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COLD WAR PARTICIPANT

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FINMIN MULLS CHANGES IN
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First chink in Opp's unity bid; KCR plans to go his own way

TRS to launch national party

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Days after Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar rebuffed his proposal to forge a Third Front, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao on Sunday declared he would soon launch a national party, delivering a blow to the ongoing attempt to bring together all Opposition parties under one umbrella.

"There has been a consensus on the alternative national agenda after prolonged discussions with intellectuals, economists, and experts from various fields like we did before the start of the Telangana movement," an official release from Rao's office said.

"Very soon, the formation of a national party and formulation of its policies will take place," it said.

KCR made the announcement after his meeting with Janata Dal(S) chief HD Kumaraswamy who flew into Hyderabad on the invitation of the TRS supremo on Sunday. Kumaraswamy met Rao at Pragati Bhavan in Hyderabad on Sunday afternoon.

KCR is known to be harbouring ambition for a major role for himself in national politics for long and has been advocating the formation of a non-Congress front to take on the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. But his move has few tak-

ers in the Opposition camp and Nitish has publicly rejected this call.

In his meeting with Kumaraswamy, KCR once again talked about the "irrelevance" of the Congress, saying, "People have come to an opinion that the Congress is not a strong alternative to the BJP and they lost faith in the congress leadership," the release said, adding, "They discussed the urgent need to the unity of regional parties so that the spirit of the democratic federation flourishes."

Since KCR did not have any significant support base outside Telangana, the formation of his national party may

not make much difference to the prospects of either the BJP or the Opposition. Still, it would be seen as a setback to the ongoing attempt to bring all anti-BJP parties under one umbrella.

The TRS won nine out of 17 Telangana seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll, garnering 42 per cent votes whereas the BJP won four seats with 20 per cent and Congress three with 30 per cent vote share respectively.

According to a release by the KCR office, Kumaraswamy asserted the immense experience of K Chandrasekhara Rao is required to the country in the present situation.

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Pawar not for PM's post, time to keep Opp together: NCP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The NCP on Sunday said the need for Opposition unity is paramount at this juncture in national politics and its party supremo Sharad Pawar is not a contender for the Prime Minister's post.

After the party's national executive council meeting in Delhi, senior NCP leader Praful Patel said Pawar is going to play an important role to bring many forces together.

"Sharad Pawar was never and will never be the PM face. He only speaks about the real issues of this country. Some workers of the party expressed their views but Pawar is not aspiring for the PM post. We know our limitations and he is not the Opposition's face but will play an important role," Patel, who served as Union Minister in the UPA Government told the media.

Patel said the NCP was going to play a key role in the upcoming general elections and virtually rejected Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao's bid to forge a non-Congress Third Front. "We were also a part of the UPA Government. We don't have any such issue with the Congress," he said.

Pawar was re-elected as the NCP president on Saturday unopposed during the party's national executive meeting.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who was in Delhi recently met Pawar and discuss ways to unite the Opposition.



NCP president Sharad Pawar being felicitated by party leader Praful Patel and others a day after he was unanimously re-elected as the party chief, during the party's national council meeting in New Delhi on Sunday
Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

LG OK's CBI probe into purchase of 1,000 buses

AAP hits back, says tenders were cancelled

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday gave his nod for a CBI probe into the alleged corruption in the procurement of 1,000 low-floor buses by the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC).

The report submitted by chief secretary Naresh Kumar on August 19 had pointed out certain "irregularities", following which the Lieutenant Governor has now forwarded the complaint to the CBI, sources said, adding the CBI is already conducting a preliminary enquiry into the matter.

Saxena has approved the clubbing of the current complaint with the complaint already being enquired into by the Central probe agency.

The AAP has hit back at the LG saying the buses were never purchased and tenders were cancelled.

In a series of Press conferences, AAP MLAs claimed the CBI had registered a preliminary enquiry and the agency could not find anything a year ago. AAP leaders Saurav Bhardwaj, Atishi, and Durgesh Pathak said, "The LG is facing many serious allegations of corruption. To divert attention, he is making such enquiries. All enquiries so far have yielded no results. After making frivolous complaints against three Ministers, he has now made a complaint against the fourth Minister. He should first



respond to the allegations of corruption against him.

