. In its final leg, the monsoon has now withdrawn from Mumbai, Pune and Nashik, thus exiting

Maharashtra. With this, most parts of the country will get to enjoy a rain-free Diwali this year. A late surge by the monsoon in September helped cut the large deficit in rainfall in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and the northeast, but not before impacting the main paddy crop in some states. Rains continued to linger on beyond September 30, which marks the end of the southwest monsoon season, mainly due to two cyclonic circulations active over Madhya Pradesh and south Gujarat and its interaction with the mid-latitude weather systems, which brought rains to parts of northwest and central India in October. Normally, by the second week of October, the

southwest monsoon withdraws from the entire northwest, north, and many parts of the Indo-Gangetic plains spanning up to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and most of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. But this year, rainfall activity continued and was associated with two cyclonic circulations each over east Rajasthan and south Gujarat-north Maharashtra. IMD statistics show that post-monsoon rainfall for the country between October 1 and 23 was 104 mm, almost 65 per cent more than the normal of 63.2 mm for the season. According to the weather office, the southwest monsoon starts retreating from the northwestern parts on September 17 and withdraws from country by October 15.

BJP sharpening its outreach among Pasmanda Muslims

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to win all 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh, the Bharatiya Janata Party is sharpening its outreach among the backward caste and Dalit or Pasmanda Muslims, who have benefitted from government welfare schemes like free ration and housing and several others. The BJP, which had held a state-level Pasmanda Muslim meet, is now planning to hold similar programmes in all major cities of the state. The Pasmanda community has 41 "castes", including Ansari, Qureshi, Mansoori, Salmani and Siddiqui. They are in professions such as butchery and weaving, and considered most backward in social, economic and political terms. The

ruling party claims that it is working for the community's political uplift after their social and economic empowerment. In Pasmanda Muslim meets, the BJP leaders are highlighting that the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Congress have always used Muslims as a "vote bank" and have not given them their due. Uttar Pradesh minister Danish Azad Ansari, who belongs to the weaver community, said, "The Central and state governments have worked for economic and social empowerment of Muslims so far. The BJP now wants political empowerment of Muslims by ensuring their participation." The common Muslims are getting benefits of government

schemes like free ration and housing without discrimination and it is the government's moral responsibility to stand with them, he added. President of Uttar Pradesh BJP's minority wing, Kunwar Basit Ali, said this time strong and trusted Muslim BJP workers would be given tickets in elections to the urban local bodies. "We have planned that people from different groups of Pasmanda Muslims will hold conferences in their societies and BJP leaders will participate in these to convey to them the party's ideology and government plans," Ali said. "The BJP government has done as much as it could do for the Pasmanda Muslims. Now, it has to take it from them," he said.

Delhi air quality poor, could turn severe on...

From Page 1
Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said his Government's priority is to save human lives and that it is not interested in politics over firecrackers. Pollution levels rise around Diwali every year. The major reason is burning of firecrackers. Emissions from firecrackers are extremely dangerous especially for kids, women and the elderly, he told reporters.

Last year, the AQI on November 3 (a day before Diwali) was 314. It had shot up to 382 on the Diwali day and 462 the next day. In 2020, Delhi recorded an AQI of 296 a day before Diwali (November 13), while it worsened to 414 on Diwali and 435 the day after. The capital logged an AQI of 287 on the day before the festival in 2019. It worsened to 337 on Diwali (October 27) and further to 368 the next day. The

AQI was 338 on the day before Diwali in 2018. Interestingly, it improved to 281 on the Diwali day before aggravating to 390 the next day. The Capital logged an AQI of 287 on the day before the festival in 2019. It worsened to 337 on Diwali (October 27) and further to 368 the next day. The AQI was 338 on the day before Diwali in 2018. Interestingly, it improved to 281 on the Diwali day before aggravating to 390

the next day. The AQI was 302 and 404 on the day before Diwali in 2017 and 2016, the CPCB data showed. The national Capital faces a severe pollution crisis every year around Diwali - with the onset of winter - as the concentration of ultra-fine PM2.5 particles (the harmful heavy metals and toxic chemical compounds in the air) multiplies manifold as people set off

firecrackers. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe". The air quality in the Capital is predicted to turn "very poor" on Monday morning while it could worsen to the "severe" category on Tuesday due to emissions from fire-

crackers and an increase in the share of smoke from stubble burning because of a favorable wind speed and direction. SAFAR, a forecasting agency under the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences, said the air quality may deteriorate to "very poor" levels even if no firecrackers are burst. In case firecrackers are burst like last year, the air quality may plunge to "severe"

levels on the night of Diwali itself and continue to remain in the "red" zone for another day. The contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's PM2.5 pollution has so far remained low (up to 5 per cent) due to a slow transport-level wind speed. "However, the transport-level wind direction and speed is likely to become very favourable from Monday afternoon. It will increase the share of stubble burning in Delhi's

PM2.5 pollution to 15-18 per cent on October 25 and push the air quality into the 'severe' category," said Gufran Beig, founder project director, SAFAR. Paddy straw burning accounted for 25 per cent of Delhi's PM2.5 pollution on Diwali last year. The share of smoke from farm fires in Delhi's pollution stood at 32 per cent in 2020 and 19 per cent in 2019.

Kohli conjures up magical knock to script...

From Page 1
It started in the 19th over when Kohli, on his haunches, sent one from Haruid Rauf for a huge six made it two from two. Cricket indeed is a leveller as Rauf, after 22 splendid deliveries bowled two bad ones and it changed the complexion of the game. Asked about those sixes, the former India skipper said, "It's just instinctively I saw it, told myself to stay still. The one at long-on was unexpected, it was a back-of-a-

length slower ball. The fine leg one, I just threw my bat at it." Then he spoke about his best T20 knocks. "Till today I said Mohali was my best T20 innings. Then I got 82 off 52, today I got 82 off 53. Both are just as special. Today I will count this one higher because of the magnitude of the occasion and the situation we were in." Anushka, who often accompanies Virat to his games, watched the nailbiter of a match on TV like several

al other cricket fans. She is currently shooting for "Chakda Xpress", a film based on cricketer Jhulan Goswami's life, in Kolkata. The actor said their 21-month-old daughter Vamika will one day understand why her mother was "dancing around and screaming wildly" in the room. "... One day she will understand that her dad played his best innings that night which followed after a phase that was tough on him but he came out of it stronger

and wiser than ever before! "So proud of you !! Your strength is contagious and you my love, are LIMITLESS!! Love you forever and through thick and thin," the actor-producer wrote in a note on her official Instagram account. 'Chak De India' reverberating around the MCG never sounded sweeter and Kohli seemed numb. He punched ground, took a long walk back, showed thumbs up to the crowd having restored India's supremacy at a global event.

Punjab Speaker vows to give ₹1L each to panchayats of village that shun stubble...

From Page 1
From September 15 till October 10 this year, the State witnessed 718 stubble-burning incidents - a figure which reached 2,625 by October 19. However, the Government reports claim that situation looks better this year in comparison to the past two years. Representing Kotkapura Assembly constituency of Faridkot district in the 117-

member House, Sandhwan said that the burning of paddy stubble has a harmful impact on the environment along with the loss of fertility of the land. "According to the principles of the Gurbani, the people of Punjab love nature the most. As people getting aware about the harmful effects of stubble burning, they are abandoning this trend," he

said, adding that the day is not far when people of the State will completely abandon the practice. Sandhwan has always been vocal about the cause of the environment and even made continuous efforts to make people aware of the harmful impacts of stubble burning. Only the previous week, Sandhwan had honored the State's farmers who did not

burn paddy stubble. In a unique initiative of its kind, 18 farmers from Faridkot district, 13 from Moga, 10 from Sangrur, one from Rupnagar, 10 from Gurdaspur, and seven from Ludhiana and Barnala were honoured in a ceremony at Vidhan Sabha. At the same time, Sandhwan appealed to the farmers to plant more trees for the protection of the environment.

Values inculcated by Lord Ram inspiration for 'sabka saath, sabka vikas', says...

From Page 1
In an obvious dig at the opposition parties, the Prime Minister said, "There was a time when the existence of Bhagwan Ram was questioned and it was taken as politically incorrect to speak about Ayodhya and Bhagwan Ram. The constant indifference towards the Centres of our ancient legacy resulted in the decline of important pilgrim centers like Ayodhya - the place which is a symbol of our existence. Today, not only Ayodhya's glorious tradition has been revived but also the city is being developed with new infrastructure, roads, intersections, and redevelopment and beautification of the Ghats.

"During the last 8 years, the country has broken the shackles of the colonial mindset. We have put forward a holistic policy of the development of India's pilgrimages. From Ram Mandir, Kashi Vishwanath Dham to Kedarnath, Mahakal-Mahalok, we have revived our pride, which has been the victim of utter neglect." Beginning his speech with 'Jai Sita Ram', Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a gathering on the occasion of historic Deepotsav in Ayodhya on Sunday in the presence of UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Governor of UP Anandiben Patel, Deputy Chief Ministers Brajesh Pathak and Keshav Prasad Muthyala and

several other dignitaries. Greeting people on the auspicious occasion of 'Choti Deepavali' and 'Deepavali', Modi said, "To fulfill the vision of a developed India in the centenary year of its Independence, we must look up to Bhagwan Ram's whose entire life is a teaching in itself. Lord Ram is the living embodiment of true religion and duty, in every role, he emphasized the most on duties." Recalling his exhortation from the Red Fort this year about the 'Panch Pran', the Prime Minister said, "energy of the 'Panch Pran' is connected with the element of citizens' sense of duty. He said that "today, in the sacred city of

Ayodhya, on this auspicious occasion, we have to rededicate ourselves to our resolution and learn from Bhagwan Ram." Recalling the 'Maryada Purushottam' the Prime Minister said, that 'maryada', teaches us decorum and also teaches us to give respect and the sentiment on which 'maryada' insists is Kartavya i.e. duty. Calling Bhagwan Ram the living embodiment of duties, the Prime Minister said that in all his roles, Shree Ram always gave foremost priority to his duties. "Ram does not leave anyone behind, Ram never turns away from his duties. Thus Ram represents that Indian notion that holds that our

rights get automatically realized through our duties", the Prime Minister elaborated. The Prime Minister pointed out that in the original copy of India's Constitution there is an image of Lord Ram, Maa Sita and Lakshman. The same page of the Constitution talks about Fundamental Rights. It means while, on one hand, the Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, at the same time there is an eternal cultural understanding of duties in the form of Bhagwan Shree Ram, he said. He went on to say that "Bhagwan Ram doesn't leave anyone behind, doesn't turn away from anyone. Development in the truest sense takes place only when

every section develops. Through Ram-Leelas, Saryu Aarti, Grand Deepotsava, Lord Rama's glory, and India's rich tradition is reaching the world." He also announced that a giant statue of Lord Ram will be constructed in Shringverpur Dham. "Nishadraj Park is being established in Shringverpur Dham (Prayagraj), where a 51 feet tall statue of Lord Ram and Nishadraj will be built... It is the duty of all Indians to follow the ideals of Lord Ram," the PM said. Prior to the address, PM Modi performed the Rajyabhishek (symbolic coronation) of Lord Ram. Ayodhya, which the Prime Minister calls a symbol of cultural heritage, has been glimmering with the

lights of over 17 lakh earthen lamps for the celebration of Uttar Pradesh's tradition of Deepotsav. Earlier, Modi offered prayers to Ram Lalla at Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya. This is Modi's first visit to Ayodhya after the "bhoomi puja" for the construction of a Ram temple on August 5, 2020. The PM also reiterated the 'Panch Prann' that he presented before the country and said, "We must learn from Lord Rama and give utmost importance to performing our duties just as he did as a son, as a warrior, as a prince, as a king and as a leader." Furthermore, the PM said that as India has entered the 'Amrut Kaal', people must take

pride in their heritage and set themselves free from any kind of slavery. "As Lord Ram saw Lanka he did not feel any inferiority complex but took pride in his traditions, customs, countrymen and motherland. For Lord Ram, Ayodhya was his 'Swarg'." "The development of our religious places that once remained neglected is strengthening the base of our country and is ensuring that the country reaches heights," said the PM adding, "In the last 8 years, the country has broken the shackles of inferiority complex. Our pilgrim sites are witnessing holistic development, while projects worth thousands of crores are underway in Ayodhya."

AAP writes to MHA, CVC to remove NCM, ITDC chiefs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party has written to Union Home Ministry, Ministry of Tourism and Central Vigilance Commission, seeking removal of Iqbal Singh Lalpura from the post of Chairman of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) and BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra who is holding the position of the chairman of India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) in violation of the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules.

AAP's letter comes days after BJP MP from West Delhi Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma complained that Delhi Dialogue and Development Commission Vice Chair Jasmine Shah was violating rules as he was also acting as a



spokesperson for the AAP.

The Planning Department of the Delhi government issued a show-cause notice to Shah asking him to explain his position. The AAP had termed the notice "yet another attack on the Delhi government due to its rising graph in Gujarat". "I have written a letter to the Union Tourism minister and the Central Vigilance Commission, demanding the



removal of Sambit Patra from the ITDC's chairman's post. Despite remaining ITDC chairman and holding public office, Patra did not demit the post of BJP National Spokesperson," the AAP MLA said during a media briefing. "He uploaded several political videos on social media which were shot in his office which is a textbook example of misuse of public office," she claimed.



In a letter to Union Tourism minister G Kishan Reddy, senior AAP leader Atishi alleged that despite being the chairman of the India Tourism Development Corporation, Patra continued to campaign for the BJP which is a "blatant violation of CCS (Conduct) Rules". Sambit Patra, national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), was appointed as Chairman of



India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) on 30th November, 2021 for a period of 3 years. ITDC falls under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India," she wrote, adding that Patra's appointment was made by Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC) in an "unprecedented move to allegedly accommodate Patra".

"The moment he gets appointed as ITDC chairman, he fulfils the legal conditions of being a 'public servant.' A 'public servant' is clearly defined in the Indian Penal Code, Prevention of Corruption Act, Central Civil Services Conduct Rules," she said.

She cited Section 1 of Rule 5 that says that "no government servant shall be a member of, or be otherwise associated with, any political party or any organisation which takes part in politics nor shall he take part in, subscribe in aid of, or assist in any other manner, any political movement or activity."

"However, Sambit Patra, in complete ignorance of law, held press conferences, took part in TV debates and election campaigns for BJP." His Twitter timeline is also filled with several political videos and debates

which he shot from his government office. It is a textbook example of misuse of public office," she said.

Meanwhile, AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj in his letter to Home Minister Amit Shah and Central Vigilance Commissioner Suresh Patel, that National Minorities Commission (NCM) Chairman Iqbal Singh Lalpura also holds membership in the BJP Parliamentary Board, which is a gross violation of Central Civil Services Conduct Rules.

Bharadwaj said that Lalpura also holds membership of the BJP Parliamentary Board, this is a gross violation of Central Civil Services Conduct Rules. "He is also a member of BJP's Central Election Committee along with being part of BJP's topmost

political body, the Parliamentary Board, Lalpura is the spokesperson of BJP. He defends the good and the bad deeds of the party on TV debates.

He was appointed as the Chairman of the NCM in September 2021, but he did not part ways from politics," said Bharadwaj adding that the Central Civil Services Conduct Rules bars a public servant from holding membership of any political body; he should be immediately removed from Constitutional post.

"However, Lalpura is the spokesperson of BJP. He defends the good and the bad deeds of the party on TV debates. He was appointed as the Chairman of the NCM in September 2021, but he did not part ways from politics," Bharadwaj said.

Police can intervene to stop illegal construction at MCD instructions: Delhi Police chief

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora has issued a circular on the force's responsibility with regard to illegal encroachment across the city, following complaints of misconduct against its personnel. He noted that while illegal constructions pose a challenge that was primarily under the jurisdiction of the municipality and other bodies, the police also have several responsibilities as the law enforcement wing.

According to the circular issued on Saturday, the Commissioner pointed out under Section 475 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act (duties of police), the role of police with regard to illegal private construction would only be under a standing order of the Delhi Police (No. L80/81/2022 S.2b) to inform the concerned municipal officer in the appropriate manner.

After giving the information, the police can further intervene only after getting instructions from the municipal official under Section 344 (2) of the Act to stop illegal construction, remove workers



from the site and seize building material, it said. The police can also intervene by their own after they get information regarding encroachment on government land or if any encroachment is going in front of them, the circular said.

He added that occasional complaints of misconduct in this regard were received from all parts of Delhi, tarnishing the image of the police. He added that the trust of people in the law was essential and there could be no compromise in this regard.

"People's trust in law is a key to our success and there can be no compromise in this regard. The police personnel on beat, in markets, residential colonies and other places should know their responsibility clearly and there is no compromise in it too," it added.

Calling free education ‘revdi’ an insult: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday launched a counter-attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his 'revdi' or freebies culture remark and questioned why people, who are worried due to inflation, should not get access to free education and treatment. Kejriwal said by calling such things free 'revdi', the common man should not be insulted.

Taking to Twitter, Kejriwal tweeted a media report of a video where Modi talks about freebies during his virtual address while conducting the "grih pravesh" ceremony of the Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY) in Satna district of Madhya Pradesh on Saturday.

The Delhi chief minister further asked that at a time when the public are quite worried about inflation, why they should not receive "free education, treatment, medicines and electricity".

"People are quite worried due to the price rise. Why should they not get free education, treatment, medicines and electricity? Politicians get so many facilities for free. Banks waived the loans of so many rich people. By calling it



free revdi again and again, do not insult the common man," the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief said in a tweet in Hindi.

Modi had slammed the freebie culture in his address after virtually conducting the "grih pravesh" ceremony of 4.51 lakh beneficiaries of the Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY) in Satna district of Madhya Pradesh on Saturday.

"Every taxpayer must be thinking that as I celebrate Diwali, the poor brothers in Madhya Pradesh too are rejoicing during the festival of lights. He is getting a pukka house. His daughter's life will improve. But when this taxpayer sees that the money collected from him is being spent on the distribution of revdi, he is pained," the prime minister had said.

In the past as well, Modi had attacked the 'revdi' or freebies culture, targetting promises made by political parties ahead of elections.

AAP has no vision to rule and only depends on freebies: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a jibe at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi BJP on Sunday lambasted him saying he is trying to divert people's attention from banning firecrackers during Diwali and failing to clean up the Yamuna once again by talking about free 'revdi' or freebies culture. Criticising Kejriwal, the Delhi BJP said that he has no vision to rule and only depended on freebies.

Addressing the media, Delhi BJP president, Adesh Gupta said that Kejriwal has never kept his promises and every year before Diwali and Chhath Puja, instead of cleaning Yamuna Maa, chants a new raga.

Gupta termed Kejriwal as 'anti-hindu' saying that he is trying to stop the people from celebrating Chhath Puja which is a holy festival and is celebrated across the country, that's why he has not done anything to get the Yamuna river clean. Gupta said that Kejriwal is trying to divert people's attention from his failures of



not cleaning the polluted Yamuna once again by talking about free revdi.

"The people need clean air to breathe, not your free revdi, clean Yamuna for their religious festivals like Chhath Puja. If instead of distributing revdi, the taxpayers' money had been used to control pollution at the right place, then the air of Delhi would not have been this worse," he said.

Gupta said that the Kejriwal government has always worked to hurt the religious sentiments of Hindus. On the one hand, by banning firecrackers, they work to prevent the celebration of a holy festival like Diwali, while their own ministers are making videos of bursting crackers in



front of their house. After all, how long will Kejriwal continue to deceive Delhiites with such anti-Hindu mentality and hurt religious sentiments.

Leader of Opposition of Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that revdi culture is about dishing out lollipops for political gains and it makes no transformation to people's lives. "It misuses taxpayers' money with the rich benefiting at the cost of the poor," Bidhuri added.

He claimed more than 700 of the 1,027 schools the Delhi government runs do not have science and commerce teachers in Class 11 and 12 and over 745 schools have no principal. Nearly 418 schools have no vice principal," he added.

Last day to pay fee extended to Oct 25 in DU



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The last date for payment of fees for admission to Delhi University's undergraduate programmes following the first round of seat allocation has been extended by a day to October 25.

Earlier, the last date for online payment of the admission fee was October 24. In a notification, Delhi University Registrar Vikas Gupta said: "On the request of candidates, and considering the Diwali festivities, the last date for payment of fees by the candidates has been extended to 02 pm, Tuesday, October 25, 2022."

The university has said that candidates who fail to pay the admission fees by Tuesday will not be able to participate in any subsequent Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS) rounds.

"Only the candidates who will pay the admission fees of CSAS Round-I will get the option of the upgrade," it said.

Over 72,800 candidates out of 80,164 have accepted the college and course allotted to them in Delhi University's first round of seat allocations, Registrar Vikas Gupta has said.

However, only around 24,000 have only submitted their fees till Saturday 8 pm, he said. The Delhi University said the vacant seat will be displayed on Wednesday

"Subsequently, the candidates who have taken the admission in CSAS Round-I can opt for 'Upgrade' and re-order their higher preferences from 10 am, Wednesday, October 26, 2022, to 04:59 pm, Thursday, October 27, 2022," the university said.

At Delhi University, admissions to 79 undergraduate programmes across 67 colleges, departments and centres are being done through the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) scores for the first time.

Till last year, admissions used to be done through merit lists based on Class 12 marks, which saw skyrocketing cut-offs. The university used to announce up to seven cut-offs lists every year.



Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena takes stock of ongoing beautification works on the Dhaula Kuan-Airport stretch of the city's primary arterial road

Fire tenders on 22 spots on Diwali

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Fire Department will deploy its fire tenders at 22 spots on Sunday and on Diwali from 5 pm till midnight as a precautionary measure.

It had told an internal committee headed by the chief fire officer to identify 50 mishap-prone spots in the national Capital where mobile fire tenders can be deployed.

The 22 spots where fire tenders will be deployed are Bara Tooti Chowk, Tilak Nagar, Lajpat Nagar Central Market, Lal Kuan Chowk, Lahori Gate, Nangloi, South Extension, Sonia Vihar, Mehrauli, Ghitorni Metro Station, Ali Pur, Rani Bagh Market, DTC Deport Katran Market, Gandhi Nagar market, Mahipalpur Chowk, Sangam Vihar, Mundka Metro Station, Dera Goan Mor, Azad Market Chowk, Jaipur Golden Hospital, Paper Market Gazipur and Yamuna Vihar.

These spots have been

selected based on an analysis of yearly fire-related calls during Diwali so that fire tenders can quickly reach any location, officials said.

Earlier during a meeting with the Delhi Fire Service to review preparedness ahead of Diwali, Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena had suggested a slew of measures to improve the city's fire-fighting capability.

Saxena had directed the department to bring down the response time for rescue calls to two to three minutes from the current eight to 16 minutes. Diwali, the festival of lights, will be celebrated on Monday.

Besides water tenders, motorcycles fitted with fire-fighting equipment will be deployed at five other locations with narrow and congested lanes.

These are Ambedkar Nagar, Chandni Chowk, Sabji Mandi Ghanta Ghar, Paharganj Shiela Cinema and Gandhi Nagar. Despite a complete ban on firecrackers, the depart-



ment received over 152 fire-related calls on Diwali last year although it was 25 per cent lower than in 2020 and the lowest in 15 years, fire officials said.

The fire services control room usually responds to the maximum number of calls on Diwali, they said. This year, around 2,900 firefighters will be on duty to tackle emergencies. Leaves and day-offs of officers

and staff have been cancelled for Sunday and Monday to ensure the presence of maximum firefighters to deal with any emergency.

Last year, only 152 fire-related calls were received on Diwali. This year, the government has banned fire crackers keeping in view of the worsening air pollution during winter.

Saving people's lives priority for Delhi Govt: Rai

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday said saving people's lives is the priority of the Delhi Government, not politics. Rai has appealed to the people of Delhi not to burst firecrackers. On the other hand, the Delhi BJP leaders criticised the Kejriwal government move to ban fire crackers on Diwali.

Rai said, "The level of pollution increases every year in winter. We celebrate Diwali every year. This Diwali, we appeal to all Delhiites to help in curbing the pollution. Try not to burst crackers. There is an appeal especially to the youth to take a pledge to stop pollution in their city." After every Diwali, he said there is difficulty in breathing and it has a great effect on the elderly and chil-

dren. The pollution is increased with the burning of firecrackers. On criticism against the ban on firecrackers, the Minister said, "I do not want to say anything on politics."

Those who want to do politics can do so. Saving people's lives is our priority. Some people had also gone to the Supreme Court regarding this matter, and after the decision of the court, now there is no scope of debate left in this matter.

When our ancestors celebrated Diwali, there were no firecrackers as then firecrackers were not produced. The priority of every religion is to save lives of people." Rai said that government's focus is to make people aware. He further raised concerns over the incidents of stubble burning reported around Delhi.

Ban pvt construction in Anand Vihar, says CAQM

New Delhi: The Delhi administration has issued an order banning private construction in Anand Vihar and adjoining areas till further orders in view of the rising air pollution levels there. "The air quality index at Anand Vihar and adjoining areas measured 410 on October 22. Hence, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has taken serious note of it and instructed that necessary precautionary and dust mitigation measures be taken to control rising air quality index in the above areas," the order issued on Saturday said.

"Therefore... It is directed to all concerned to

stop private construction with immediate effect till further direction. Non-compliance of the direction will be viewed seriously," it read.

According to the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), if air quality turns "severe" (AQI 401 to 450) authorities are required to enforce a ban on construction and demolition activities in Delhi-NCR, except on essential projects (like railways, metros, airports, ISBTs, national security/defence-related projects of national importance) and non-polluting activities such as plumbing, carpentry, interior decoration and electrical works.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Traffic movement remained smooth in most parts of the national Capital on Sunday, a day ahead of Diwali, except for congestion in some market areas.

The Delhi Traffic Police helpline too recorded minimal calls for traffic congestion. These were from market areas and were caused by improper parking of vehicles.

Some commuters took to Twitter to inform them about the traffic congestion. One user said there was a massive jam outside the Anand Vihar bus stand.

Another said there was traffic congestion in the Najafgarh area. A senior police officer said adequate personnel have been deployed for smooth movement of vehicles in the

Traffic Control Room recorded minimal calls from commuters

city. Several commuters tweeted about traffic congestion in areas like Rohini Sector-7, Ghazipur flyover, Moti Nagar crossing and at the flower market in Chhattarpur.

On Saturday, there were traffic issue in places like Anand Vihar, Karol Bagh, Azadpur and many others as people thronged the markets for Dhanteras.

The Delhi Traffic Control Room was bogged with calls from commuters from various parts of the city who complained of heavy traffic at several intersections. Diwali, the festival of lights, will be celebrated on Monday.



Gandhis star campaigners in HP



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/SHIMLA

Congress has planned a full-throttle campaign in Himachal Pradesh Assembly elections scheduled next month. The party will take up issues like price rise and unemployment and go all out to exploit the huge anti-incumbency to wrest power from the

ruling BJP. The party has included Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot as one of the star campaigners besides outgoing party chief Sonia Gandhi, president-elect Mallikarjun Kharge, former president Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel. AICC sources said the party has to bank on the lega-

cy of the tallest leader of the state late Virbhadra Singh to prevent BJP to retain. The grand old party is, however, faced with internal rumblings and defections of some of its old timers in the recent past that may affect its performance at the hustings.

The party has fielded some young leaders, including former chief minister Virbhadra

Singh's son Vikramaditya and ex-minister B D Bali's son Raghurib Bali.

However, the absence of a tall leader like Virbhadra Singh, who steered the party to many a victory, is being felt in a big way even though his wife Pratibha Singh is leading the charge currently.

The party has made a host of promises to woo the voters in the state. These include the restoration of the old pension scheme, 300 units of free power, payment of Rs 1,500 to women, and government jobs to all those working on out-sourced employment, which is catching the attention of voters so far. Himachal has seen alternate governments of the BJP and the Congress for many decades now, and that is what the Congress has pinned its hopes on.

From the state, senior leader Anand Sharma, Himachal Congress chief Pratibha Singh, CLP leader Mukesh Agnihotri and former

state party chief Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu feature in the list of star campaigners. The Congress has announced 67 candidates for the upcoming polls, while the party is yet to announce its candidate for the Hamirpur seat.

The Legislative Assembly of Himachal Pradesh is 68-members strong. This time, the election is likely to witness a two-cornered contest between the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress, which is eyeing to wrest back power after its defeat in 2017. The party has also decided to go to polls without declaring a chief ministerial candidate.

The party will focus more on small rallies at the district level against only four bigger ones of Priyanka. "People are excited with Priyanka ji taking the lead. She has one home that too in Himachal. The state was formed by her grandmother and she loved the people of Himachal Pradesh," said Sukhi.

Gujarat BJP accuses AAP of being 'anti-religious'

I read news that Kejriwal has banned firecrackers in Delhi, says Guj BJP chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the eve of the Diwali festival, poll-bound Gujarat witnessed a 'cracking debate' over the AAP-ruled Delhi Government's ban on the firecrackers in the national Capital with the Gujarat BJP accusing it of being 'anti-religious'.

Last month, the Arvind Kejriwal Government re-imposed a complete ban on the production, sale and use of all types of firecrackers till January 1, 2023, including on Diwali.

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai recently

said the bursting of firecrackers on Diwali in Delhi will attract a jail term of up to six months and a fine of Rs 200. The BJP has attacked the latter for allegedly not respecting the sentiments of the majority community and being "anti-religious".

Addressing a gathering after a firecrackers show organized in Rajkot, BJP chief CR Patil said, "Today I read some news that the Chief Minister of Delhi has imposed a ban on firecrackers in Delhi. That brother is trying to come here (for elections in Gujarat). Then how will you burst firecrackers?" "So please recognise such anti-religious people and against firecrackers who stop us from celebrating our festivals," Patil said.

The AAP which has replaced Congress in Punjab as the ruling party is now trying to position itself as the main contender to the ruling BJP in

Gujarat where elections are due later this year. The Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government had said the ban on crackers was imposed on the orders of the Supreme Court and the BJP leaders were showing disrespect to the court.

BJP leaders had targeted the Delhi government over the complete ban on firecrackers, dubbing the Kejriwal-led dispensation "anti-Hindu". BJP MP Manoj Tiwari also recently said chief minister Kejriwal should allow people in Delhi to burst crackers for two-three hours on Diwali.

Kejriwal has been campaigning and campaigning in Gujarat promising guarantees like 300 units of free electricity per month, free education in government schools, sops for unemployed youth, Rs 1,000 allowance to women and a monthly stipend for new lawyers.

'Drug hauls from Indo-Pak border have recorded marginal decline'

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Drug hauls from the Indo-Pak border have recorded a marginal decline from about 660 kg in 2021 to a little over 507 kg in the first nine months of this year. This has also been marked by a three-fold jump in drone sightings along the frontier and the shooting of 10 unmanned aerial vehicles.

Of the 659.945 gm of drugs seized in 2021, a maximum of 486.260 kg was recovered from the frontier along Punjab followed by 81.640 kg from Rajasthan, 39.100 kg from Gujarat and 37.145 kg from Jammu besides 14.230 kg from Kashmir, according to official data.

In 2022, a maximum of 216.910 kg was seized from the Punjab frontier followed by 208.665 kg from Gujarat, 49.40 kg from Jammu and 32.047 kg from Rajasthan besides 0.350 kg from Kashmir along the Line of Control (LoC).

The seizures of contraband from the frontier with Pakistan has also witnessed a sharp spike in sightings of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) or drones along the Indo-Pak border and LoC in Jammu and Kashmir which increased thrice from 109 in 2021 to 327 this year till September.

From January to September this year, as many as 236 drones were sighted from Punjab followed by observation of 51 such flying machines in Jammu, 24 in Rajasthan, six in Gujarat, five in Kashmir and two in Jammu.

In 2021, just 64 drones were sighted in Punjab followed by 31 in Jammu, seven in Gujarat, two in Gujarat, three in Kashmir and two in Jammu.

Over the last few years, drones have been used as a



medium of logistics by Pakistani agencies for sending arms, ammunition and drugs especially along the Punjab frontier for onward supply to the terrorist groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir and for generation of terror funding.

The Border Security Force that secures the frontier with Pakistan, on its part, is seeking to devise technological means to counter threats emanating from the drones coming from across the border.

However, the recovery of arms and ammunition along the northern and western border with Pakistan has substantially reduced till September this year due to the heightened vigil by the security forces deployed on the ground.

As many as 45 rounds and arms and 595 rounds of ammunition were recovered till September this year in contrast to recovery of 84 arms and 5,284 rounds of ammunition in 2021, according to official data.

However, the number of drones carrying narcotics as also arms and ammunition in the Punjab sector has increased in the last nine months even as the BSF has sought down 10 drones along the Punjab frontier till now.

Most of the arms and ammunition were recovered from the Punjab border with 501 live rounds and 32 arms being seized from this border

this year followed by 90 rounds of ammunition and 11 arms being seized from Jammu sector, one weapon and three live rounds being seized from Gujarat.

In 2021, as many as 3,322 live rounds and 58 arms were recovered from Jammu and 347 such ammunitions and 10 arms were seized from Gujarat along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, 463 ammunitions were recovered from Jammu and 1,152 ammunition and 84 arms were seized from Kashmir.

Apprehension of ultras along the Indo-Pak border has also declined from 182 in 2021 to 170 in the first nine months of this year. As many as 97 suspects were apprehended in 2021 from Punjab followed by 42 in Rajasthan, 29 in Gujarat and eight in Jammu besides six from the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir.

In 2022, a total of 82 suspects were nabbed from Punjab, followed by 39 from Gujarat, 36 from Rajasthan and nine from Jammu. No suspect has been apprehended from the LoC till September this year.

In 2021 and number has marginally been down with 170 apprehensions till September this year excluding those nabbed from Line of Control which was six last year and till September this year.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during Deepotsav celebrations, on the eve of the Diwali festival, in Ayodhya on Sunday

PTI Photo

Ex-MP criticises Pondy Lt Governor for cancelling suspension order of PTU Registrar

Puducherry: Former Puducherry Lok Sabha member M Ramadoss on Sunday criticised the "intervention of Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and her direction to cancel order of Puducherry Technological University Vice Chancellor suspending the Registrar."

In a release, Ramadoss who is also a former Head of the Department of Economics in Pondicherry Central University, said, "Lt Governor has violated her authority and intervened without justification to cancel the order of suspension." **PTI**

BJP welcomes MHA's move to cancel FCRA licences of Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Trust



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday welcomed the decision of the Union Home Ministry to cancel the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licences of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and the Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust for alleged violation of laws.

Addressing newspapers here, Party spokesperson, Sambit Patra said, that "no one had the courage to take action against people like Zakir Naik, who is being investigated on accusations of terrorism and has fled India, while the UPA was in power."

He accused RGF of drawing Rs 50 lakh from the absconding Islamic preacher Naik's Islamic Research Foundation as also 'semesters Rana Kapoor and Mehul Choksi'. BJP spokesperson said the Modi administration has operated in line with the law and the Constitution.

He said these two NGOs are associated with and controlled by the Gandhi family. He alleged that the donation was received by these organisations three times from 2005 to 2006 communist Party of China and the Embassy of China.

He said when alleged donation flowed to these organisations Sonia who was chairperson of United Progress Alliance (UPA) and also that of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and "crores of rupees from Chinese Communist

party and also from Chinese Embassy went into the RGF". Patra said BJP President J P Nadda had also spoken spoke about the scandal in 2020. The BJP spokesperson said the people of the country and his party welcome "the Centre's decision to restraint these NGOs by canceling their licences".

Taking a swipe at the Gandhi family, Patra said Rahul who asks many questions on China should be reminded that during "Doklam standoff with China the entire Gandhi family was seen under Chinese tent".

Patra also referred to the visit of all Gandhi family members-Sonia, Rahul, Priyanka, and Robert Vadra -to Olympics in China where he alleged a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Chinese President and Sonia "following which donations from China flowed to the RGF".

He again appreciated the central government "for acting against an NGO having links with China". Patra alleged that during UPA government Rs 100 crore donation was made to said NGO and those contributing to it included 11 Public Sector Units (LIC SAIL, Gail, SBI, HUDCO, ONGC, etc., and Ministers including home, Family and environment ministries.

Bid to divert public mind from country's woes, defame us, says Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday hit back at the Centre for action against the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and the Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust (RGCT), saying the move is aimed at defaming the party and diverting public attention from the main issues being faced by the country.

The Congress' remarks come after the Central government cancelled the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licences of the RGF and the RGCT -- two NGOs headed by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi -- for alleged violation of laws.

Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said the country's economy is in deep crisis caused by spiralling prices, rising unemployment and a falling rupee, and the people are clearly "fed up with the politics of hate and divisiveness".

"Over the Deepavali weekend, the Ministry of Home Affairs cancelled the FCRA registrations of both the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and the Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust. They recycle old charges against the RGF and RGCT. This is to defame the party and divert public attention from issues of day-to-day concern to them," he said in a statement.

Congress leader and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot also slammed the NDA government's move and said the cancellation of FCRA licences of the RGF and RGCT is a "symbol of political malice" of the Modi government.

The action against the RGF came following investigations carried out by an inter-ministerial committee formed by the Union Home Ministry in 2020. "The FCRA licences of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation

and the Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust have been cancelled after investigations against these NGOs," an official of the home ministry said.

The investigators covered alleged manipulation of documents while filing income-tax returns, misuse of funds and money laundering while receiving funds from foreign countries, including China, officials said.

The probe team comprised officers from the ministries of home and finance, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), besides the ED, and was mandated to investigate if these trusts run by the Gandhi family and other Congress leaders allegedly manipulated any documents while filing tax returns or misused and laundered money received from foreign countries, they said.

The BJP welcomed the government's action and said the Gandhi family and organisations linked to them can't be above law.

Ramesh said the people of India are aware that the RGF was established in 1991 after the tragic assassination of Rajiv Gandhi who stood for the ideas of Sadbhavana, both among all Indians and with other nations, inclusive and sustainable development of India using science and technology and empowerment of women, the youth and local self-government at the panchayat, district and municipal levels.

He said the former prime minister also stood for relief to those affected by natural disasters and violence, and those with disabilities.

The RGF has been working since its inception to promote these ideas through programmes in various parts of India and lakhs of people, including children and women, have benefited from these programme, he said.