"These buses were never purchased, and tenders were cancelled. Delhi needs a more educated LG. This man has no clue what he is signing on."

The development comes amid raging controversy over CBI searches of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's premises in connection with the Delhi Excise Policy. The AAP and the LG have been locked in a bitter standoff as both sides have accused each other of corruption.

The BJP, which has all along sided with the LG, on Sunday wasted no time in hitting out at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal saying tenders were prepared by friends of the Kejriwal Government and Kejriwal and corruption have become synonymous.

The BJP leaders said Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot was made the chairman of the committee for tendering

and procurement of buses by Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) "with the intention of giving benefits to friends."

"There are general financial rules. I want to ask Kejriwal why he didn't follow the general financial rules. Does he think that he stands above the laws and constitution of the nation?" BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said at a Press conference along with MLA Vijendra Gupta and Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta. Bhatia said, "Kejriwal and corruption have become synonymous."

Sources in Raj Niwas said a complaint addressed to Saxena in June this year had claimed that the appointment of the Minister of Transport as the chairman of the committee for tendering and procurement of buses by Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) was done in a "premeditated manner".

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Cow smuggling: Bengal probes Suvendu's role

BJP calls it 'dirty design' by TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In what is seen as a clear case of tit-for-tat, the Mamata Government has started its own probe against State Opposition leader Suvendu Adhikari in the infamous cow smuggling case, sources in the department have revealed.

According to the sources, the State CID has asked the Murshidabad district Superintendent of Police to submit reports about Adhikari's security staff during his stint as the Trinamool Congress observer there between 2019 and 2020.

Adhikari was a senior Minister and a powerful Trinamool Congress leader — and a blue-eyed boy of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee — before he left the TMC ahead of the last year's Assembly



elections to join the BJP.

Besides bordering Bangladesh, Murshidabad is adjacent to Birbhum district which houses the second biggest inland cow market in Asia. Cows from all over the country converge at Ilam Bazar in Birbhum before being transported to Murshidabad or Malda from where they are smuggled into Bangladesh.

The BJP suspected a "dirty design" in CID's action to "falsely implicate" Adhikari in a retaliatory measure against ED and CBI actions in the State that has seen a number of TMC leaders, including Minister Partha Chatterjee, national executive member Anubrata Mondal and municipal chairman Raju Sahni land-

ing in jail.

The CBI last month took Mondal into custody in cow smuggling case. Subsequently, the agency has dug out properties worth several crores allegedly belonging to the Birbhum TMC strongman and people close to him.

Challenging the TMC Government to find out any evidence against him, Adhikari said, "The CID action is intended at locating the police personnel then involved in my duty so that they can be pressurised to give false evidence against me ... But I challenge the Government and Mamata Banerjee to go ahead and prove me guilty."

Meanwhile, in an unrelated development, the CID officials investigating a disproportionate asset case against suspended IPS officer Debashish Dhar on Sunday raided five premises related to Kolkata businessman Sudipta Roy Chowdhury who has a close relationship with Dhar.

On wane, Covid taking 1 life every 44 seconds, says WHO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Despite continuing decline in the number of daily infections globally and in India, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that one person with Covid-19 is still dying every 44 seconds globally.

Claiming that this virus will not just fade away, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, said, "The global decline in reported cases and deaths is continuing. This is very encouraging. But there is no guarantee these trends will persist. The most dangerous thing is to assume they will."

"The number of weekly reported deaths may have dropped by more than 80 per cent since February, but even so, last week one person died with Covid-19 every 44 seconds," Ghebreyesus said during his regular briefing.

"Most of those deaths are avoidable. You might be tired of hearing me say the pandemic



is not over. But I will keep saying it until it is. This virus will not just fade away," he added.

WHO will publish a set of six short policy briefs next week, outlining the essential actions that all governments can take to reduce transmission and save lives.

The briefs will cover the essential elements of testing, clinical management, vaccination, infection prevention and control, risk communication and community engagement, and managing the infodemic.