Saudi Prince MBS to visit India in mid-Nov

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will visit India in mid-November and hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on bilateral ties and issues like the raging Ukraine conflict. The Crown Prince is also the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The visit has geopolitical significance in the backdrop of U.S.-Saudi tensions over oil production cuts by the OPEC+ grouping. US President Joseph Biden had warned of "consequences" for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Crown Prince will arrive in New Delhi on November 14 and leave for G-20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia the same day after holding talks with Modi, sources said here on Sunday. Modi, Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping among other leaders will also attend the summit in Bali on November 15-16.

The Crown Prince is coming here on the invitation of the Indian Prime Minister, they said adding External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had

extended the invitation to him during his visit to Saudi Arabia last month. On the likelihood of a bilateral meeting between Jinping and Modi on the sidelines of the G-20 summit, sources said here it is yet to be confirmed.

Both the leaders were present at the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) summit in Uzbekistan last month. As regards talks between the Prime Ministers of India and Saudi Arabia, sources said they will review the present energy security situation due to Ukraine conflict scenario due.

The two leaders will also take stock of the situation in the backdrop of sanctions against Russia by the western nations. The two leaders will review bilateral projects including the progress on the Crown Prince 2019 promise of "\$100 billion investment" in India, particularly in oil reserves, and green energy projects.

Karnataka Minister slaps woman at public function, video goes viral

New Delhi: In yet another case of gross high-handedness by politicians, Karnataka Minister V Somanna on Sunday slapped a woman who approached him with some grievance regarding her land and pleaded with him to redress her grievance.

The video of the slapping incident went viral, but what followed was more shocking. Under apparent pressure, the woman claimed she was never slapped by the Minister and he, in fact, helped her.

"I am from a very poor family. I fell on his feet and asked him to help me by allocating the land. He consoled me but they are misinterpreting that he had slapped me. He has given us the land. He also returned Rs 4,000 which we had paid."

"We have kept his photo along with other Gods and Goddesses. We worship him at home," she said after she was slapped many times. Few have taken her denial at face value. Not even Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai. Who has sought an explanation from the

minister?The incident occurred at an event to distribute land titles in Hangala village, Chamrajnagar district. The woman, identified as Kempamma, confronted the Minister at the event after she did not receive a land title. In the video, Somanna, the state minister of infrastructure development, appears furious and slaps her.

Despite the assault, she immediately bent down and touched the minister's feet. A few men intervened to lift her up, while none of the women security personnel in the video reached out to the woman.

Apparently, the minister turned angry after he was shoved due to the unruly crowd. "This incident is not an incident at all. I have been in politics for the past 40 years. This was a program organized for the downtrodden and economically weaker section of society."

Though I did not misbehave at all if anyone felt hurt then I apologize and express my regret," the minister told reporters in Chamarajanagar.

CPM to launch protest against Guv Arif from Nov 1: Govindan

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The ruling CPI(M) and its allies would launch a State-wide agitation in Kerala from November 1 against the high-handed behaviour of Arif Mohammed Khan, the Governor. This was declared by M V Govindan, the Kerala secretary of the CPI(M) on Sunday. The decision was taken in the liaison committee of the Left Democratic Front which met at Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday afternoon.

"The Governor has become a tool of the Sangh Parivar and he is trying to derail all development works and progressive measures initiated by the CPI(M) led Kerala Government. That is the reason why he is not signing on the legislations enacted by the Assembly. He is functioning as a tool of the RSS and Sangh Parivar, the Hindu communalists," said Govindan while addressing the media.

The CPI(M)'s announcement comes at a time when the Governor is contemplating action against the Kerala Government's move to unilaterally nominate and appoint persons handpicked by the party as vice-chancellors of



the universities in the State.

The CPI(M) had suffered a setback last night when the Supreme Court nullified the appointment of M S Rajasree as the vice-chancellor of APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University describing it as a violation of norms specified by the University Grants Commission. The fate of other three vice-chancellors too hang in the balance following the apex court verdict.

Govindan said that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan would lead an agitation in front of the Raj Bhavan at Thiruvananthapuram on November 15 against the Governor's "evil designs".

"There will be State-wide protests before this grant agitation which would see the participation of all frontal organisations of the party joining it. All tributary units of the



CPI(M) representing children, students, youth, farmers, artisans and workers would line-up to expose the original intention of the Governor," said Govindan.

He also said that the CPI(M) would ignore the allegations and sexual assault charges levelled by God Smuggling scam accused Swapna Suresh against party leaders with contempt. "It has been levelled by an accused person and why we should give attention to such charges?" asked the drill teacher-turned-party ideologist.

Meanwhile Thomas Issac, former finance minister, blamed the BJP and the Sangh Parivar for the allegations made by Swapna Suresh against him. "She is the foster daughter of the Sangh Parivar and it is their style of attacking enemies with this kind of propaganda. Am I

that foolish to invite this lady to Munnar where I have never gone?" asked Issac who reportedly persuaded Swapna to the hill resort Munnar.

Party insiders said the CPI(M) leadership has decided to ignore the charges made by Swapna Suresh as there was nothing new in them. The Congress too is not taking up the issue with due seriousness as the party is yet to recover from the shock caused by Eldhose Kunnappillil, MLA, who allegedly molested and abused a lady school teacher. Kunnappillil has been suspended from the party for six months for not showing due care and caution during his interaction with the public. The Congress MLA has been granted anticipatory bail by the Sessions Court and he has come out of hiding after more than ten days.

V D Satheeshan, leader of the opposition, told media persons that the CPI(M) led Government should file at least a FIR against the three senior leaders who have been named by Swapna Suresh. "The police were quick in filing charges against Kunnappillil. The law should be the same for all," said Satheeshan.

Land for 2nd launch site has been acquired in TN, says ISRO chief

PTI ■ SRIHARIKOTA

The Indian Space Research Organisation has acquired land for the proposed rocket launch site in Tamil Nadu where a launch pad would be set up, the chief of the space agency said on Sunday.

ISRO chairman S Somanath said the space agency was currently in the process of consolidating the land at Kulasekarapatnam in Thoothukudi district, about 650 kilometres from here.

"The second launch site is at Kulasekarapatnam (in Tamil Nadu), we have already acquired the land. Currently, we are consolidating the land to ensure it is all within our boundary wall," he told reporters here, after the successful launch of 36 satellites on board the LVM3-M2/OneWeb India-1 Mission.

ISRO has planned to set up a second launch site and had identified the coastal town in Tamil Nadu for taking up missions that require small satellite launch vehicles as compared to the one in Sriharikota which is currently in use for missions undertaken by the space agency.

"The design for the launch pad is ready. Once the land comes into our control in terms



of protection like security, we will commence construction," the Chairman said.

The whole construction activity is expected to take place in two years, he said responding to a query.

Regarding the Chandrayaan-3 lunar mission, Somanath said the space agency was looking at a launch window by June-July 2023.

Besides the successful launch of the 36 satellites, the press conference also turned into a jubilant mood as it was double delight for ISRO scientists and members of Network Access Associated Limited (OneWeb) Ltd, since October 23 marks the birthday of Sunil Bharti Mittal, the chairman of Bharti Enterprises.

Bharti Enterprises is one of the major investors and shareholders in OneWeb Ltd.

Somanath and a host of leaders including NewSpace India Chairman and Managing Director D Radhakrishnan extended their birthday greet-

ings to Mittal on the occasion. Mittal, who arrived on Saturday at the spaceport to witness the launch, took some time to witness the launch

pads, the LVM3-M2 rocket and also took pictures of him along with Somanath at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.

ISRO's historic mission: Rocket LVM3-M2 launches 36 satellites

PTI ■ SRIHARIKOTA/BENGALURU (AP)

Indian Space Research Organisation's heaviest rocket LVM3-M2 on its maiden commercial mission on Sunday successfully placed 36 broadband communication satellites of a UK-based customer into the intended orbits, the space agency said, describing the mission as "historic".

OneWeb Ltd is the UK-based customer of NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL), ISRO's commercial arm, and a global communication network powered from space, enabling internet connectivity for governments and businesses. Bharti Enterprises is one of the major investors in OneWeb.

London-based satellite communications company Network Access Associated Limited (OneWeb) said its partnership with ISRO and



the space agency's commercial arm NSIL demonstrated its commitment to provide connectivity across the length and breadth of India by 2023.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded ISRO and other stakeholders for the success.

"Congratulations @NSIL_India @INSPACeIND @ISRO on the successful launch of our heaviest launch vehicle LVM3 with 36 OneWeb satellites meant for global connectivity. LVM3 exemplifies Atmanirbharta & enhances India's competitive edge in the global commercial launch service market," he said.

Won't let BJP turn Karnataka into lab of hatred, misgovernance: Rahul

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said his party will not allow Karnataka to be turned into a laboratory for the BJP's experiments with hatred and misgovernance.

The leader was optimistic that his party will unleash Karnataka's true potential through the path of love, peace and harmony.

"The Congress party will not allow this garden of peace to be turned into a laboratory for the BJP's experiments with hatred and misgovernance," he said in a statement, after winding up his Karnataka leg of Bharat Jodo Yatra and entered Telangana on Sunday.

"Through the untiring efforts of our state leaders, drawing on the rich cultures of Karnataka and the support of crores of Kannadigas, that day will soon come when we will unleash Karnataka's true



potential through the path of love, peace and harmony," he added.

While thanking the people for their outpouring of support throughout his journey in Karnataka, Gandhi said he saw the potential of its people being crippled.

Farmers growing crops from every region are struggling to support their families due to rising costs, uncertain yields and fluctuating prices, the Wayanad MP said.

The youth are unable to find opportunities that meet

their aspirations despite repeated attempts, Gandhi said, adding, small entrepreneurs are closing down with inadequate or no support and a market that is tilted heavily in favour of a few big players.

"MGNREGA workers, women, weavers and many others are staring at shrinking incomes. Disadvantaged sections of the society and minorities face a rising tide of hatred and violence. The languages, the diverse cultures and the history of the state are being distorted and decimated," the former Congress president alleged.

He accused the BJP in Karnataka of going against the teachings of 12th century social reformer Basaveshwara, the founder of Lingayat sect.

He said Gurus Basavanna had taught "Do not steal, do not kill, do not lie, do not be angry, do not be intolerant of others" but the BJP has done exactly the opposite of his

teachings in Karnataka.

"The state that once spearheaded India's growth story is now known for the '40 per cent Commission' government that exemplifies the BJP's model of suit, boot, loot Sarkar," Gandhi charged.

Corruption, according to him, is at an unprecedented scale where people have to pay for jobs, contracts and public services.

"There is nothing that is not up for sale for the BJP in Karnataka. The erosion of social harmony and the public sector is paralysing economic progress and hitting the poor and vulnerable the hardest," the Congress leader said.

Gandhi, who started the Bharat Jodo Yatra from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu on September 7, entered Karnataka on September 30. After travelling across the state for 24 days, he entered Telangana via Mahabubnagar on Sunday.

Sharad Pawar says he will participate in Cong's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Maharashtra

PTI ■ BARAMATI

NCP president Sharad Pawar on Sunday said he will participate in the Congress's Bharat Jodo Yatra when it enters Maharashtra as an attempt is being made through it to bring harmony in society.

Talking to reporters here, Pawar said state Congress leaders Ashok Chavan and Balasaheb Thorat had met him and extended an invitation to participate in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, a mass outreach programme, when it enters the state on November 7.

The Congress' Bharat Jodo Yatra is scheduled to cover a distance of 3,570 km in 150 days. It started on September 7



from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu and will conclude in Jammu and Kashmir.

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who is leading the yatra, has so far covered four states - Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Pawar said, "The yatra is a Congress party programme. But through this initiative, an attempt is being made to bring harmony in the society. So some of us from different parties will join the yatra wherever possible when it is in the state."

To another question, Pawar scoffed at politics being done over the elections of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

"One should not bring politics into some fields. Those who do it are ignorant. When I was the BCCI president, Gujarat's representative was (present prime minister) Narendra Modi, Arun Jaitley represented Delhi while Anurag Thakur represented Himachal Pradesh. Our job is to provide facilities to players. We don't bother about other issues," the NCP chief said.

World Cup winner Roger Binny was recently elected as the 36th president of the BCCI,

taking over from Sourav Ganguly to run the world's richest cricket board.

Jay Shah was re-elected as the secretary for a second successive term. The other office bearers who were elected unopposed included treasurer Ashish Shelar, vice-president Rajeev Shukla and joint secretary Devjit Saikia.

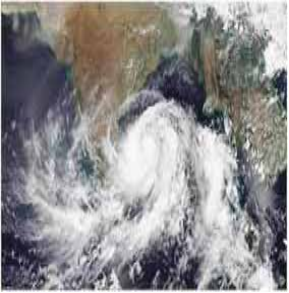
On former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray's tour of Aurangabad district on Sunday, Pawar said, "It is good he is travelling to meet farmers. His health has improved...Why have doubts? He should put the demands of farmers before the state and central governments. If the farmers benefit, it is good."

Bengal braces up as cyclone Sitrang hurtles towards Bay of Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With cyclone Sitrang hurtling up the Bay of Bengal towards Bengal-Bangladesh coast, the Bengal Government braced up for all exigencies, senior State Minister and Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim said.

Taking lessons from the ferocity of previous storms Aila, Yash or Titli the district administrations of all the south Bengal districts including North and South 24 Parganas, East Midnapore, and Nadia have been put on high alert senior officials at State secretariat at Nabanna said adding the fishermen have been warned against venturing out in the deep seas. The above mentioned districts could receive heavy to very heavy rainfall, sources said.



"The administration in the low lying areas have resorted to miking and have started evacuating the people to higher areas, shelters have been kept ready," sources said. Leave of government employees in the departments concerned have been cancelled and "the NDRF and SDRF and the police have been put on high alert," the Minister said.

With Kali Puja and Diwali falling on the same day the rev-

ellers and Puja organisers have been asked to exercise utmost caution, the minister said.

The deep depression hovering over the Bay of Bengal was likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm and make a landfall at Tinkona Islands off Barishal district in Bangladesh, the officials at regional IMD office in Kolkata said adding the wind speed could be around 60-70 kmph and their could be an occasional gush of about 90 kmph.

The cyclonic depression was about 740 km away from Barishal when reports last came in. This was the first cyclonic depression after the monsoon this year, officials said.

There could be rains in Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura under the impact of the cyclone, sources said.

Yogi to celebrate Diwali with Musahars and Vantangiya

PNS ■ KUSHINAGAR / GORAKHPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will celebrate this Diwali with members of Musahar and Vantangiya communities.

The Musahar community, which was neglected for decades and brought into the mainstream of society with Yogi government's efforts in the last five and half years, has been invited to the Diwali celebrations with the chief minister while it has become a ritual for Yogi to celebrate Diwali with the Vantangiya people.

The Yogi Adityanath government has been working dedicatedly in the last five and a half years for the uplift and welfare of the underprivileged and the deprived in the state. As a result of Yogi's efforts, the Musahar community, which faced hunger, malnutrition, poverty and neglect for years,



is now able to celebrate the festivals with fervour and gaiety.

Owing to the sustained efforts of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the children of the Musahar communities, mainly daughters, are attaining education and are moving towards achieving self-reliance. Two such daughters of the Musahar community, after completing training from the Rashtriya Raksha University, have become the 'Lakshmi' of their homes by performing duties as 'security guards' in Telangana.

There are about 10,414 Musahar families living in Kushinagar district's 138 gram sabhas. The previous governments before 2017 continued to neglect the development of

the Musahar families, due to which the community suffered hunger, malnutrition and various illnesses.

Ever since Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took over the reins of the state, it was ensured that all the deprived families benefitted from the schemes that were launched for them. The community ever since has been receiving the benefits of several schemes, and getting rice, wheat and gram through the public distribution system.

About 8,000 houses have been built under PM Awas Yojana (Rural) in 10 Musahar-dominated development blocks in the district and additional houses have been built as part of the Chief Minister Awas Yojana.

The community has been made aware of the importance of cleanliness and about 10,159 families have been provided with toilets. Job cards of almost all eligible Musahars have been

made under MGNREGA in Kushinagar district to ensure that there is no hindrance to the livelihood of Musahars.

The Musahars presently are not only leading quality life with the presence of all basic amenities by being benefitted through government schemes but also the distant dream of providing education to their children is also being fulfilled. The efforts of Yogi Adityanath towards uplift and empowerment of the Musahar community have been yielding fruitful results with the daughters belonging to the community becoming self-reliant and setting an example before the country.

Kiran and Sandhya belonging to the marginalised Musahar community of Sukrauli Madanpur village have been serving as 'security guards' in Telangana by undergoing training from the Rashtriya Raksha University, Gujarat.

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CM to launch development works

Lucknow: It has become a ritual for Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to celebrate Diwali with the Vantangiya, a community that has been brought into the mainstream of society through his relentless efforts. Like previous years, the chief minister will once again share the gaiety of the festival with the forest dwellers in Tinkona village along with the Musahar families. The chief minister on this occasion will launch development works worth about Rs 80 crore. Gifts will also be distributed among Vantangiya families on behalf of the chief minister. **PNS**

CM welcomes 'Lord Ram' on return to Ayodhya by Pushpak Viman

PNS ■ AYODHYA

The divine scene of the return of Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshman to Ayodhya by Pushpak Viman after 14 years of exile was recreated on Sunday in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Governor Anandiben Patel and hundreds of people at the Ram Katha Park here on Sunday.

The homecoming of Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshman was staged at a programme organised prior to the mega Deepotsav event. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Governor Anandiben Patel and



Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak gave them a grand welcome.

Flowers were also showered from Pushpak Viman to welcome Lord Ram. The entire city of Ayodhya erupted in excitement upon seeing this divine scene. Everyone present at the venue was overwhelmed.

Spectacular tableaux kick off 6th Deepotsav celebrations

PNS ■ AYODHYA

The 6th edition of Deepotsav celebrations started on Sunday morning with 16 spectacular tableaux based on episodes from the Ramayana being taken out in the holy city.

Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh flagged off the themed tableaux, which were taken out from Udaya intersection to Ram Katha Park in Ayodhya.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the stage was set for Deepotsav celebrations on a grand note in Ram Nagari on Sunday, adding that the number of diyas (earthen



lamps) to be lit to celebrate Deepotsav would set a new world record.

In this Deepotsav, the coronation of Lord Ram is to be performed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Deepotsav celebrations will remind visitors of Ayodhya as it was in Treta Yuga when Lord Ram returned to

Ayodhya after conquering Lanka and the way the people of Ayodhya had welcomed him. Treta Yuga came alive on Sunday in Ayodhya.

The event introduced the world to the rich Sanatan culture and traditions of India and the significance of Lord Ram for every Indian.

The tableaux have been designed by the Tourism and Information departments and replicated Balkand, Ayodhya Kand, Kishkindhakand, Aranyakand and Lanka Kand of Ramayana, in addition to presenting glimpses of Yogi government's campaign against criminals and land mafia.



Ram Ki Paidi illuminated with earthen lamps during Deepotsav celebrations, on the eve of the Diwali festival, in Ayodhya on Sunday. (PTI Photo)

Xi's China

Leaders and peoples must steel themselves to face a more bellicose China under Xi

By electing Xi Jinping as its general secretary for the next five years, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party has made him emperor in all but name. He has also secured reappointment as head of the country's Central Military Commission. In March next year, the 69-year-old is also expected to get a third term as China's President. CCP oligarchy has become one-man rule. The post-Mao period was marked with power-sharing among the CCP top brass. But in Xi, all powers have once again concentrated. He has already been called the most powerful leader since Mao Zedong—a remarkable feat for a leader who came to power in 2012. Xi has steadily and systematically removed all (potential and actual) rivals from the bodies that exercise control, filling them with his confidantes. The world saw former president Hu Jintao being unexpectedly, almost unceremoniously, escorted out of the closing ceremony of the Congress of CCP. He was "not feeling well" was the official explanation for the act. In the video that went viral, however, Hu seemed reluctant to leave the ceremony. Xi has not only ensured the exit of persons who are not close to him but also appointed four of his allies in the newly announced Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC). The remaining PBSC members are also his confidantes. Though Xi Jinping Thought, in line with Mao Zedong Thought, is yet to become the guiding philosophy of the CCP Xi is quite close to that.

During Xi's rule, China's gross domestic product or GDP has more than doubled to \$17.73 trillion, as has the per capita income, from \$5,910 in 2012 to \$11,890 by 2021. This is on account of a decline in birth rates; but that is now becoming a problem. Good economic growth, however, has not resulted in a comfortable employment situation. Since 2019, unemployment rates have remained above 5 per cent. In the 16-24 age group, it is 19.9 per cent. Xi doesn't want such facts to be talked about; at least he didn't in his opening speech at the CCP's 20th Congress. China's military expenditure has also doubled since 2012; it is now \$208 billion, as compared to around India's \$77 billion. This spells trouble for the world, especially countries like India which are in China's neighbourhood, not just because of the high defence spend but also the aggressiveness Beijing has become known for in its interaction with the world; most nations have problems with China on one account or the other—trade, the Belt and Road Initiative, wolf warrior diplomacy, border disputes, spread of Covid, et al. Unbothered by the apprehensions the world has, a defiant Xi reportedly urged party members to steel themselves against numerous challenges including a hardening geopolitical climate. India and other countries are already suffering from the multifarious threats emanating from Beijing; it is leaders and people in other countries who must steel themselves to face a more bellicose China — Xi's China.



An illuminated Ram Ki Paidi during Deepotsav celebrations on the eve of the Diwali festival, in Ayodhya

Keep cricket apolitical

Politicising cricket is not a good idea as it denies good cricket to millions of fans on both sides

The announcement by Jay Shah, the secretary of BCCI that India won't go to Pakistan to play the Asia Cup 2023, has saddened the cricket world. Shah also made it clear that Pakistan can't come to India either. He has hinted that the match should be played at any other venue outside Pakistan. Asia cup is a major cricketing event that brings the two Asian giants India and Pakistan face to face which otherwise are not playing one-on-one since 2006. India canceled all its tours to Pakistan after the Mumbai attack in 2008. The last time the Indian team visited Pakistan was in 2006. In retaliation, the Pakistani cricket Board officials have hinted that they might decide to pull out of the World Cup to be held in India. This is an unfortunate day for the game of cricket. The politics has seeped into the gentlemen's game and is now threatening to undo it. Perhaps cricket is the only bridge left between the two hostile neighbors. The PCB has as expected shown its disappointment and disapproval of the ACC President Jay Shah and said his comments were not warranted as they were made without prior discussion with the board of the ACC or the PCB and that it could have 'long-term consequences and implications.'

PCB has made a valid point as throwing a spanner in the works would hurt all, of course, PCB would be the worst hit. Besides, there was no immediate provocation as in 2008, when Pakistan's involvement in the Mumbai attacks outraged the nation and India did the right thing to snap all ties with Pakistan. But then all rivalries should come to an end especially now when the two teams enjoy excellent understanding and bonhomie. Apart from the loss of revenue to the ICC and the two cricket boards, it is also a big loss for the millions of cricket fans on both sides of the border who look forward to the event. It is a fact that today India is the big boy of cricket. Its cricketing revenue keeps the ICC going and also many cricket boards, including PCB which get a share from ICC. Former Pakistan cricketer Ramiz Raja once pointed out that it is Indian ad revenue that keeps the PCB going. Indeed India could pull the plug on PCB but that would not be a nice thing to do as it would make India the bad boy of cricket which is happy to kill the competition by unfair means. If India has to fight Pakistan let it be on the 22-yard pitch and not in the boardrooms of cricket boards.

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Perils of living beyond means

Freebies may be popular and help Government win over people but at the end of day it can be a financial drain and lead to an economic collapse

The Supreme Court of India has directed that all pleas against the practice of freebies offered by political parties to win over voters should be listed before a three-judge bench. It had been hearing a PIL and subsequent pleas against freebies before it since July this year. The apex court said that the pleas would be listed after four weeks beginning the twenty-sixth of August stating that "Ultimately it appears that the issues raised by the parties require an extensive hearing before any considered order can be passed." The apex court further stated that the question raised in petitions against the practice of political parties promising pre-election freebies relates to promises made by them as part of their election manifestos or during the poll speeches.

For some time now, the issue of irrational freebies offered by political parties before elections or in their manifestos has been assumed absurd, ludicrous, and even fiscally threatening proportions. Not to mention uneconomic practices of subsidies, cross-subsidies and farm loan waivers, and other similar populist measures undertaken in our country during the recent past few decades, the wave of freebies has taken new forms and again struck in an alarming way. Free electricity has been much used as a freebie with mounting uncleared bills of power generating and distributing companies. Punjab which is already in debt-ridden has announced up to three hundred units of free power every month. It has blindly followed Delhi state in its irrationally providing free water and power even apart from ignoring the fact that Delhi has high revenues and lesser expenses. Though most opposition-ruled states have fallen prey to ruinous freebie culture, even BJP-ruled Himachal Pradesh has followed suit and has promised one hundred and twenty-five free units of electric power and no water charges in rural areas.

While there can be no two opinions that in our country the central and state governments have to make every effort to pull



the poorest and needy sections of society out of poverty, it has to be done through welfare measures based on sound economic principles and not through freebies and other populist measures. Also, there has to be a clear line of distinction between freebies and welfare measures which are based on sound distributive justice and similar other considerations and not on somehow grabbing power without any fiscal considerations.

To ensure continued overall sustainable economic development and also to create means to remove poverty itself and lift economic development standards, the government has to prioritize and give due and proper weightage and importance to educational, health care, infrastructural, and employment generation plans and projects which ensure growth and sustainable development of the country. But even regarding welfare measures, there has to be a clear line of distinction between freebies and welfare measures. In a universally recognised course of economic and political development activity in developed countries, a political party after it assumes power in a democratic set up takes cognizance of its financial and other resources and plans and executes its develop-

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mental and other plans accordingly. It has to have a clear aim to spend taxpayers' money judiciously without frittering it away on unproductive usages.

On the contrary, the motivation behind a freebie is devoid of considerations as stated in the foregone para, and is based on offering a dole to the prospective voter to motivate him on personal considerations to vote for the party offering the dole. Without any regard for fiscal discipline, the competitive culture of freebies could ultimately lead to providing everything for free in our country where the pride for hard work to achieve noble ends continues to be suppressed after suffering foreign rule for over a millennium. With Sri Lanka clearly before our eyes, we have not to go far off to see the results of fiscal indiscipline.

Referring to freebie culture raising its head again in the country, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi cautioned the country that shortcut politics based on populist measures could destroy the country. He pointed out that there is no alternative to hard work.

Freebies ultimately lead to the danger of financial instability resulting in added liabilities without the creation of assets essential for developing countries like India on the

borderlines to turn into economic super power on its own. These impact our political development also particularly in the context of its development as a leading democracy of the world. Freebies destroy the incentive to work hard for creating assets and encourage the culture to live on the palliatives provided by political parties. There is a clear need in our country to build up a consensus against it at the political level. It also throws a social responsibility on our media to carry out a sustained campaign against the degrading impact of freebies in our country.

The apex court has already ordered listing the issue of freebies before a three-judge bench for extensive hearing before any considered order can be passed. The matter had come up before it earlier also and in its judgment in 2013, the apex court had noted that after examining and considering the parameters of the Representation of Peoples Act it concluded that promises in the election manifesto of political parties cannot be read into section 123 for declaring it to be a corrupt practice. The issue is far wider this time.

(The writer is a former IIS officer/accredited freelance journalist/producer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RAINING JOBS

Sir — The blame game of recruitment search and fewer chances of getting an opportunity was talked about at length but all of a sudden a job opens up from the sky as a blessing in disguise. BJP blamed all along for the lack of job opportunities, made a big breakthrough and made the opposition a silent spectator. Again, people blamed the Modi team and we expect other states' Chief Ministers will open Pandora's box and provide more than what Modi offered in an effort to win the heart of the people before the 2024 elections. Vote Bank politics may fetch more jobs and it is good. Modi is a mind winner and he knows how to win the heart in a big way. These recruitments are being done in Mission Mode by Ministries and departments either by themselves or through recruiting agencies. It is indeed a good sign and a big breakthrough.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

MEENAKSHI GODDESS TEMPLE

Sir — Madurai in Tamil Nadu is a very attractive tourist and pilgrim center. The carvings of the ancient temple and sculptural beauty are the points of attraction that keep the eyes and mind glued to them. The maintenance of the city and temple precincts by the local administration leaves much to be desired. Temple precincts are crying for neat maintenance. As per the information received from localities, the painting of temples is done once in 12 years. The Rajgopurams of the temple appear to be in a sorry state of affairs in their look with no paintings done for a long time.

Filths and garbage on both sides of roads leading to the temple dominate the streets. Name boards and the mode of communication in Madurai are only in Tamil Nadu. It is indisputable that the local language of the state must be accorded primacy. Therefore, Tamil must get its pride in place. But unfortunately, the mode of communication with visitors coming from other states or countries has not been supported by English and Hindi. Therefore the visiting tourists are unable to know the

Is another Cold War coming?



Astrologically the planetary configuration gets replicated every sixty years in the almanac. The night sky of 2022 should be no different than 1962. But the terrestrial array today is in sharp contrast. If 1962 marked the end of the Cold War, today's calendar signals the beginning of one far colder. The two big powers that orchestrated a near-nuclear showdown in 1962 seem to be opting for a far more

cavalier and lethal script. Locked in confrontation, the piling ruins of war in Eastern Ukraine that are no different from, say, ravaged streets of a fallen Mosul earlier in Iraq or from the theatres of WW II, hardly trouble them. King Ashoka became great when he renounced war, but we see no such sagacious leader emerging, even in the far distant future. We are destined to visit endless human follies in the savagery of armed conflicts. A greater tragedy that nations have little time to reflect on their foibles that comes with short lived regret in its wake.

King Ashoka became great when he renounced war, post the Kalinga. Sadly, we see no such sagacious leader emerging even in the far distant future and destined to witness endless human follies. Greater pity that nations have little time or inclination to address the growing aberration in human evolution, only to be followed by short lived regret.

R Narayanan | Mumbai

INDIA TO BEAT CHINA IN POPULATION

Sir — Indians will beat China with a population of 1.428 billion on 1 July 2023 with the world population touching 8bn(800 cr) on 15 November 2022. India is a rich country with poor people with wealth concentrated in the hands of a few. Poverty and population are inter-linked. Poverty is the root cause of many Socio Economic problems. Overpopulation, unemployment, low literacy levels & increasing crimes are all consequences of poverty. India houses the largest poor population with wealth & prosperity concentrated in the hands of few, but millions don't have access to even basic facilities. Only if steps are taken to reduce poverty will many of our social problems be solved & the nation will prosper. Mahatma Gandhi said, "Poverty is the worst form of violence."

TS Karthik | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Uddhav Thackeray never left home even for the sake of his party, but now he has set out to welcome Rahul Gandhi



BJP leader —Sanjay Upadhyay

India and China always talk about the need to establish dialogue and resolve everything peacefully, we know their position. These are our close allies, partners, and we respect their position.

Russian President —Vladimir Putin

I got thrown out, from a film called Saaya which was an Anurag Basu film with John Abraham after shooting one shot. At that time, I thought my life was over. I thought my career was over.



Actor —Katrina Kaif

We have disappointed our fans and ourselves. It's definitely hurting. I have disappointed my guys with the way I performed.

West Indies skipper —Nicholas Pooran

I appeal to all tourists in the country to spend at least 5 per cent of their travel budget on buying local products.



Prime Minister —Narendra Modi

FIRST COLUMN

WE MUST BE IN GOD’S SHELTER

Indulgence in material pleasures brings only misery



AJIT BISHNOI

The earth is like a middle planet. It is neither pleasant like heaven nor unpleasant like hell. Each of us must be dutiful. This is a basic requirement for all of us. Our duties begin as we begin to grow; we must learn. This learning process starts quite early, as early as three. This process goes on for a quarter of our lives in a concentrated form, but must go on for the rest of our lives.

Vihar-based life simply means that a person wishes to return to enjoyment of senses and the mind. The basic requirement for a human being is to be dutiful, i.e., be kartavya-based. Another way is shelter-based, which simply means that a person has taken shelter of God for all intents and purposes. He exemplifies what the famous saint Suradas stated in his famous poetry. He used the simile of a bird of a ship, which returns to the ship after completing its duty of feeding itself. There it finds shelter and peacefully remains till it must go out again.

Unfortunately, the majority of humans are vihar-based, and suffer the consequences. Men succumb to weakness, because of ‘ahankara’. Ahankara is a faculty for carrying out duties. We make an entirely different of this precious faculty by claiming to be the doer, which no one can ever be.



This wrong use of ‘ahankara’ is at the root of almost all our problems. Let me start with being lust for sense enjoyment. Yes, we are allowed quite a few enjoyments, but they must be according to dharma. One breaches this maryada because one feels that one is an enjoyer, whereas we have been essentially created to serve others. What about being greedy? One does not believe in the karmaphala principle and wishes to accumulate unlimitedly. His ahankara tells him that it is alright to do so. What happens to such people? Lord Krishna informs: The door to hell is opened for them. The same logic applies to getting angry readily and unnecessarily. Why? Because I am special; only God is, no one else.

Therefore, let us come to our senses and restrain ahankara in us, which is the biggest obstacle in taking shelter of God, which we all must do if we wish to ever be peaceful. (The Bhagavad-Geeta #18.62) Because God is everything to us. Not only God is the only source of peace, which is really being peaceful, not a momentary feeling of peace. He is also a giver of material boons, which we all need in plenty. What did Lord Krishna promise Arjuna, “You, therefore, get up; gain fame, having triumphed over the enemies; and enjoy the flourishing kingdom, these people have already been killed by Me only; you just be the instrument.” (# 11.33)

One must take shelter of God and remain in His shelter, quantum is not important, because a child will hardly do that, but he must be aware of God. As we grow and then begin to age, this shelter taking becomes ever more important. Past 75 years, this must be the life, other duties take lesser positions. Yes, there is another reality also, which is in ‘jeeva’ form, being vihar-based is natural. This is where we must become different from animals, we must do tapasya to reach higher positions, which is very highly satisfying. Ask me, who is enjoying this shelter-based life..

(The author is a spiritual teacher)

Course correction is a must to stop freebies



PRASHANT TEWARI

Consensus among political parties is needed to avert the financial disaster that freebies will lead to in the long run

India has already suffered a lot because of freebies. Unfortunately, all the regional parties, and to some extent the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, indulge in mindless populism and imprudent welfarism. There can be justification for free education and healthcare, but none for the distribution of grinders, washing machines, television sets, laptops, subsidised pilgrimages, free electricity, and farm loan waivers.

Freebie culture is blamed on political elites only, while bureaucrats drafting policy go scot-free. The judicial system conveniently ignores its responsibility to correct the course since it will displease the political class and, of course, the media will never discuss the issue since the government advertisement inflows will be hurt. The poor taxpayers of the country enjoy the visual site of watching their own elected government ripping hard-earned money distributed to large sections of the population seeking the comfort of sitting at home since the government has no vision to generate employment for a dignified living. It is all about failed governance and bribing voters to overcome this monumental failure.

Real income growth of the bottom 30 per cent of Indians slowed down from 1992 when India first began ‘opening up’ and ‘liberalising’ its economy by encouraging the private sector. Since everyone has a vote, that means politicians cannot ignore them. The sops and freebies to the poor buy the requisite votes. It is a small price that India’s affluent have to pay to ensure the economy continues to disproportionately reward them.

The political parties in India try to outdo each other in luring the Indian voters with assorted goodies called freebies. This trend has gained more momentum in recent times with the political parties being innovative in their offerings as the ‘traditional free water and electricity is no longer sufficient as election goodies. The political dialogue built around freebies is fraught with danger as it shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree.

The unviable pre-election promises adversely affect the informed decision making by voters. This calls for fixing the gaps in the design, execution and accountability of freebie culture. It is not that nobody earlier warned against the consequences of populism. It is a ‘race to the bottom’ and “a quick passport to fiscal disaster.”

The results are for all to see. A recent RBI study said, “We can identify a core subset of highly stressed states from among the 10 states identified by the necessary condition, i.e., the debt/GSDP ratio. The highly stressed states are Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal.” GSDP is the state GDP. The states with the highest debt-to-GSDP ratio in 2021-22 include Punjab at 53.3 per cent, Rajasthan at 39.8 per cent, West Bengal



BY THE 1990S, INFLATION HAD REACHED 1,000 PER CENT IN COUNTRIES LIKE BRAZIL, AND THE POOR SUFFERED EXPONENTIALLY. LARGE ECONOMIES, INCLUDING MEXICO, ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL, LANGUISHED AND UP TO HALF OF LATIN AMERICANS SLID INTO POVERTY

(The author is a policy analyst)



at 38.8 per cent, Kerala at 38.3 per cent, and Andhra Pradesh at 32.4 per cent, whereas the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act recommended a debt-to-GDP ratio of 20 per cent for state governments (40 per cent for the Centre) by the financial year 2022-23. This level of debt is extremely concerning and is largely the result of committed expenditure and subsidies under populist schemes coupled with slow growth in revenues.

Most of the states, however, post a healthy picture of their finances which is aided by the fact that much of the borrowing that funds these freebies happens off-budget, beyond the pale of FRBM tracking. The States borrow on the books of their public enterprises by pledging future revenues to the State as a guarantee. Effectively, the burden of debt is on the State exchequer, albeit well concealed.

The debt-GSDP ratio of Punjab is the worst, and worsening. Instead of being concerned that the state debt to GSDP ratio has not gone below 40 per cent for the past six years, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government instead announced that around 51 lakh households won’t pay any electricity bills from September. This is in accordance with the AAP’s election promise of 600 units of free power per billing cycle starting from 1 July 2022.

A case in point is Latin America which provides key learning lessons on populist politics. Populism was active during the 1920s through to the 1970s,

when the working poor united behind icons like Brazil’s Getúlio Vargas and Argentina’s Juan Perón over their dissatisfaction with industrialisation. Populist governments resorted to inflationary financing to grant benefits to the poor. By the 1980s, uncontrolled public spending resulted in excessive fiscal deficits, unsustainable public debt and intractable inflation. Latin America’s ‘Lost Decade’ followed.