"We hope countries will use these briefs to reassess and readjust their policies to protect those most at risk, treat those who need it and save lives. The

pandemic is always evolving, and so must the response, in every country," said the WHO chief.

On monkeypox, he said that the WHO is continuing to see a downward trend in Europe. "While reported cases from the Americas also declined last week, it's harder to draw firm conclusions about the epidemic in that region," said Ghebreyesus.

A total of 52,997 people have been infected with the monkeypox virus, according to the WHO.

Of the cases registered in the last four weeks, 70.7 per cent came from the Americas and 28.3 per cent from Europe.

Russians leave behind arsenal in hasty retreat to flee Ukrainian siege

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian troops on Sunday successfully pressed their swift counteroffensive in the northeastern part of the country, even as a nuclear power plant in the Russia-occupied south completely shut down in a bid to prevent a radiation disaster as fighting raged nearby.

Kyiv's action to reclaim Russia-occupied areas in the Kharkiv region forced Moscow to withdraw its troops to prevent them from being surrounded, leaving behind significant numbers of weapons and munitions in a hasty retreat as the war marked its 200th day on Sunday.

A jubilant Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy mocked the Russians in a video address Saturday night, saying that "the Russian army in these days is demonstrating the best that it can do — showing its back."

He posted a video of Ukrainian soldiers hoisting the national flag over Chkalovsk, another town reclaimed in the counteroffensive.

While most attention was focused on the counteroffensive, Ukraine's nuclear energy operator said the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, was reconnected to Ukraine's electricity grid, allowing engineers to shut down its last operational reactor to safeguard the plant amid the fighting.

The plant, one of the 10 biggest atomic power stations in the world, has been occupied by Russian forces since the early days of the war. Ukraine and Russia have traded blame for shelling around it.

Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the situation at the plant in a call on Sunday with French President Emmanuel Macron, the Kremlin said.

CAPSULE

PEOPLE LINE UP ROUTE AS QUEEN'S COFFIN APPEARS

London: Thousands lined the route to catch a glimpse as Queen Elizabeth II's coffin, seen in public for the first time, made its journey on Sunday from Balmoral Castle in Aberdeenshire to arrive at the late monarch's official Scottish residence of Holyrood house Palace in the capital city of Edinburgh.

FORMER UNION MINISTER KRISHNAM RAJU DIES

Hyderabad: Former Union Minister and veteran actor Uppalapati Krishnam Raju passed away on Sunday wee hours while undergoing treatment at a private hospital here, hospital sources said. He was 83 and is survived by wife and three daughters.

PTI ■ KARACHI

As millions across Pakistan Amarooned and displaced by the catastrophic floods desperately await assistance, a Hindu temple in a tiny village of Balochistan has shone a light in the darkness by providing food and shelter to about 200 to 300 flood-hit people, mostly Muslims.

Perched on high ground, the Baba Madhoda's Mandir in Jalal Khan village in the Kachhi district has remained relatively safe from the floodwaters and serves as a sanctuary to the flood-affected people in their bleakest hours.

The village was cut off from the rest of the province due to inundation in the Nari, Bolan, and Lehri rivers, leaving

the residents of the remote area to fend for themselves. The local Hindu community opened the doors of the Baba Madhoda's Mandir to the flood-hit people and their livestock, the Dawn newspaper reported.

According to locals, Baba Madhoda was a pre-partition Hindu saint equally cherished by Muslims and Hindus of the area. "He used to travel on a camel," says Iltaf Buzdar, a frequent visitor to the village from Bhag Nari tehsil.

Buzdar says as per the stories narrated by his parents, the saint transcended religious boundaries. "He would think of people through the prism of humanity instead of their caste and creed," he said his parents told him.



The worship place — frequented by Hindu worshippers from across Balochistan — is made of concrete and covers a large area. Since it is located on high ground, it remained relatively safe from the floodwaters.

Most members of the Hindu community in Jalal Khan have migrated to other cities of Kachhi for employment and other opportunities, but a couple of families remain on the temple premises to look after it, the report said.

Rattan Kumar, 55, a shopkeeper in the Bhag Nari tehsil, is in charge of the temple at present. "There are over one hundred rooms in the temple as a large number of people from all over Balochistan and Sindh come here for pilgrimage every year," the report

quoted him as saying. Sawan Kumar, Rattan's son, said a few rooms were damaged by floods, but, overall, the structure remained safe.