Growth at 5.6 per cent in the 1970s shrank to 1.3 per cent and stagnated for another decade. By the 1990s, inflation had reached 1,000 per cent in countries like Brazil, and the poor suffered exponentially. Large economies including Mexico, Argentina and Brazil languished, and up to half of Latin Americans slid into poverty. It will augur well for India and its political stakeholders to imbibe the lessons of Latin America and how the first generation of fiscal reforms introduced in Latin America introduced political stability in the early 2000s. Going down the same path as Latin America may result in a ‘lost decade’ for India also.

The problem with freebies is a political one; the way out is simple: all parties (at the Centre and in states) sit down together and draw a list of don’ts, a negative list of things that none of them would do. With states running astray, it is the responsibility of the Centre to work together with states to advocate fiscal conservatism while ensuring states still retain their freedom in the spirit of federalism.

This requires the Centre to walk a tightrope and requires strong visionary leadership at the helm. More emphasis and confidence should be placed in the legislation already in place to check fiscal spending which is the FRBM Act.

Constructive debate and discussions in Parliament are difficult since the freebie culture has an impact on every political party, whether directly or indirectly. Therefore, judicial involvement is required in order to propose measures. The Election Commission of India can anticipate enforcing the ‘Model Code of Conduct’ for ‘Guidance of Political Parties and Candidates’ effectively to regulate election manifestos in order to prevent the manipulation of informed voter behavior.

Since getting elected is not a license to kill, the elected representatives must not act arbitrarily. The system of monarchy and practicing democracy have a clear distinction, wherein in the latter system the leader is accountable for all the actions, while in the office including the finances and its management. In India, many regional and even national leaders consider themselves the incarnation of god. The reckless way these leaders spend public money is just unacceptable in an orderly society and there have to be reasonable restrictions to be imposed on them while they systematically corrupt the society by offering freebies over quality governance, so as to safeguard the macro interest of the society and the growth of the country.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

AAP IS RAISING AWARENESS AGAINST THE MALADMINISTRATION AND GARBAGE MISMANAGEMENT IN THE BJP-RULED MCD. —AAP MCD IN-CHARGE DURGESH PATHAK



WE WILL START OUR CAMPAIGN AFTER DIWALI AND COMPLETE IT BY NOVEMBER 10. WE’LL TELL PEOPLE ABOUT OUR ACHIEVEMENTS. —DELHI BJP PRESIDENT AADESH GUPTA

Paradox of growing economy, shrinking workforce

India needs to embark on export-led growth to create high-income jobs with a big role of MSMEs



RP GUPTA

India’s GDP growth is highest in the world but its ‘Active work-force (job holders and job seekers)’ is shrinking, while there is a rise in the poverty level. Such a phenomenon in a fast growing economy is surprising and this needs an in-depth study. In a growing economy, new jobs must be generated and the growth benefits should percolate to the population at the bottom of the pyramid. In such a peculiar situation, let’s revisit the concept of GDP treating this to be National income.

In 1934-35, GDP was invented by Simon Kuznets, a Nobel laureate from the USA. Thereafter, the entire world recognized that GDP is the national income. This is a sum total of value addition during production of ‘goods

(The author has written Turn Around India-2020)

and services”. This is used for consumption and investment by the public and government, besides financing trade deficits (goods and services). Currently, out of 1085 million employable workforce (above 15 years age), the ‘Active work-force’ has reduced to about 435 million from about 500 million in 2016 and 475 million in 2011. It reveals that several persons have lost hope and exited from the job market, causing shrinkage of the active workforce despite new additions in the work force @10-12 million per year.

For percolating benefits of GDP growth, India must enlarge labour participation ratio (LPR) in the productive activities. Currently, this has tumbled to about 40 per cent of the total employable work-

force, as against 50.3 per cent in 2016 and 52.9 per cent in 2011. In other nations, it is 60-75 per cent. Falling LPR is the root cause of growing poverty and the distress among majority households.

Therefore, India must revisit its GDP growth model. For better appraisal, let’s visit the pattern of job distribution. As per the 5th employment survey, 2016, about 46.6 per cent of the job-holders are self-employed persons, about 36.4 per cent are casual and contract labourers and the balance 17 per cent are getting regular salary. It means that about 80-82 per cent of job holders are employed in the unorganized small business, mostly in the micro and small sector and farming sector. Out of which, about 45-50 per cent are self-

employed persons, including farmers.

More so, such a majority of job holders are having low income below Rs.10,000/- per month. Considering the complexity, first priority should be attached to generating more jobs by improving LPR. Thereafter, we shall ponder how to raise their income level. During the interim period, the inflation should be controlled.

For generating low/middle income jobs, the agriculture and MSME sector must prosper through proactive policy. Farmers are the true entrepreneurs, who can generate huge jobs. They need remunerative prices, cheaper inputs and protection from the natural calamities. Ways and means must be designed for this with

affordable fiscal burden. Consistent and calibrated export could be a right choice. Food processing industries should gain priority.

Role of FCI should be changed as a marketing and storage facilitator. This could be a game changer in the agro sector. The MSME sector, particularly the micro and small business, are the next big job providers. But those are mostly under stress after 2016. They need liberal credits and tax incentives and exemption. Regulatory easement and simplification of tax laws will motivate them to expand and formalize their business. That will enhance income and generate more jobs. In the medium term, this might surpass agriculture in crafting new jobs with lower middle income.

India also needs large businesses for mass production in an efficient manner. They outsource goods and services and support small businesses. However, those may be pursued for boosting exports and replacing imports. For which, radical reforms must be enacted. They should also invest in the infrastructure for improving efficiency of the Indian economy.

By and large, India needs a mixed economy of small, medium and large business. In the developing phase, the small business and agriculture needs incentives. Gradually, those will expand and join the formal economy. This is the story of most Asian countries, including China and Japan.

Thereafter, the regular salaried jobs with middle/high

income will grow at a faster pace. Growth model should be investment and export-led and not consumption-led. The consumption shall automatically grow with rising income. High interest, stringent NPA norms, tough business regulations and its criminalization are deterrent to new investment. For capital scarce countries like India, investment needs and priorities must be worked through a composite plan.

Global precedents show that faster growth was achieved through rapid industrial growth only. The GDP growth is heavily dependent upon components such as, ‘public and administration expenditures’ and direct tax collection and high end services. Such a growth model needs total review.

Russia builds defensive lines to stem Ukraine’s advance

AP ■ KYIV

Russian authorities are building defensive positions in occupied areas of Ukraine and border regions of Russia, reflecting fears that Ukrainian forces may attack along new sections of the 1,000-kilometer front line of a war nearing its ninth month.

In recent weeks, Ukraine has focused its counteroffensive mostly on the Kherson region. Their relentless artillery strikes cut the main crossings across the Dnieper River, which bisects the southern region, leaving Russian troops on the west bank short of supplies and vulnerable to encirclement.

Kirill Stremousov, the deputy head of the Russian-installed regional administration in Kherson, said Sunday in a radio interview that Russian defensive lines "have been reinforced and the situation has remained stable" since local officials strongly encouraged all residents of the region's capital and nearby areas Saturday to evacuate by ferry to the river's east bank.

The region is one of four that Russian President Vladimir Putin illegally annexed last month and put under Russian martial law on Thursday.

Kherson city has been in Russian hands since the early days of the war, but Ukraine's forces have made advances toward reclaiming it.

About 20,000 Kherson residents have moved to places on the east bank of the Dnieper River, the Kremlin-backed regional administration reported. The Ukrainian military said Sunday that Russia's military also withdrew its officers from areas on the west bank, leaving newly mobilized, inexperienced forces.

The Ukrainian claim could not be independently verified.

As Ukraine presses south after liberating the Kharkiv region in the north last month, authorities in the western Russian provinces bordering northeastern Ukraine appeared jittery.

The governor of Russia's Kursk region, Roman Starovoit, said Sunday that two defensive lines have been built and a third



one would be finished by Nov. 5.

Defensive lines were also established in the Belgorod region, Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

He posted pictures Saturday of lines of pyramid-shaped concrete blocks to block the movement of armoured vehicles.

More defensive positions are being built in the Luhansk

region of eastern Ukraine, according to an announcement by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a millionaire Russian businessman dubbed "Putin's chef."

Prigozhin owns the Wagner

Group, a mercenary military company that has played a prominent role in the war. He said his company was constructing a "Wagner line" in the Luhansk region, another of the Ukrainian provinces Putin illegally annexed last month.

Prigozhin posted images Wednesday showing a section of newly built defenses and trench systems southeast of the town of Kremenna.

The British Defense Ministry said Sunday that "the project suggests Russia is making a significant effort to prepare defences in depth behind the current front line, likely to deter any rapid Ukrainian counteroffensives."

Russia's forces captured Luhansk several months ago. Pro-Moscow separatists declared independent republics in the region and neighboring Donetsk eight years ago, and Putin made controlling all of both provinces a goal at the war's outset.

The Institute for the Study of War, a think tank in Washington, said Sunday that Russia's latest strategy of tar-

geting power plants appeared aimed at diminishing Ukrainians' will to fight and forcing the government in Kyiv to devote more resources to protecting civilians and energy infrastructure.

It said the effort was unlikely to damage Ukrainian morale but would have significant economic impacts.

Nine regions across Ukraine, from Odesa in the southwest to Kharkiv in the northeast, saw more attacks targeting energy and other critical infrastructure over the past day, the Ukrainian army's general staff said. It reported a total of 25 Russian air strikes and more than 100 missile and artillery strikes around Ukraine. The Russian attacks forced the emergency suspension of fertiliser production at a major chemical plant in northwestern Ukraine.

The company that operates the plant, Rivneazot, said Sunday the suspension did not pose an environmental risk.

Russian S-300 missile strikes overnight hit a residential neighbourhood in the city

of Mykolaiv, injuring three people, according to the Ukrainian military's southern command.

Two apartment buildings, a playground and a warehouse were damaged or destroyed, it said in a Facebook post.

Images posted on Telegram by local media and officials showed an apartment building with one side sheared off, and piles of rubble amid puddles on the adjacent ground.

Ukrainian counteroffensive forces in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, meanwhile, targeted Russian-held facilities, notably in the town of Nova Kakhovka, and carried out 17 air strikes in the overall campaign, according to the Ukrainian army's general staff.

In a Telegram post Sunday, the Ukrainian military claimed to have destroyed 14 Iranian-made Russian drones over the past day.

The mayor of Enerhodar, home to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, reported an attack on a hotel used by Russian occupying forces and people who collaborate with them.

Ukrainian woman’s quest to retrieve body of prisoner of war

AP ■ CHUBUYNSKE (UKRAINE)



In the last, brief conversations Viktoria Skliar had with her detained boyfriend, the Ukrainian prisoner of war was making tentative plans for life after his release in an upcoming exchange with Russia.

The next time Skliar saw Oleksii Kisilishin, he was dead — one of several bodies in a photo of people local authorities said were killed when blasts ripped through a prison in a part of Ukraine's Donetsk region controlled by Moscow-backed separatists.

For months, Skliar had held out hope she would reunite with her partner, who had been one of the defenders of the Azovstal steel plant, the last redoubt of Ukrainian fighters in the besieged city of Mariupol.

Now, she has retrained her focus on getting his body back. Against enormous odds, Ukraine has now received the remains of dozens of prisoners who were held at the prison in Olenivka.

But with experts still needing months to identify all the bodies — and no guarantee Kisilishin is among them — Skliar's quest is far from over.

That she even knows her boyfriend is dead is remarkable. She recognised his tattoos in a photo shared on social media following the July 29 blasts.

It showed him laid out, semi-naked, on the ground in a line with eight other bodies.

"When I saw the photo, my eyes did not go beyond Oleksii's body," Skliar told The Associated Press. "I didn't have time to cry. I cried all my tears when they were in Azovstal. My first

thought was to get the body back somehow."

Skliar said she contacted representatives with the International Committee of the Red Cross, told them about the photo and gave them his name in the hopes that they'd be able to arrange for him to be brought home.

The humanitarian organisation couldn't tell her much — the group had to wait for official lists of prisoners and agreements from politicians before it could help repatriate any bodies. While she waited for word, Skliar feared her loved one would end up in a mass grave.

Kisilishin, who died at 26, was called back to the Azov Regiment, part of the Ukrainian National Guard, where he'd served until 2016, two weeks before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.

The animal caregiver and activist had chosen to return to

defend his hometown of Mariupol, rather than stay in Kyiv, where he'd met Skliar at an equestrian club a year before.

When Kisilishin was holed up at the Azovstal steel mill during a three-month siege of the city, they spoke every day until Russian forces encircled the plant. In May, he was captured when the last Azovstal defenders were told by Ukraine's military to turn themselves over to Russian forces.

From captivity, Skliar continued to have phone calls from him, though they never lasted longer than a minute.

Her boyfriend said little about himself, responding only "it's OK" or "bearable" when she asked him how he was.

Then, Skliar said she received a call from Kisilishin — and his voice was cheerful. "He said that they will be taken somewhere. He hoped for an exchange," she said.

Russia withdrew officers from Kherson: Military think tank

AP ■ KYIV



Russia's military leadership has withdrawn its officers in the Russian-annexed city of Kherson across the Dnieper River in anticipation of an advance of Ukrainian troops, the Institute for the Study of War think tank said on Sunday.

To delay the Ukrainian counteroffensive as the Russians complete their retreat, Moscow has left newly mobilised, inexperienced forces on the other side of the wide river, it added.

The troop movements come as the Ukrainian military said its forces have continued their counteroffensives in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

On Saturday, Russian-installed authorities in Ukraine told all Kherson residents to leave immediately ahead of the expected action by Ukrainian troops to take back the city.

Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Russian-backed regional administration in Kherson, said on Sunday that over 20,000 civilians had evacuated to the left bank of the Dnieper River.

He said that while Ukrainian forces were trying to push their offensive on the right bank, Russian defensive

lines "have been reinforced and the situation has remained stable".

Kherson has been in Russian hands since the early days of the eight-month-long war in Ukraine. The city is the capital of a region of the same name, one of four that Russian President Vladimir Putin illegally annexed last month and put under Russian martial law on Thursday.

On Friday, Ukrainian forces bombarded Russian positions across the province, targeting pro-Kremlin forces' resupply routes across the river and preparing for a final push to reclaim the city.

The ISW think tank also

said on Sunday that Russia's latest war strategy of targeting power plants in recent days appears to be aimed at diminishing Ukrainians' will to fight and forcing Ukraine's government to spend additional resources to protect civilians and energy infrastructure.

It said the effort was unlikely to damage Ukrainian morale but would have significant economic impact.

The Russian attacks on power supplies forced the emergency suspension of fertilizer production at a major chemical plant, Rivneazot, in northwestern Ukraine. The company said on Sunday the suspension is not posing an

environmental risk.

The mayor of Enerhodar, home to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, reported an attack on a hotel used by Russian occupying forces and those who collaborate with them. It's unclear if anyone was hurt.

The Ukrainian military said on Sunday that Russian forces are now mostly on the defensive, but are keeping up offensive attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and on several towns in the eastern Donbas area.

Nine regions across Ukraine, from Odesa in the southwest to Kharkiv in the northeast, saw attacks again targeting energy and other critical infrastructure over the past day, the Ukrainian general staff said.

It reported a total of 25 Russian air strikes and more than 100 missile and artillery strikes around Ukraine.

Ukrainian counteroffensive forces in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, meanwhile, targeted Russian-held facilities, notably in the town of Nova Kakhovka, and carried out 17 air strikes in the overall campaign, according to the Ukrainian general staff.

In a Telegram post on Sunday, the Ukrainian military claimed to have destroyed 14

Iranian-made Russian drones over the past day.

Russian S-300 missile strikes overnight hit a residential neighbourhood in the city of Mykolaiv, injuring three people, according to the Ukrainian military's southern command.

Two apartment buildings, a playground and a warehouse were damaged or destroyed, it said in a Facebook post.

Images posted on Telegram by local media and officials showed an apartment building with one side sheared off, and piles of rubble amid puddles on the adjacent ground.

Governors of two Russian regions that border northeastern Ukraine said defensive lines are being built, apparently in anticipation of cross-border attacks as Ukrainian troops advance.

Kursk Gov. Roman Starovoit said Sunday that two defensive lines in the region already have been built and a third one will be finished by Nov. 5.

Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said that defensive lines were also built in his region. On Saturday, he posted pictures of lines of pyramid-shaped concrete blocks intended to block the movement of armoured vehicles.

Fears over Russian threat to Norway’s energy infrastructure

AP ■ OSLO



Norwegian oil and gas workers normally don't see anything more threatening than North Sea waves crashing against the steel legs of their offshore platforms.

But lately they have noticed a more troubling sight: unidentified drones buzzing in the skies overhead.

With Norway replacing Russia as Europe's main source of natural gas, military experts suspect the unmanned aircraft are Moscow's doings. They list espionage, sabotage and intimidation as possible motives for the drone flights.

The Norwegian government has sent warships, coast-guard vessels and fighter jets to patrol around the offshore facilities. Norway's national guard stationed soldiers around onshore refineries that also were buzzed by drones. Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store has invited the navies of NATO allies Britain, France and

Germany to help address what could be more than a Norwegian problem.

Precious little of the offshore oil that provides vast income for Norway is used by the country's 5.4 million inhabitants. Instead, it powers much of Europe.

Natural gas is another commodity of continental significance. "The value of Norwegian gas to Europe has never been higher," Ståle Ulriksen, a researcher at the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy, said. "As a strategic target for sabotage, Norwegian gas pipelines are probably the highest value target in Europe."

Illegal border crossings to US from Mexico hit annual high

AP ■ SAN DIEGO (US)

A surge in migration from Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua in September brought the number of illegal crossings to the highest level ever recorded in a fiscal year, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The year-end numbers reflect deteriorating economic and political conditions in some countries, the relative strength of the U.S. Economy and uneven enforcement of Trump-era asylum restrictions.

Migrants were stopped 2,27,547 times in September at the U.S. Border with Mexico, the third-highest month of Joe Biden's presidency. It was up 11.5 per cent from 2,04,087 times in August and 18.5 per cent from 1,92,001 times in September 2021.

In the fiscal year that ended September 30, migrants were stopped 2.38 million times, up 37 per cent from 1.73 million times the year before, according to figures released late Friday night.

AP ■ BUDAPEST (HUNGARY)



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban made veiled comparisons on Sunday between the Soviet troops that attacked Hungary during the 1956 revolution and the institutions of the European Union today.

Marking the 66th anniversary of that crushed uprising, Orban suggested that the EU, which has sought to rein in democratic backsliding in Hungary, would end up like the Soviet Union, which dissolved more than three decades ago.

"Let's not bother with those who shoot at Hungary from the shadows or from the heights of Brussels. They will end up where their predecessors did," Orban said in a speech to a select group of guests in the rural city of Zalaegerszeg in western Hungary, breaking with a tradition of giving a speech in Budapest on the anniversary.

His absence from the capital on one of Hungary's most important national holidays comes as his government faces growing pressure from a sustained wave of protests by Hungarian teachers and students.

The educators demand higher wages and better working conditions. Another protest was

planned on Sunday in Budapest.

Orban, who characterizes his form of government as an "illiberal democracy", is also facing the threat of cuts to EU funding over his democratic record and perceived corruption.

Seeking to salvage some funding, the Hungarian parliament recently passed new anti-graft legislation.

But the country still risks losing billions of euros in funding as punishment over perceived breach of democratic practices — something that has caused the currency and economy to weaken recently.

"We were here when the first conquering empire attacked us, and we'll be here when the last one collapses," Orban declared on Sunday.

"We will bear it when we must, and we will push back when we can. We draw swords when there is a chance, and we resist when long years of oppres-

sion come."

"We are victorious even when we are defeated," Orban said.

"The October 23 national holiday commemorates the beginning of a 1956 popular uprising against Soviet repression that began in Budapest and spread across the country.

After Hungary's Stalinist leader was successfully ousted and Soviet troops were forced out of the capital, a directive from Moscow sent the Red Army back into Budapest and brutally suppressed the revolution, killing as many as 3,000 civilians and destroying much of the city.

The holiday, which looms large in Hungary's historical memory as a freedom fight against Russian repression, comes as war rages in neighbouring Ukraine where Moscow has occupied large swaths of the country and illegally annexed four regions.

Russian warplane falls on building in Siberia, 2 pilots die



AP ■ MOSCOW

A Russian warplane crashed into a residential building in the Siberian city of Irkutsk Sunday, killing both crewmembers — the second incident in less than a week in which a combat jet has crashed in a residential area.

Irkutsk Gov. Igor Kobzev said the plane came down on a private, two-story building housing two families.

There were no casualties on the ground.

The local branch of Russia's Emergencies Ministry said the Su-30 fighter jet crashed during a training flight, sparking a fire.

A surveillance cam video posted on Russian social networks showed the fighter coming down in a nearly vertical dive.

Other videos showed the building engulfed by flames and firefighters deployed to

extinguish the blaze.

The crash came less than a week after another Russian warplane crashed near an apartment building in the Sea of Azov port of Yeysk and exploded in a giant fireball, killing 15 and injuring another 19. Sunday's crash was the 11th reported noncombat crash of a Russian warplane since Moscow sent its troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24. Military experts have noted that as the number of Russian military flights increased sharply during the fighting, so did the crashes.

Irkutsk, a major industrial center of more than 600,000 in eastern Siberia, is home to an aircraft factory producing the Su-30 fighter planes.

The Su-30 is a supersonic twin-engine, two-seat fighter that has been a key component of the Russian air force and also has been used by India and other countries.

Chinese Prez Xi creates history, wins record third term in power

PTI ■ BEIJING

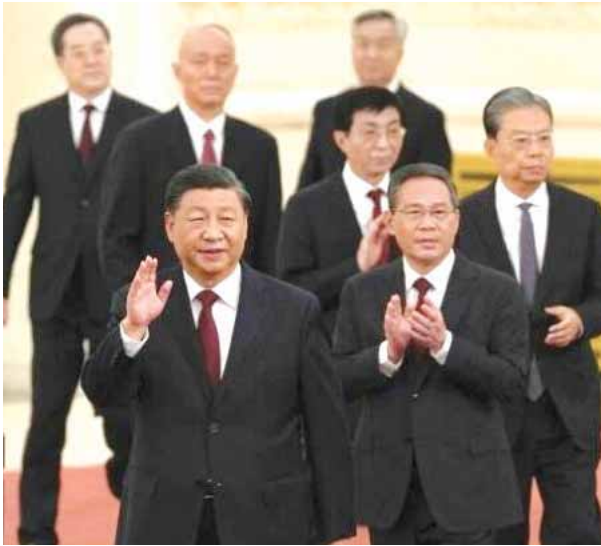
Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday created history, becoming the first leader of the ruling Communist Party after party founder Mao Zedong to get re-elected for an unprecedented third term in power with the prospect of ruling China for life.

Xi, 69, was elected Sunday morning as General Secretary of the Communist Party for 3rd five-year tenure by the Central Committee, which was constituted a day earlier by the once-in-a-five-year Congress.

The Central Committee session, presided over by Xi, was attended by 203 members of the 20th CPC Central Committee and 168 alternate members, an official communique here said.

The Central Committee also approved a 24-member Political Bureau which in turn elected a seven-member Standing Committee, which is packed with Xi's supporters.

In a familiar pattern, all seven members of the Standing Committee, the most powerful body that governs the country, walked in a file with Xi leading



the group at the ornate Great Hall before the media. Their appearance was telecast live on the national media.

"I was re-elected as the General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee," Xi said and introduced the other six, two of them were from the previous committee.

The other six are Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai

Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi. Both Zhao and Wang, who is the ideologue of Xi, are the members of the previous committee.

Li Qiang, head of the Shanghai CPC, is regarded as a close associate of Xi and widely expected to be promoted as Premier in March to replace the incumbent Li Keqiang who retired.

Li Qiang's selection has raised eyebrows as Shanghai performed gravely during the recent COVID-19 spike leading to the closure of over 25 million strong city for weeks. The prolonged lockdown during which people suffered for basic necessities invoked strong criticism from the public.

A notable official who was elevated to the Political Bureau is the Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi, 69, who was previously a Central Committee member.

Wang, who is selected in spite of been crossed the retirement age of 68 for top officials, is expected to play a significant role in shaping Xi's foreign policy.

Also, the Political Bureau has reappointed Xi as the Chairman of the all-powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high Command of the Chinese military.

With this, Xi will continue to hold all top power centres, the Presidency, the head of the Communist Party and the CMC.

The People's Liberation

Army (PLA) Generals Zhang Youxia and He Weidong were appointed as the Vice Chairmen of the CMC.

The other CMC members included top military officials Li Shangfu, Liu Zhenli, Miao Hua and Zhang Shengmin. They will head different branches of the military, including the Navy and the Rocket Force.

Like his previous two tenures, Xi is the only civilian in the CMC.

Addressing the media, Xi said China and the world need each other and projected a positive picture of the Chinese economy, which is in a slow-down mode especially due to his resolve to implement the zero-COVID policy resulting in lockdowns of several top cities leading to supply chain disruptions.

"Just as China cannot develop in isolation from the world, the world needs China for its development. The Chinese economy has a great reliance potential and latitude. Its strong fundamentals will not change and it will remain on a positive trajectory over the long run. China will open its doors wide," he said.

Rushdie lost sight in an eye, use of one hand after Aug attack

IANS ■ MADRID

Salman Rushdie has lost his sight in one eye and the use of one hand after the attack he suffered while preparing to deliver a lecture in the US' New York state two months ago, his agent has confirmed, the media reported.

The 75-year-old author, whose received death threats from Iran in the 1980s after his novel 'The Satanic Verses' was published, was stabbed in the neck and torso as he came on stage to give a talk on artistic freedom at the Chautauqua Institution on August 12, The Guardian reported.

Until now, the full extent of Rushdie's injuries had been unclear. But in an interview with Spain's El Pais, Andrew Wylie explained how serious and life-changing the attack had been. "His wounds were profound, but he's (also) lost the sight of one eye," said Wylie. "He had three serious wounds in his neck. One hand is incapacitated because the nerves in his arm



were cut. And he has about 15 more wounds in his chest and torso. So, it was a brutal attack."

The agent declined to say whether Rushdie was still in hospital, saying the most important thing was that the writer is going to live, The Guardian reported.

Wylie also said he and Rushdie had talked about the possibility of such an attack in the past. "The principal danger that he faced so many years after the fatwa was imposed is from a random person coming out of nowhere and attacking (him)," he said.

"So, you can't protect against that because it's totally unexpected and illogical. It was like John Lennon's murder."

The man accused of stabbing Rushdie pleaded not guilty to second-degree attempted murder and assault charges when he appeared in court on August 18.

Hadi Matar, 24, was arraigned during a brief hearing in Chautauqua county district court on an indictment returned by a grand jury that charged him with one count of second-degree attempted murder and one count of second-degree assault.

Jan 6 trial highlights missed warnings before Capitol siege

AP ■ WASHINGTON

In a telephone call days after the 2020 election, Oath Keepers leader Stewart Rhodes urged followers to go to Washington and fight to keep President Donald Trump in office.

A concerned member of the extremist group began recording because, as he would later tell jurors in the current seditious conspiracy trial of Rhodes and four associates, it sounded as if they were "going to war against the United States government".

That Oath Keeper contacted the FBI, but his tip was filed away. He was only interviewed after Rhodes' followers stormed the Capitol on January 6 last year.

The defendants are charged with plotting to stop the transfer of presidential power, and their trial is raising more questions about intelligence failures

in the days before the riot that appear to have allowed Rhodes' anti-government group and other extremists to mobilise in plain sight.

"You don't have to have been invited to a secret meeting of the Oath Keepers... To know that the Oath Keepers presented a threat," said Mike German, a former FBI agent and fellow with the Brennan Center for Justice's Liberty and National Security Programme.

It's unclear to what extent authorities were tracking Rhodes and his militia group before January 6. But it has since become apparent that authorities had plenty of intelligence warning that some Trump supporters were planning an assault to stop the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's victory.

Despite that, police left unprepared on the front lines were quickly overwhelmed by



the mob that engaged in hand-to-hand combat with officers, smashed windows and poured into the Capitol.

Additional details emerged this month when the House committee investigating the attack disclosed messages showing that the Secret Service was

aware of plans for January 6 violence. Jurors in the Washington trial, which is expected to last several more weeks, have received a trove of evidence from prosecutors. That includes Rhodes' secretly recorded call on November 9, 2020, encrypted messages and surveillance

footage from the Virginia hotel where the Oath Keepers stashed weapons for a "quick reaction force" that could quickly run guns into the capital if they were needed.

Much of the evidence, however, has come in the form of statements and writings that Rhodes made publicly in the weeks before January 6. They show how the former US Army paratrooper and Yale Law School graduate was openly broadcasting his desire to overturn the election and threatening possible violence to attain that goal.

Days after the election on November 3, 2020, Rhodes announced on conspiracy theorist Alex Jones' "Infowars" show that his group was already mobilising to stop the transfer of power.

"We have men already stationed outside of DC as a nuclear option in case they attempt to

remove the president illegally, we will step in and stop it," Rhodes said.

Jurors also watched video of a speech Rhodes gave in December 2020 in Washington, where thousands of Trump supporters came to rally behind the then-president's election lies.

Rhodes urged Trump to invoke the Insurrection Act, which gives presidents wide discretion to decide when military force is necessary, to call up a militia and "drop the hammer" on the "traitors".

"He needs to know from you that you are with him, that if he does not do it now while he is commander in chief, we're going to have to do it ourselves later, in a much more desperate, much more bloody war. Let's get it on now while he is still commander in chief," Rhodes told the crowd.

That day, Rhodes attracted the attention of a US Capitol

Police special agent who was doing counter-surveillance monitoring and had recently read a news article about the group.

Rhodes was wearing a black cowboy hat, an eyepatch and an expired congressional badge from when he was a staffer for the late 1990s. The agent took a photo and sent it to colleagues. Rhodes was also wearing a black cowboy as he roamed the exterior of the Capitol building as Oath Keepers entered on January 6.

Two weeks before the Capitol riot, Rhodes published an open letter to Trump on the Oath Keepers' website, suggesting that his followers may need to "take to arms" if Trump doesn't act over what he viewed as a stolen election.

Rhodes and his associates are the first January 6 defendants to stand trial on seditious con-

spiracy charges.

On trial with Rhodes are Thomas Caldwell of Berryville, Virginia; Kenneth Harrelson of Titusville, Florida; Jessica Watkins of Woodstock, Ohio; and Kelly Meggs of Dunnellon, Florida. Abdullah Rasheed, the Oath Keeper member who recorded Rhodes' call on November 9, 2020, told jurors that that he tried to reach out to the FBI and others to share his concerns about Rhodes' rhetoric. When asked whether anyone called him back, Rasheed responded: "Yeah, after it all happened."

An FBI agent acknowledged on the stand that the bureau first received a tip about the call in November 2020. Pressed by a defence lawyer about why the FBI didn't investigate at the time, another agent said the FBI receives thousands of tips a day.

Sudan official: Deaths from southern tribal clashes touched 220

AP ■ CAIRO

Two days of tribal fighting in Sudan's south killed at least 220 people, a senior health official said Sunday, marking one the deadliest bouts of tribal violence in recent years.

The unrest added to the woes of an African nation mired in civil conflict and political chaos.

Fighting in Blue Nile province, which borders Ethiopia and South Sudan, reignited earlier this month over a land dispute. It pits the Hausa tribe, with origins across West Africa, against the Berta people.

The tensions escalated on Wednesday and Thursday in the town of Wad el-Mahi on the border with Ethiopia, according to Fath Arrahman Bakheit, the director general of the Health Ministry in Blue Nile.

He told The Associated Press that officials counted at least 220 dead as of Saturday night, adding the tally could be much higher since medical teams were not able to reach the epicentre of the fighting.

Bakheit said the first humanitarian and medical convoy managed to reach Wad el-Mahi late on Saturday to try to assess the situation, including counting "this huge number of bodies," and the dozens of injured.

"In such clashes, everyone loses," he said. "We hope it ends soon and never happens again. But we need strong political, security and civil interventions to achieve that goal."



AP's reporting, showed burned houses and charred bodies. Others showed women and children fleeing on foot.

Many houses were burned down in the fighting, which displaced some 7,000 people to the city of Rusayris. Others fled to neighbouring provinces, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Overall, about 211,000 people have been displaced by tribal violence and other attacks across the country this year, it said.

Authorities ordered a nighttime curfew in Wad el-Mahi and deployed troops to the area. They also established a fact-finding committee to investigate the clashes, according to the state-run SUNA news agency.

The fighting between the two groups first erupted in mid-July, killing at least 149 people as of earlier October.

It triggered violent protests and stoked tensions between the two tribes in Blue Nile and other provinces.

The latest fighting comes at a critical time for Sudan, just a few days before the first anniversary of a military coup that further plunged the country into turmoil.

The coup derailed the country's short-lived transition to democracy after nearly three decades of the repressive rule of Omar al-Bashir, who was removed in April 2019 by a popular uprising.

In recent weeks the military and the pro-democracy movement have engaged in talks to find a way out of the ongoing situation.

The generals agreed to allow civilians to appoint a prime minister to lead the country through elections within 24 months, the pro-democracy movement said last week.

However, the violence in Blue Nile is likely to slow down such efforts. Protest groups, who reject the deal with the ruling generals, have been preparing for mass anti-military demonstrations called for Tuesday, the anniversary of the coup.

Boris, Sunak said to be locked in talks

IANS ■ LONDON

With Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak, the two main potential candidates in contest to become the UK's next Prime Minister, said to be locked in talks, speculation has been mounting over whether the pair could strike a deal to lay the foundations for a unified Conservative government, local media reported.

Earlier reports began to emerge that Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak held talks late into the night - fuelling speculation they could strike a deal, Sky News reported.

Now Sky News understands that the talks between the pair did take place.

Neither the former prime minister nor the ex-chancellor have officially declared themselves in the race to succeed Liz Truss as prime minister.

And it is still unclear what was discussed during the talks last night. The country needs a "big player" like Boaris Johnson who is a "great unifier and campaigner", Northern Ireland secretary Chris Heaton Harris has said.

Speaking on whether the former prime minister had enough MPs backing him, he said that Johnson "definitely had enough numbers", Sky News reported.

Heaton Harris went on to say that Johnson was a "great unifier" and a "great cam-

SKorean, Austrian FMs voice hope for closer bilateral cooperation

IANS ■ SEOUL

The top diplomats of South Korea and Austria expressed hope for the expansion of cooperation between the two sides as they had talks here on Sunday.

Speaking at the outset of the meeting with his Austrian counterpart, Alexander Schallenberg, Foreign Minister Park Jin said his government would like to further strengthen the bilateral "strategic partnership" forged in 2021, Yonhap news agency reported.

In that sense, Park said, Schallenberg's visit to Seoul is "very timely" as a "very important opportunity" for the development of the ties.

He added that the two countries are close friends and partners for cooperation, marking the 130th anniversary this year of forging diplomatic relations.



The Austrian minister pointed out the two nations have much in common in terms of open society and trade.

Algeria: Saudi crown prince to skip summit on doctor advice

AP ■ DUBAI

Saudi Arabia's powerful 37-year-old crown prince will not attend an upcoming summit in Algeria after his doctors advised him not to travel, the Algerian presidency said early on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia offered no immediate acknowledgment of the comments by Algeria about the condition of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who has quickly risen to power under his 86-year-old father King Salman.

Much of the focus on the Al Saud royal family in recent years has been on King Salman's health, with analysts suggesting Prince Mohammed could rule the OPEC-leading nation for decades after ascending to the throne. The kingdom's government did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press about the prince, whose health hasn't previously prevented him from traveling.

Statements carried in



Arabic and French on the Algeria Press Service referred to a statement from the office of President Abdelmadjid Tebboune about a telephone call between him and Prince Mohammed. In the call, Prince Mohammed "apologised for not being able to participate in the Arab Summit to be held on November 1 in Algiers, in accordance with the recommendations of doctors who advise him not to travel," the statement read.

"For his part, Mr President said he understood the situation and regretted the impediment of

the Crown Prince, His Highness the Emir Mohammed Bin Salman, expressing his wishes for his health and well-being."

A statement on the state-run Saudi Press Agency acknowledged a call between Tebboune and the prince, but offered no word on the doctors' advice.

It just said the call focused on "the aspects of bilateral relations between the two fraternal countries" and possible joint cooperation.

The Arab League Summit in Algeria represents the first time the regional body has met since the coronavirus pandemic took hold across the world.

The Arab League, founded in 1945, represents 22 nations across the Mid-east and North Africa, though Syria has been suspended amid its long-running war.

While unified in the call for the Palestinians to have an independent state, the body has otherwise been largely fractious and unable to enforce its mandates.

‘Demonetisation behind the buoyancy in tax collections’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Ashima Goyal has attributed the rise in tax collections to demonetisation and said that it will help the nation move towards the ideal situation where low taxes are levied on a large base.

On November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the demonetisation of old ₹1,000 and ₹500 banknotes and one of the key objectives of the unprecedented decision was to curb black money flows and promote digital payments.

Noting that demonetisation had short-term costs but some long-term benefits, Goyal said it enhanced digitisation and formalization in the economy and reduced tax evasion, although all this has further to go.

“It contributed to the buoyancy in taxes the country is benefitting from today. This helps us move towards the ideal of low tax rates on a large base,” she told PTI.

The tax department on



October 9 said that the gross collection of tax on corporate and individual earnings jumped nearly 24 per cent so far in the current fiscal year to ₹8.98 lakh crore.

GST collections remained above ₹1.40 lakh crore for the seventh month in a row at ₹1.47 lakh crore in September, a 26 per cent increase over last year, reflecting buoyancy in tax collection.

However, earlier this month former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said that the BJP's policies of demonetisation, GST and farm laws are weapons aimed at India's poor and small businesses.

Replying to a question on Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), Goyal said the objec-

tives of the CBDC are to reduce the use of cash, and provide additional functions to the existing payment system rather than replace it.

“CBDC can certainly meet new needs in the digital age, reach remote areas and enhance financial inclusion, and save costs since cash is expensive and cumbersome,” she noted.

Recently, the Reserve Bank said it will soon commence the pilot launch of the e-rupee for specific use cases with a view to bolstering India's digital economy, making payment systems more efficient and checking money laundering.