At least 200-300 people, mostly Muslims, and their livestock were given refuge on the premises and looked after by Hindu families, the report said.

Initially, the area was completely cut off from the rest of the district. The displaced said they were provided rations via helicopter sorties, but after they moved inside the temple, they were being fed by the Hindu community.

"Besides locals, Hindus have also housed the goats and sheep along with other animals," said Israr Mugheri, a doctor in Jalal Khan.

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Mayawati attacks Centre for discontinuing free food grains

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati on Sunday targeted the Central Government for discontinuing the free food grain distribution to the poor.

She asked the Centre not to stop the free ration being given to the poor under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, started during the COVID-19 pandemic, citing inflation. The former Chief Minister of UP said that it would be unfair to the poor if the distribution of free ration was stopped.

Through a series of tweets on Sunday, Mayawati said, “The huge population of the

country is still almost as sad and stricken by the problem of inflation, poverty, unemployment etc. as it was during the time of coronavirus (pandemic). It would be unfair and unjust to snatch a bite from the mouth (of the poor).”

Mayawati said in another tweet that this was the main reason why the governments of various states were exerting pressure on the Central government to continue this food scheme for some more time after September.

“The BSP demands that the Central Government should pay due and sympathetic attention to this scheme, keeping in view the wider public interest,” she said.



The Central and state governments had extended the free ration scheme by three months till September. Now, the government has announced not to further

extend the free food grain distribution scheme. All the state governments are subsequently putting pressure on the Central government to continue this scheme.

Man arrested for duping 200 people on pretext of online alcohol delivery

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a 23-year-old man for allegedly posting online advertisements in names of popular liquor stores in Gurugram adjoining the national Capital and duping more than 200 people on the pretext of delivering alcohol at their homes.

The accused, identified as Azharuddin Khan, is a resident of Bharatpur in Rajasthan and was operating from his hometown. He used Google Ads to promote his fraudulent business.

According to Devesh Kumar Mahla, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), outer north district, a

case of cheating was registered based on a complaint received from a Delhi resident who alleged that while watching a YouTube channel, a phone number appeared on his screen for home delivery of liquor.

“When he contacted the given mobile number, he was sent a QR (Quick Response) code, barcode and account number and asked for an OTP. After sharing the OTP (one-time password), a total of Rs 78,374 got deducted from his account in various transactions. Later, the accused disconnected his phone,” said the DCP.

“During investigation, it was revealed that the alleged mobile numbers used by the fraudster were found operating



from a village near Jhenjhuri in Bharatpur district in Rajasthan. As part of the investigation, a police team was sent to Bharatpur from where accused Azharuddin Khan was arrested and three mobile phones and one basic keypad phone used for calling purpose and used in the crime was recovered from him,” said the DCP.

Explaining the modus operandi of the accused, the DCP said that he posted advertisements on Google Ads in the name of famous liquor shops situated in Gurugram.

“He has been running this racket for the last one year and has duped many people throughout the National Capital Region (NCR),” said the DCP.

BJP MP writes to LG seeking timely cleaning of Yamuna before Chhath

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari has written to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena seeking a direction to officials to ensure timely cleaning of River Yamuna and necessary preparations ahead of Chhath festival celebrated post Diwali.

The North East Delhi MP also attacked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying he may “target” the festival of Purvanchalis to hide his failure of not cleaning the river.

No immediate reaction was available from the AAP on Tiwari's charge.

Chhath is celebrated by a large number of Purvanchalis and is held at riverbanks and other water bodies through



performance of rituals in knee deep water to worship the Sun.

In his letter to Saxena, Tiwari accused the Kejriwal government of trying to ban Chhath in Delhi last year to “humiliate” 50 lakh Purvanchalis living in Delhi and also to cover up its failures.

Last year the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) had banned Chhath due to the Covid pan-

demic. However, later it had permitted celebration of the festival at designated ghats except along the Yamuna, amid vociferous protests by the BJP.