In a concept note on Central Bank Digital Currency, the RBI said CBDC is aimed to

complement, rather than replace, current forms of money and is envisaged to provide an additional payment avenue to users, not to replace the existing payment systems.

CBDC is a digital form of currency notes issued by a central bank. While most central banks across the globe are exploring the issuance of CBDC, the key motivations for its issuance are specific to each country's unique requirements.

To a question on India's widening trade deficit, Goyal said multiple policy levers are available to reduce the deficit, among shorter-term measures are exchange rate depreciation and reducing aggregate demand.

According to her, more emphasis should be on longer-term sustainability-aiding measures such as reducing oil intensity as well as dependence on energy imports and encouraging exports.

Goyal suggested that the best export incentives are increasing the competitiveness of the Indian industry by lowering the costs and difficulties of doing business here.

Two Russian banks open special vostro account for overseas trade in rupee

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two Russian banks have opened a special vostro account following permission from the Reserve Bank of India to facilitate overseas trade in rupee.

Sberbank and VTB Bank — the largest and second largest banks of Russia — are the first foreign lenders to receive this approval after the RBI announced the guidelines on overseas trade in rupee in July.

These banks have opened special vostro account in their respective branches in Delhi, sources said.

Last month, state-owned UCO Bank received the RBI's approval to open a special vostro account with Gazprombank of Russia.

The Kolkata-based lender, among the first banks to receive the regulator's approval following the RBI's decision to promote rupee settlement, opened the account during this month.

The move to open the special vostro account clears the deck for settlement of payments in rupee for trade between India and Russia, enabling cross-border trade in the Indian currency, which the RBI is keen to promote.

The RBI has allowed the special vostro accounts to invest the surplus balance in Indian government securities to help popularise the new arrangement.

According to reports, Gazprombank is only facing sectoral sanctions, and is not under the Specially Designated Nationals, or SDN, sanctions.

UCO Bank already has a vostro account-based facility with Iran.

Gazprombank, or GPB, is a privately-owned Russian lender and the third largest bank in the country by assets.

No Govt, LIC veto post privatisation of IDBI Bank: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government and state-owned insurer LIC, who will continue to hold significant shareholding in IDBI Bank post its privatisation, will not veto any proposals of the new owner as part of their plan to give the incoming promoters a free hand, a senior official said.

The government earlier this month invited bids for the sale of 60.72 per cent stake in IDBI Bank, which is 45.48 per cent owned by the government and 49.24 per cent by the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

At Friday's closing price of Rs 44.30, IDBI Bank is valued at Rs 47,633 crore but the government is looking for at least 30 per cent markup in the sale.

At the current price, sale of 61 per cent stake would fetch about ₹29,000 crore to the government.

The official said post-privatisation, the government and LIC shareholding will come down to 34 per cent but they do not intend to move in tandem to block any special resolution proposed by the new promoter.

This is with a view to assuaging



the concerns of investors.

“There should not be any such concern. If we are selling a 60.72 per cent stake and transferring management control, it should be clear to investors that we are not interested in controlling the institution and hence will not oppose any resolution,” the official said.

“We will give an assurance on this at the RFP or financial bids stage to the qualified bidders for IDBI Bank,” the official told PTI.

There have been concerns in some quarters that the government and LIC holding 34 per cent stake in IDBI Bank after its privatisation may act as a deterrent for bidders as a shareholder or a group of shareholders together holding 25 per cent or more of the shares can effectively oppose a special resolution.

FPIs sell Indian equities worth ₹6 K cr in Oct on strengthening dollar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pulled out close to Rs 6,000 crore from the Indian equity markets so far this month in the wake of strength in the US dollar against the rupee.

With this, the total outflow by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) has reached Rs 1.75 lakh crore so far in 2022, data with the depositories showed.

Going forward, FPIs' flow is expected to remain volatile in the coming months due to ongoing geopolitical risk, elevated inflation, expectation of rising treasury yields, etc, Shrikant Chouhan, Head-Equity Research (Retail) at Kotak Securities, said.

“FPIs are unlikely to sell heavily in the near term. But they will turn sustained buyers only when the dollar starts declining. This, in turn, will depend on the trajectory of US inflation and the Fed's monetary stance,” V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

According to the data, FPIs withdrew Rs 5,992 crore from equities in October (till



21).

However, during the last few days FPIs had slowed down their selling substantially.

A major trend in the market is that sustained buying by domestic institutional investors (DIIs) and retail investors has been overwhelming FPI selling.

“If FPIs want to buy the stocks that they sold, they will have to pay a much higher price. This realisation is slowing down their selling even in the negative macro construct where US bond yields are rising and rupee is depreciating,” Vijayakumar said.

The withdrawal so far this month came following an outflow of over Rs 7,600 crore in September on hawkish

stance by the US Federal Reserve and sharp depreciation in rupee.

Prior to this, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 51,200 crore in August and nearly Rs 5,000 crore in July.

Before July, foreign investors were net sellers in Indian equities for nine months in a row which started in October last year.

The latest outflow by FPIs was largely driven by the concerns of the monetary policy tightening by the US Fed as well as other central banks globally, which could hamper global economic growth, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

Eight of top-10 firms add ₹2L cr in market valuation

Reliance lead gainer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the 10 most valued firms together added Rs 2,03,335.28 crore in market valuation last week amid an overall positive trend in equities, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainer.

Last week, the BSE Sensex climbed 1,387.18 points or 2.39 per cent.

Barring HDFC Bank and Bajaj Finance, rest eight firms in the top-10 pack witnessed addition in their market valuation.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of index heavyweight Reliance Industries jumped Rs 68,296.41 crore to stand at Rs



16,72,365.60 crore.

State Bank of India (SBI) added Rs 30,120.57 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 5,00,492.23 crore.

ICICI Bank's market valuation climbed Rs 25,946.89 crore to Rs 6,32,264.39 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) advanced Rs 18,608.76 crore to Rs 6,23,828.23 crore.

Bharti Airtel's valuation

grew by Rs 17,385.1 crore to stand at Rs 4,43,612.09 crore. The market valuation of ITC jumped Rs 16,739.62 crore to Rs 4,28,453.62 crore and that of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) spurred Rs 15,276.54 crore to Rs 11,48,722.59 crore.

The mcap of Infosys soared Rs 10,961.39 crore to Rs 6,31,216.21 crore.

Dr Reddy's, Cipla, Aurobindo units recall products in US market

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading drug firms Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Cipla and Aurobindo Pharma are recalling different products in the US market for various issues, according to the US Food and Drug Administration.

As per the enforcement report by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), the US-based unit of Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling 2,838 ampules of vitamin K deficiency treatment drug Phytonadione Injectable Emulsion. According to the USFDA, Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling the affected lot due to “failed stability specifications”.

“Out of specification results reported at 12-month stability testing for aluminum content,” it stated. Dr Reddy's initiated the Class III voluntary recall on September 14 this year.

As per USFDA, a Class III recall is initiated in a “situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product is not likely to cause adverse health consequences”.

USFDA further said the US-based arm of domestic drug major Cipla is recalling 9,041 cartons of Arformoterol Tartrate Inhalation Solution, which is used to help control the symptoms of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).



IGL net rises 4% as gas prices hurt margins

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indraprastha Gas Ltd, which retails CNG and piped cooking gas in the national capital and adjoining cities, reported a 4 per cent rise in its September quarter net profit as rise in input natural gas prices hurt margins.

The net profit stood at Rs 416.15 crore in July-September compared with Rs 400.54 crore in the same period a year back, the company said in a statement.

Revenue almost doubled to Rs 3,922.02 crore in the second quarter of fiscal year starting April 1 against Rs 2,015.99 crore revenue in the year ago period. Gas prices have doubled since Russia invaded Ukraine.

384 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.52 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 384 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.52 lakh crore, as per a report.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which monitors infrastructure projects of Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,529 projects, 384 reported cost overruns and as many as 662 projects were delayed.

“Total original cost of implementation of the 1529 projects was Rs 21,25,851.67 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 25,78,197.18 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,52,345.51 crore (21.28% of original cost),” the ministry's latest report for September 2022 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till September 2022 was Rs 13,78,142.29 crore, or 53.45 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.



However, the number of delayed projects decreases to 531 if delay is calculated on the basis of latest schedule of completion.

Further, it showed that for 603 projects, neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Out of the 662 delayed projects, 133 have overall delays in the range of 1-12 months, 124 have been delayed for 13-24 months, 276 projects for 25-60 months and 129 projects have been delayed for 61 months and above.



action to ensure airlines maintain the highest level of safety standards.

On October 12, SpiceJet's Bombardier Q400 aircraft operating its flight to Hyderabad from Goa had an emergency landing in Hyderabad after smoke filled up its cabin.

“...I have had the matter examined. Based on the preliminary investigation,

evidence of engine oil was found in the engine bleed-off valve, which had led to oil entering the aircraft air-conditioning system resulting in smoke in the cabin,” Scindia said in his response to Chaturvedi on October 21.

The observations made by DGCA were communicated immediately to SpiceJet for rectification, the minister said, adding, “DGCA is keeping a close watch on the situation and shall take all appropriate action to avert any untoward incident.” The ministry and DGCA place “highest importance on the safety of air operations” and have taken several proactive measures to enhance the safety of air operations and minimise air occurrences, Scindia said in the communication.

Slide show: Cashew exports plunge deeper to 38% in Sep at \$22.71 mn

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Contracting for the last eleven months, the country's cashew exports contracted by 38 per cent to USD 22.71 million in September succumbing to intense competition in the international markets.

The exports have been declining since November last year, according to the data of the commerce ministry.

The data showed that the exports dipped by 34 per cent in April, about 30 per cent in May, about 6 per cent in June, 26.62 per cent in July and 31.5

per cent in August.

Karnataka Cashews Manufacturers Association Vice President Tukaram Prabhu said that withdrawal of export incentives under ‘Vishesh Krishi and Gram Udyog Yojana’ too is impacting the outbound shipments.

“At present, we have no incentives to push shipments, though there is good demand in global markets. Our quality is much better than Vietnamese cashew. It is also a labour-intensive sector,” Prabhu said.

He urged the government to consider extending export incentives to boost exports.

BUSINESS BRIEF

INTERNAL INSIGHT ORGANISES BOOK LAUNCH EVENT



Director of Communications at SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) R Nanda Kumar, eminent business man and philanthropist Nalli Kuppuswami Chettiar, Chairman Sri Sai Spiritual Central Trust (Bengaluru) Srichand T Rajpal, Chairman and Managing Director of TANGEDCO Rajesh Lakhani along with eminent spiritualist Shubha Didi at a book launch event in Chennai on Saturday

Chennai: Internal Insight, an organisation into promotion of spiritual well-being of people, organised a book launch event on October 22. Director of Communications at SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) R Nanda Kumar launched a pocket book ‘My True Friend’ dealing with quick and easy solutions to day to day problems of human life. It is within ourselves that we can look for answers to problems that bother us from outside, said Shubha Didi, Spiritual Master & Life Coach of Internal Insight. Earlier, eminent business man and philanthropist Nalli Kuppuswami Chettiar launched the book ‘Ashtavakra Geeta As Spoken’ during the event. Chairman of Sai Spiritual Central Trust (Bengaluru), Srichand T Rajpal, inaugurated the programme titled ‘Sapt Sadhana’. Rajesh Lakhani, chairman and managing director of TANGEDCO, launched another programme titled ‘Internal Insights School of Thoughts’.

600 PM KISAN SAMRUDDHI KENDRAS LAUNCHED



Panipat: A large scale live streaming event of the inauguration ceremony of 600 Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samruddhi Kendras (PMKSK), Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Urvarak Pariyojana - One Nation One Fertiliser and International E-magazine on Fertilizers - Indian Edge by the Hon'ble Prime Minister was held on October 17, 2022 in a PMKSK of National Fertilizers Limited in Panipat, (Haryana). C&MD, NFL Atul B. Patil in the esteemed presence of Sanjay Bhatia, Hon'ble MP, Karnal, Pramod Vij, MLA, Panipat, Govt. representatives, Media persons and large number of progressive farmers of the region attended the inauguration ceremony through live streaming besides employees of NFL.

ARSENAL SLIP ON SUPER SUNDAY

AP ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Arsenal dropped points for just the second time this season in a frustrating 1-1 draw for the Gunners at Southampton as Aston Villa responded to the sacking of Steven Gerrard with a 4-0 thumping of Brentford.

Mikel Arteta's side went in front through Granit Xhaka's first-half strike at St Mary's.

But Armstrong levelled after the interval as Arsenal paid the price for failing to convert several chances to increase their advantage.

It was a rare slip from the Gunners, who had won nine of their 10 previous league games this season, with their only defeat coming at Manchester United.

The end of Arsenal's eight-game winning run in all competitions leaves them two points clear of second-placed Manchester City with both having played 11 games.

While Arteta will be frustrated that Arsenal squandered the lead given to them by Swiss midfielder Xhaka, it is a tribute to his team's unexpected rise this season that failing to take maximum points ranks as a disappointment.

Arsenal have already proved they are a force to be reckoned with as they chase a first title since 2004 and they started in vibrant mood on the south coast.

Bukayo Saka's cross was inches away from Gabriel Magalhaes before Gabriel Martinelli caused havoc in the Southampton defence with a direct run that ended with Xhaka's powerful drive repelled by Gavin Bazunu.

Xhaka turned provider moments later when he tied up Martin Odegaard for a low strike that whistled wide from the edge of the area.

Arsenal were in complete control and Xhaka delivered the goal their pressure merited in the 11th minute.

It was a smooth move as Saka's backheel sent Ben White away down the right flank and his cross reached Xhaka, who crashed a blistering strike into the roof of



the net from 12 yards.

Arsenal had never lost when Xhaka scored, a sequence stretching to 17 games.

Gabriel Jesus was inches away from doubling Arsenal's lead when he shot into the side-netting from Odegaard's pass.

Bazunu left Jesus frustrated again just before half-time as the Brazilian reached Odegaard's lofted pass for a volley that the Saints keeper blocked at point-blank range.

Mohamed Elyounoussi's last-ditch tackle stopped Jesus in his tracks after the

Arsenal striker sprinted clear on goal.

But, for all their territorial dominance, Arteta's team couldn't land the knockout blow as they were hit with a sucker punch in the 65th minute.

Elyounoussi slipped a clever reverse pass through the heart of the Arsenal defence and Armstrong timed his run perfectly to slot a composed finish past Aaron Ramsdale.

With Southampton suddenly in the ascendancy, Joe Aribo tested Ramsdale with a low shot and Romain Perraud swivelled

to drill wide.

Odegaard thought he had won it in the 79th minute when the Dane smashed home from Kieran Tierney's cross but the goal was disallowed because the ball had run out of play.

LEEDS INTO BOTTOM THREE

Former Liverpool captain Gerrard was the fall guy for Villa winning just two of their opening 11 league games with a 3-0 defeat at Fulham on Thursday the final straw.

Varane's injury 'less serious than thought'

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United's France defender Raphael Varane is less seriously injured than feared and still hopes to make the World Cup, a source close to the player said on Sunday.

Varane, 29, left the pitch in tears with a leg injury during United's 1-1 draw against Chelsea on Saturday after falling awkwardly in a challenge with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang.

There were fears the injury could rule him out of the World Cup which kicks off in Qatar on November 20 but the source said a scan on Sunday had been "relatively positive".

It showed Varane has a small hamstring tear but it is "less serious than feared" and he can "still have hope" of going to Qatar, the source said.

Varane, who has suffered several long-term injury absences during his career, is expected to be out for between three and four weeks, according to reports in France.

France coach Didier Deschamps,



who will name his squad on November 9, is heading into his defence of the World Cup with a host of injury concerns.

N'Golo Kante, Chelsea's defensive midfielder who was a key part of France's success four years ago, will definitely miss the tournament with a hamstring injury.

Paul Pogba is a doubt as he is still recovering from knee surgery and AC Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan, the backup to first choice Hugo Lloris, could be ruled out with a calf injury.

Real increase La Liga lead AC Milan hammer Berlusconi's Monza

AP ■ MADRID

Just when it seemed Real Madrid might consider dropping points in the title race, the champions calmly moved up a gear to secure a 3-1 win over Sevilla on Saturday and extend their La Liga lead.

Carlo Ancelotti's unbeaten side moved six points clear of rivals Barcelona, who host Athletic Bilbao on Sunday, thanks to two strikes in three minutes from Lucas Vazquez and Fede Valverde in the final stages.

Sevilla thought they might take something from the game when Erik Lamela's leveller cancelled out Luka Modric's early strike, but Madrid confidently wrestled control of the match back.

Vinicius Junior, through on goal in the 79th minute, unselfishly squared for substitute Vazquez to roll the ball home and then Valverde continued his own sublime form with a rocket which left Sevilla goalkeeper Bono scrambling helplessly.

"We lost a bit of confidence when we let in the goal, but luckily, the substitutes gave energy to the team and more confidence," said Ancelotti.

"We scored the second goal with a spectacular counter and a great pass from Vinicius, and from there we were on our way."

The goals provided a rip-roaring finale to a fine night for Madrid supporters, despite heavy rain. Karim Benzema had offered the Ballon d'Or he won on Monday to the masses at the Santiago Bernabeu before kick-off, handed his trophy by former winners Modric and Zinedine Zidane.

Fans brandished gold sheets laid out for them by the club.

Although they were not able to watch the French striker here, with a thigh problem keeping him out, their team maintained their momentum.

It took Real Madrid just five minutes to open the scoring.

Vinicius was the architect, picking the pocket of Gonzalo Montiel, driving forward deep into the area and then sliding a perfect pass across to split the defence and leave Modric with a simple finish on his 450th appearance for the club.

Returning from a sciatica problem, Thibaut Courtois also presented his Yashin Trophy for



being the world's best goalkeeper to supporters, which was his only task of note until the second half. He soon had another - picking the ball out of the back of the net.

Lamela finished well after being set-up by Montiel, who stole the ball from Vinicius in a reverse of the opening goal.

Ancelotti responded by replacing Aurelien Tchouameni with Eduardo Camavinga, and Madrid picked up again, boosted further by Marco Asensio and Vazquez coming on.

Rodrygo, operating at false nine in place of Benzema, produced a piece of magic with a backheel to find Vinicius, who shot into the side-netting from a tight angle after hurtling past Bono to reach the pass.

Sevilla were on the back foot and the next time Vinicius burst through, running on to Asensio's pass, he earned his second assist of the night, and then Valverde sealed the win in spectacular fashion.

AP ■ MILAN

Spanish attacking midfielder Brahim Diaz scored twice as AC Milan beat Monza 4-1 on Saturday to go above Atalanta to second in Serie A.

Diaz, 23, on loan from Real Madrid until the end of the season, doubled his goal tally for the season with first-half efforts before Belgium's Divock Origi and Portugal's Rafael Leao contributed after the break to send the champions behind leaders Napoli on points difference.

Diaz opened the scoring in San Siro after 16 minutes after a long-range run was finished with a sliding effort.

The former Manchester City playmaker claimed his second after receiving an Origi pass and smoothly finishing home four minutes before the break.

Origi was on the scoresheet for the first time the league this season after



65 minutes as he fired his effort into the top corner.

Last season's Serie B playoff winners Monza, owned by former Milan

president Silvio Berlusconi, claimed one back five minutes later as Filippo Ranocchia scored a superb free-kick for the outfit based to the north of the city.

The three points were confirmed with six minutes left as Leao, who looks set to go the World Cup with his country, added his fifth goal of the season.

UDINESE STUMBLE AGAIN

Udinese fell to a 2-1 home defeat Torino on Sunday as their fairytale start to the season hit another bump in the road.

Andrea Sottili's team were in sight of the Serie A summit two weeks ago but two draws and this surprise loss to mid-table Torino leave them sixth.

They are five points behind leaders Napoli, who take on fourth-placed Roma in Sunday's late match.

Goals in each half from Ola Aina and Pietro Pellegri ended Torino's a five-match winless streak in the league.

Udinese were also knocked out of the Italian Cup in the week by promoted Monza.

India junior men's hockey team goes down 4-5 to SA

PTI ■ JOHOR

The Indian junior men's hockey team squandered a two-goal lead at half time to lose 4-5 against South Africa in its second match at the Sultan of Johor Cup here on Sunday.

Marvin Simons (7th), Fawaaz Kahder (34th), Senzwesihle Ngubane (35th) and Cameron Le Forestier (49th, 57th) scored for South Africa. Sharda Nand Tiwari (9th, 10th), captain Uttam Singh (17th) and Sudeep Chirmako (45th) found the target for India.

India had beaten hosts Malaysia 5-2 in their first round-robin match on Saturday.

South Africa who took the lead with Marvin Simons (7th) deflecting in past Ankit Malik.

India though roared back into the game within minutes as Sharda Nand Tiwari (9th and 10th) converted two penalty corners. India ended the first quarter with a 2-1 lead and looked in control of the proceedings.

A couple of minutes into the second quarter, India struck again with captain Uttam Singh (17th) getting his first goal of the tournament. With the momentum going their way, India were 3-1 ahead at the end of first half.

South Africa made a comeback in the second half. Fawaaz Kahder (34th) made it 3-2 for



Ferrari's Carlos Sainz clinches pole for USA Grand Prix in Austin

AP ■ AUSTIN

Carlos Sainz outpaced team-mate Charles Leclerc to take pole position as Ferrari dominated Saturday's tense qualifying for Sunday's United States Grand Prix.

The Spaniard delivered a final flying lap in one minute and 34.356 seconds to beat his Monegasque partner by 0.065 seconds, leaving world champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull third, on the day his team's founder and co-owner Dietrich Mateschitz died aged 78.

With Leclerc taking a grid penalty, Dutchman Verstappen will start second on Sunday alongside Sainz on the front row as he bids for a record-equaling 13th win of the season to help Red Bull clinch their fifth constructors' title.

His Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez, who also faces a grid penalty, was fourth ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton and his Mercedes team-mate George Russell, Aston Martin's Lance Stroll and Lando Norris of McLaren.

"I knew it was coming boys, I knew it," said Sainz after taking his third pole of the season.

"It was a lot of fun, very tricky with the gusts of wind, but I managed to put together a good lap without mistakes. This pole was a long time coming in the dry - Red Bull is still favourite as they have more race pace," he added.

The Red Bull team had been informed of Mateschitz's death before qualifying and Verstappen said it had been a difficult day.

"It's been hard news for everyone -- for Red Bull and for the sport and for me -- in general, in my career and in my life. It is a very tough day. We missed out in qualifying by a little bit, but there is a race tomorrow and we'll try to do it for him," he said.

Ganguly backs out, sibling Snehasish set to lead CAB

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Former BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Sunday pulled out of the race to become the Cricket Association of Bengal's next chief, paving the way for his elder brother Snehasish to be elected uncontested at its upcoming AGM on Oct 31.

"I had said that I would contest only if there's election. There's not going to be any election, so it will be uncontested," Ganguly told reporters at Eden Gardens after he chose not to file his papers for the president's post on the last date of nomination.

Denied a second term at the Indian cricket board, the former BCCI president only a week back had announced that he's all set to contest elections to return as the CAB chief.

"Had I been there, it would have meant two or more people would not get any posts. So, I've moved



aside," Ganguly said.

"I would have been elected uncontested, but I don't think it's right. Others would not have got the opportunity to work for this association. They will be working for these three years now and we will see after that."

Asked about his next innings, he said: "Let's see. I'm free of responsibilities for some time now and I'm happy about it."

"I've no rival in CAB, everyone is my friend here. There are new and experienced people here to run the show. I'll also be around and they will get me at times," he added before leaving the Eden.

The elder Ganguly, who was the secretary under Avishek Dalmiya, will now run the show, while Amalendu Biswas, who is the father of Students Federation of India (SFI) leader Mayukh, will be appointed as the vice-president.

Malvika, Kaushal emerge champions

PTI ■ PUNE

Top-seeded Malvika Bansod clinched the women's singles title while unseeded Kaushal Dharmam secured the men's crown at the VV Natu Memorial All India Senior Ranking badminton tournament here on Sunday.

Bansod clinched a come-from-behind 13-21, 21-17, 22-20 win over Adita Rao in a thrilling final which lasted an hour and three minutes.

Kaushal, on the other hand, beat Rohan Gurbani 21-10, 21-16 in the men singles summit clash.

Meanwhile, Khushi Gupta secured two titles -- women's doubles and mixed doubles.

Khushi and Siddharth Elango beat the pair of Aravind Suresh and Pavithra Navin 21-19, 21-15 to lift the mixed doubles title.

Khushi then joined Priya Devi Konjengbam to defeat Shikha Gautam and Poorvisha Ram 21-16, 17-21, 21-12 in a nail-biting women's doubles final.

NOT JUST VIRAT'S BUT INDIA'S BEST-EVER T20 KNOCK: ROHIT

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

India captain Rohit Sharma didn't bat an eyelid before declaring Virat Kohli's 82 here on Sunday as not only his best but the most accomplished knock played in the country's T20 history.

Kohli has had his issues with form, but his skipper didn't count himself among the Doubting Thomases, who had termed him well past his sell-by-date.

"Yeah, I think it has to go -- definitely his best for sure, but I think from the situation we were in, and to come out with a victory, I think it has to be one of India's best knocks, not just his best knock," Rohit told mediapersons after India's T20 World Cup win against Pakistan.

He explained why he rated this innings as India's No. 1 T20 knock.

"Because until the 13th over (needing close to 100 runs), we were so behind in the game, and the required rate was just climbing up and up. But to come out and chase that score was an extremely brilliant effort from Virat, and then obviously Hardik (Pandya) played a role there, as well," the skipper didn't forget to praise his all-rounder.

Both Kohli and Pandya are veterans of many close T20 contests, which they had pulled off under pressure at the international as well as IPL level.

"I thought both of them, because these guys have played under pressure so many games for us, so they knew exactly how to handle that kind of situation, and they did pretty well in that situation," the skipper said.

While most of the cricket fans questioned whether Kohli's ability to win big games was on the wane, Rohit has been consistent that it was never the case.

"Speaking about Virat, I honestly don't think he was struggling with form or anything. He was batting as good as he was, but with him, the expectations are always so high that even if he gets a good 30 or 40, people tend to talk about it," Rohit reiterated the need to temper down expectations at times.

As a part of the team management, Rohit never felt the need to put pressure on Kohli.

"From the team management's perspective, I thought he was in good space right from the Asia Cup, where he got a month off and then he came back to Asia Cup. He was fresh, got a brilliant hundred there, got a couple of fifties if I'm not



wrong. "And then leading up to the World Cup, we know the quality

that he has, and he's done so well in these type of conditions in all three forms."

Best innings after tough phase: Anushka on Virat's knock

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Bollywood star Anushka Sharma on Sunday praised her husband and cricketer Virat Kohli for his "grit and determination" as he powered India to a magical four-wicket over Pakistan in a thrilling T20 World Cup game on Sunday at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Anushka, who often accompanies Virat to his games, watched the nailbiter of a match on TV like several other cricket fans. She is currently shooting for "Chakda Xpress", a film based on cricketer Jhulan Goswami's life, in Kolkata.

The actor said their 21-month-old daughter Vamika will one day understand why her mother was "dancing around and screaming wildly" in the room.

"... One day she will understand that her dad played his best innings that night which followed after a phase that was tough on him but he came out of it stronger and wiser than ever before!

"So proud of you !! Your strength is contagious and you my love, are LIMITLESS!! Love you



forever and through thick and thin," the actor-producer wrote in a note on her official Instagram account.

In his own words, Virat had no idea how he had engineered India's epic win over arch-rivals Pakistan in their blockbuster T20 World Cup face-off after "struggling" with his form in these last months.

"Well, it's a surreal atmosphere. I honestly have no words. I have no idea how that happened. Till today I said Mohali was my best T20 innings. Then I got 82 off

52, today I got 82 off 53. Both are just as special.

"I will count this one higher because of the magnitude of the occasion and the situation we were in. All these months when I was struggling, you guys (the crowd) kept me going. Thank you so much," said Virat after his incredible knock in the team's big-ticket tournament opener.

Terming the game the "best match" of her life, Anushka said her husband had brought joy in people's lives on Diwali eve.

"You beauty!! You freaking beauty!! You have brought sooooo much joy in peoples lives tonight and that too on the eve of Diwali! You are a wonderful wonderful man my love.

"Your grit, determination and belief is mind boggling!! I have just watched the best match of my life I can say (sic)," she wrote alongside a series of pictures of her watching the match.

Many fans took to Twitter to "thank" Anushka after Virat scored a phenomenal unbeaten 82-run knock to anchor a chase of 160

which felt like a lost cause after the Men in Blue were scrambling to find a foothold at 31 runs for the loss of 4 wickets.

Even before they got married, the actor has often been subjected to trolling and abuse on social media whenever the right-hand batter failed to put up an impressive number on the board.

"The wife #AnushkaSharma. After everything you guys said about her she is here standing besides her husband," wrote a user.

"Everyone say thank you to Anushka Sharma and Vamika Kohli," said another.

In January 2022, Anushka had penned a heartfelt note for Virat Kohli when he stepped down as the Test captain of the Indian men's cricket team, following the 2-1 test series defeat against South Africa during the tour of South Africa.

The cricketer quit as India's T20 captain last September and was later replaced by current skipper Rohit Sharma as ODI captain by the BCCI in December.

India Pak T20 match blockbuster creates new viewership record

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It was a Sunday blockbuster with over 1.8 crore viewers tuning into the India-Pakistan T20 World Cup match on the digital streaming platform, Disney + Hotstar. The match was telecast on Star Sports in India for television but viewership numbers will be released only a week later by the television audience measurement body Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC).

It was also screened on the- atres of PVR and Inox, which reported large visitors coming to watch the match at their cinema halls. On Disney+ Hotstar app, which streamed the match live, it was the highest-ever viewership at 1.8 crore beating the previous record of 1.4 crore recorded

between the two teams at the Asia Cup, a source said.

There were 36 lakh live views when the first ball of the match was bowled by India's Bhuvneshwar Kumar. When the Pakistan innings ended there were 1.1 crore viewers live on the app and this increased to 1.4 crore viewers during the innings break.

A total of 40 lakh viewers watched when India's chase started, with the numbers rising to a record 1.8 crore when the match finished in India's favour, as former captain Virat Kohli led to a 4 wickets win. Similarly, the multiplex operators INoX Leisure and PVR, which are showing the matches live on the screens of their cinema halls have also witnessed phenomenal responses from the viewers.

ALL ABOUT USING EXPERIENCE

Kohli had pulled off a similar-

ly incredible chase six years ago in Mohali, during a knock-out T20 World Cup game against Australia.

Hardik recalls late father's sacrifices

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Flamboyant India all-rounder Hardik Pandya on Sunday turned emotional, recalling how his late father moved cities to fulfil a young boy's crickering dreams.

If Virat Kohli (82 not out) stole the limelight with his incredible knock in India's four-wicket win over Pakistan in their T20 World Cup opener, star all-rounder Hardik (40) was the perfect ally as the team recovered from a woeful start to emerge victorious.

"I was only thinking about my dad. I have not cried about my dad. I love my son, but I don't know if I'll be able to do for him what my dad did for me. He moved cities for a six-and-a-half-year old boy's dreams without knowing I'd get to where I am today. So this is for him," said Hardik on Star Sports.

"I will be grateful forever. If he hadn't given me a chance, I won't be standing here. He made a big sacrifice, he shifted to a different city for his kids. We were six at that time, and he shifted an entire city and



his entire business. It was a big thing," a teary-eyed Hardik added.

Kohli conjured up a memorable unbeaten 82-run knock to anchor a chase of 160 which became tricky after India were left in tatters at 31 for 4. While Hardik, the most important cog in India's T20 wheel, struck 40 off 37 balls in a partnership of 113 for the fifth wicket.

While the all-rounder was not at his aggressive best, Hardik, who also picked up three wickets with the ball in a fine spell earlier in the day, did play an important role in helping Kohli to play his natural game at the other end.

Kohli showed his class today: Babar

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Often Babar Azam has been compared with Virat Kohli. Without an iota of doubt, the two are world cricket's premier batters.

But on Sunday, even the Pakistan skipper was in awe of Kohli, who fashioned India's memorable win in the T20 World Cup at the MCG.

Kohli's inspirational batting was the difference between the two sides.

"Our bowlers were outstanding in first 10 overs. Credit to Virat and Hardik, for the manner, in which, they finished the game," said Babar after the demoralising defeat.

But when the discussion veered towards Kohli, Babar was effusive in his praise.

"Virat Kohli just showed his class today. It was a close game and people enjoyed it."

Winning a pressure game will boost Kohli's morale after a lean patch of three years, Babar agreed.

"Pakistan vs India are always extra pressure games and the more quickly you can overcome it, the better. That's why he is a big player, there was pressure on him and he over-



came it and then build his innings. The way they built partnership was turning point," the Pakistan skipper said.

"This innings must have given him a lot of confidence and when you win these kind of games, you mentally feel good," he added.

BRINGING NAWAZ IN 20TH OVER

The question that was inevitable was why left-arm spinner Mohammed Nawaz was brought in the 20th over and pacers' quota of overs was exhausted before.

"When the partnership (Kohli-Pandya) was building,

we needed to get wickets and I thought of bringing my main bowler and build pressure.

"But the plan didn't work out as I would have thought. He (Nawaz) will learn from this and when next time he faces this kind of a situation, he will realise what he needs to do."

Babar was very clear his mind that they can't keep on lamenting this defeat as the tournament has just started.

"We will remain confident. We will learn from this defeat. Some good things happened and some mistakes happened.

We will deliberate and it's just start of the tournament and we have lot of games left.

Dockrell plays against SL despite Covid

PTI ■ HOBART

The ongoing T20 World Cup reported its first COVID-19 case as Ireland all-rounder George Dockrell has been identified as "potentially positive" for the virus ahead of their match against Sri Lanka, here on Sunday. But despite being COVID positive, Dockrell took the field against Sri Lanka and made 14 off 16 balls. Dockrell has been identified as "potentially positive" for the virus, confirmed Cricket Ireland, adding that he is being managed in accordance with the guidelines of the ICC and national authorities. As per the current regulations, a positive test does not stop a player from playing in the ongoing T20 World Cup or training with his teammate. However, the positive player is required to travel separately on match and training days. "Dockrell's symptoms are mild, however medical staff have managed his movements and interactions in line with protocols in a bid for him to play in Sunday's encounter with Lanka at Bellerive Oval," read a report in the tournament's official website, t20worldcup.Com.

SL THRASH IRELAND BY NINE WICKETS



PTI ■ HOBART

Kusal Mendis hit an unbeaten fifty after the bowlers put up a clinical show to guide Sri Lanka to a dominating nine-wicket win over Ireland in a T20 World Cup super 12 match, here on Sunday. Asked to bowl, Sri Lankan bowlers, led by spin duo of Maheesh Theekshana (2/19) and Wanindu Hasaranga (2/25), produced an all-round effort to restrict Ireland to a below-par 128 for 8. They were right on the money as Ireland failed to build substantial partnerships.

Harry Tector was the top-scorer for Ireland, scoring 45 off 42 balls with two fours and one six, while Paul Stirling made 34 off 25 balls during which he struck four boundaries and two hits over the fence. While Theekshana and Hasaranga shared four wickets between them, Lahiru Kumara (1/12), Dhananjaya de Silva (1/13), Chamika Karunaratne (1/29) and Binura Fernando (1/27) picked up a wicket each for the island nation. Chasing 129 to win, Sri Lanka, who had lost to minnows Namibia in their first match of the qualifying round, never looked in any sort of trouble as they overwhelmed the target, scoring 133 for 1 with five overs to spare.

Kusal Mendis anchored the chase with a 43-ball unbeaten 63, while Charith Asalanka (31 not out off 22) and Dhananjaya de Silva (31 off 25) also got some runs under their belt.

Ireland, who are playing in their seventh straight World Cup, featured in the final round of the tournament only for the second time since their super 8 appearance in the 2009 edition in England.

Knew spin would play major role: Shanaka

PTI ■ HOBART

Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka on Sunday credited the spinners for their dominating nine-wicket win over Ireland in a T20 World Cup match, saying keeping spin options for the death overs did the trick.

It was the bowling unit, especially spin duo of Maheesh Theekshana (2/19) and Wanindu Hasaranga (2/25), who set up the win by restricting Ireland to 128 for 8.

"Really happy with the way we've played the game, we set out to do some things and did well. We knew spin would play a major role, we knew they'd like pace, so we kept a lot of spin for the back-end," Shanaka said at the post-match presentation ceremony here.

Kusal Mendis then complemented the bowlers with a 43-ball 68 as Sri Lanka registered an easy chase.

"He has been consistent this year (on Kusal Mendis), has played according to the situation most of the times, That's what he has improved - it is high-class batting. That consistency which Sri Lanka needed for a long time, that gives us a luxury," Shanaka said. "Death bowling is our key area and the start is important - we did that really good. Want to continue with that confidence."

'Richardson should play in place of Cummins'

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Cricketer-turned-commentator Simon Doull feels Kane Richardson should be picked in place of Pat Cummins in the T20 World Cup as he offers variations, something which Australia's bowling lack.

Cummins and Mitchell Starc looked toothless as Aussie bowlers conceded 200 runs during their T20 World Cup opener against New Zealand to eventually go down by 89 runs on Saturday.

"I think Australia would be concerned, I'd be concerned with some of the parts of the bowling. I said the other night in the warm-up match, I feel personally that Pat Cummins shouldn't be playing in this T20 side," Doull said on Digital Daily.

"I think Kane Richardson



should be playing. I feel that he offers them a few variations that they just don't have. It's same-same. It's pace on, pace on, pace on. Starc, (Josh) Hazlewood, Cummins - they

don't have a really good change-up bowler.

"We saw from Tim Southee tonight (Saturday) with some of those change-ups that that certainly played a part from New Zealand's point of view. So I feel that Richardson should be in the side (though) it's a big call though to drop."

New Zealand bundled out Australia for 111 to register their first win against their trans-Tasman rivals in Australia in any format since December 2011.

"That's a drubbing, that is a proper win and it really hurts Australia's net run rate for the future in the tournament, and it just helps New Zealand enormously," Doull said. "I gave them about an 80/20 chance of winning, or a 20 percent chance basically, but they surprised me."