Kejriwal, who had first suggested that the ban was for the safety of the people in view of Covid, later came out in support of allowing the festival.

“The way Kejriwal is serving lies to mislead the people and cover up scams of his government, it is suspected he may target Chhath to prevent the reality of Yamuna in Delhi to be exposed,” Tiwari charged.

He urged the LG to speed up schemes for cleaning of Yamuna and issue directions to officers concerned for timely preparations at the riverbank for celebrations of Chhath.

Khattar suspends additional SHO over dereliction of duty

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal while presiding Grievance Committee meeting on Sunday suspended an additional station house officer (SHO) sub-inspector (SI) Satinder, who was posted at Sohna Sadar police station, over dereliction of duty.

The suspended SI has been placed under suspension with immediate effect and transferred to police lines, Gurugram. According to the police, the SI was investigating a case related to the fraudulent extortion of money in the name of a Group-D job in the Prime Minister's Office.

In connection with the matter, a case was filed by one Anil Kumar a resident of Sohna in



which he alleged that he had given Rs 3.5 lakh to the accused person. Sohna police, during the investigation, had told it to be a case of mutual money transaction saying that there is no evidence or instrument of money transaction between the complainant and the accused.

The Deputy District Attorney (DDA), appointed by the Police Commissioner,

Gurugram, had prima facie considered it to be a civil matter between the two parties.

The CM has also ordered to take action against the DDA for giving the wrong opinion to the police in this matter. The DDA of the Police Commissioner's Office had described the corruption case as a civil case of money transactions.

First chink in Opp's unity bid; KCR plans to go his own

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“KCR, who is leading the Telangana state on the path of progress by fulfilling the Telangana people's 60-year aspirations, should move forward to constitute an alternative front in the national politics and play a key role,” Kumaraswamy said, adding, that he is extending full support to KCR.

Kumaraswamy also welcomed the news that KCR will soon announce a national party and play a key role in the country's politics.

Kumaraswamy hailed KCR's development model and said that the entire coun-

try is discussing the progress made by Telangana in just 8 years after its birth.

The two leaders discussed the “dangerous and selfish political path adopted by the BJP Government at the Centre” and its consequences and expressed serious concerns. “Both of them arrived at a consensus that they will protect the country from being pushed into the dangerous religious hatred in any situation. In this direction, they stressed the need for unity of all alternative political forces to safeguard the spirit of the country's democratic federalism,” the release said.

₹1,800 crore to be incurred for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, says trust

PTI ■ AYODHYA (UP)

An estimated cost of Rs 1,800 crore will be incurred to build the Ram temple in Ayodhya, officials of the trust responsible for the construction of the structure said here on Sunday.

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, formed on the Supreme Court's orders for the construction of the temple in this Hindu holy town in Uttar Pradesh, approved its rules and manual after a marathon meeting here.

At the meeting held at the Faizabad Circuit House, the trust members also unanimously decided to make space for idols of prominent Hindu seers in the temple complex.

The trust has estimated an expenditure of Rs 1,800 crore for the construction of the Ram temple only, based on a report filed by experts.

The general secretary of the trust, Champat Rai, said after long contemplation and suggestions from everyone concerned, the rules and bye-laws of the trust were finalised at the meeting.

The trust has also decided to make space for idols of prominent Hindu seers and the main characters from the Ramayana period in the temple complex, he added.

Rai said 14 of the 15 trust members attended the meeting.



Construction committee chairman Nripendra Mishra, trust chairman Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, treasurer Govind Dev Giri, member Udupi Peethadheeshwar Vishwathirtha Prasannacharya, Dr Anil Mishra, Mahant Dinendra Das, Kameshwar Chaupal and ex-officio member District Magistrate Nitish Kumar were among those who were present physically, while Keshav Parasharan, Yugpurush Parmanand, Vimalendra Mohan Pratap Mishra and ex-officio member state Principal Secretary, Home, Sanjay Kumar participated virtually.

The construction of the temple is expected to be completed by December 2023 and Lord Ram is expected to be seated in the sanctum sanctorum by the Makar Sankranti festival in January 2024, Rai said.

Instill fear of police in the minds of criminals: Yogi

PNS ■ BAGHPAT/LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, took stock of the law and order situation in Baghpat district and asked the top cops to instill fear of police in the minds of criminals. “There is no place for crime and criminals in Uttar Pradesh; criminals should not be spared under any circumstances,” he said.

The Chief Minister also reviewed several development works of different departments being carried out in the district at the collectorate auditorium and ordered timely completion of these projects. During the meeting, the chief minister stressed on better communication with the public representatives.

“Everyone in the state must get the benefits of the government schemes without any discrimination,” he said.

Appreciating the Sajal

Baghpat Abhiyan and Baghpat Khel Vikas Abhiyan, the chief minister said that sports activities should be encouraged in private schools and sports competitions should be organised at the district level also.

The chief minister also instructed officials to ensure that the money meant for uniforms of schoolchildren was utilised for that purpose only and not diverted anywhere else.

He also called for better communication between parents and teachers. Furthermore, the chief minister directed authorities to provide separate toilets for boys and girls in schools and form old student councils.

He also reviewed the progress of Har Ghar Nal Yojana in the district.

The chief minister issued directions for ensuring proper sanitation and cleanliness in the district. He also interacted with intellectuals.

Woman among 3 arrested for abducting minor girls in Gurugram

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

A woman and her two associates have been arrested for allegedly kidnapping two minor girls from Ekta Enclave, Maruti Kunj of Gurugram, the police said on Sunday.

According to the police, on Friday they received information regarding the abduction of two minor girls — a 9-year-old and a 14-year-old — and the abductor had reportedly demanded a ransom of Rs 50 lakh. The victims had gone missing from the Ekta Enclave area on Saturday. A case was registered at the Bhoneisi police station and a team was constituted to trace the girls.

Cops managed to recover the girls from Hero Honda Chowk. The accused were identified as Rinki, Sagar and Ajay. Rinki was the mastermind behind the incident, the police said.

During the probe, it was



disclosed that the mothers of both the minor girls knew each other and that Rinki had borrowed around 26 lakhs from the complainant's wife.

“She hatched a conspiracy to kidnap the 9-year-old girl along with her daughter so that no one can suspect her. She along with her accomplice Sagar worked as her driver and Vikas aka Suraj worked at her Dhaba. They planned to kidnap the girls on the night of a Kirtan program organised in the house of complainant to

which Rinki was also invited,” police said.

As per the plan, Rinki attended a Kirtan programme during which the victim was lured out of her house on the pretext of buying ice cream. Outside, Sagar and Vikas were ready with a car to kidnap the victim. When both minor girls went outside for ice cream, both were kidnapped. Later the accused demanded Rs 50 lakhs from the complainant.

The accused have been sent to judicial custody.

LG OK's CBI probe into purchase...

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It had also alleged that the appointment of Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System (DIMTS) as a bid management consultant for this tender was done with an aim to facilitate wrongdoing. The complaint had alleged irregularities in a July 2019 procurement bid for 1,000 low floors BS-IV and BS-VI buses and another bid made in

March 2020 for the purchase and annual maintenance contract for low-floor BS-VI buses, the sources said. The complaint was forwarded to the chief secretary on July 22 to seek comments from the departments of the Delhi government and consequently their recommendations.

A committee, headed by retired IAS officer OP Aggrawal, constituted to look

into the charges of corruption in the procurement of buses in June 2021, in its report submitted in August last year, had clearly indicted the AAP Government for “procedural deviations in the entire tendering and procurement procedure,” the sources said.

A matter linked to the bus procurement case is also in the Delhi High Court. Delhi Transport Minister Kailash

Gahlot had last year approached the High Court with his civil defamation lawsuit against the BJP's Vijender Gupta, seeking Rs 5 crore in damages, accusing him of making scandalous statements over the procurement of 1,000 low-floor buses. On Wednesday, the court asked the two leaders to explore the possibility of settling the defamation case.

Hindu temple an oasis of life for flood-devastated Pak...

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Jalal has set up a medical camp inside the temple. “There were announcements on the loudspeaker by the local Hindus, calling upon Muslims to rush to the temple to take refuge,” he adds.

Those who took refuge there say they are indebted to

the local community for coming to their aid and providing them food and shelter during this difficult hour.

For locals, opening the temple to the survivors of the flood was a gesture of humanity and religious harmony, which has been their tradition for centuries, the report said.

Nearly 1,400 people have died in flooding that has inundated a third of the country, wiped-out crops and displaced more than 33 million.

UN chief Antonio Guterres on Saturday exhorted the international community to step up efforts to help flood-ravaged Pakistan

rebuild resilient communities and infrastructure to resist future disasters.

Last week, the UN launched an appeal for USD 160 million in aid for Pakistan. Separately, the US has also announced an additional USD 20 million as financial aid for flood relief.

Russians leave behind arsenal in hasty retreat to flee Ukrainian...

From Page 1

Ukraine's military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, announced that its forces had recaptured about 3,000 square kilometers since the counteroffensive began in early September.

He noted that Ukrainian troops are only 50 kilometers from the border with Russia.

Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Ukrainian troops have reclaimed control of more than 40 settlements in the Kharkiv region, noting he

couldn't give a precise number because the operation is still unfolding.

Defense Minister Anna Malysa said Ukrainian forces are firing shells containing propaganda into areas where they seek to advance.

“One of the ways of informational work with the enemy in areas where there is no Internet is launching propaganda shells,” she wrote on Facebook. “Before moving forward, our defenders say hello to the Russian invaders and

give them the last opportunity to surrender. Otherwise, only death awaits them on Ukrainian soil.”

The Russian pullback marked the biggest battlefield success for Ukrainian forces since they thwarted a Russian attempt to seize the capital, Kyiv, at the start of the nearly seven-month war.

The Kharkiv campaign came as a surprise for Moscow, which had relocated many of its troops from the region to the south in expectation of a coun-

teroffensive there.

In an awkward attempt to save face, the Russian Defense Ministry said Saturday the troops' withdrawal from Izyum and other areas was intended to strengthen Moscow's forces in the neighbouring Donetsk region to the south.

The explanation sounded similar to the justification Russia gave for pulling back from the Kyiv region earlier this year when they failed to take the capital.

The Russian forces around

Izyum have been key for Moscow's effort to capture the Donetsk region, and their pullback will dramatically weaken its capability to press its offensive on Ukrainian strongholds of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk to the south.

A map released by the Russian Defense Ministry on Sunday showed its forces retreating to a narrow patch of land along the border.

Igor Strelkov, who led Russia-backed forces when the separatist conflict in the

Donbas erupted in 2014, mocked the Russian Defense Ministry's explanation of the retreat, suggesting that handing over Russia's own territory near the border was a “contribution to a Ukrainian settlement.”

The retreat drew an angry response from Russian military bloggers and nationalist commentators, who bemoaned it as a major defeat and urged the Kremlin to step up its war efforts. Many scathingly criticised Russian authorities for continuing with fireworks and

other lavish festivities in Moscow that marked a city holiday on Saturday despite the debacle in Ukraine.

Just as the Russian forces were hastily pulling back from Izyum under Ukrainian fire on Saturday, Putin attended the opening of a huge Ferris wheel at a Moscow park, although it reportedly closed for repairs soon thereafter. He also inaugurated a new transport link and a sports arena.

The action underlined the Kremlin's narrative that the

war it calls a “special military operation” was going according to plan without affecting Russians' everyday lives.

Pro-Kremlin political analyst Sergei Markov criticized the Moscow festivities as a grave mistake.

“The fireworks in Moscow on a tragic day of Russia's military defeat will have extremely serious political consequences,” Markov wrote on his messaging app channel. “Authorities mustn't celebrate when people are mourning.”

Kejriwal, corruption have become synonymous: BJP

'Gahlot was made chief of panel for buses procurement by DTC to give benefits to friends'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the Aam Aadmi Party as 'hardcore corrupt Government, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday wasted no time in hitting out at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal saying tenders were prepared by friends of Kejriwal Government and Kejriwal and corruption have become synonymous and said he has no right to remain in the post.

The BJP leaders said Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot was made the chairman of the committee for tendering and procurement of buses by Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) "with the intention of giving benefits to friends".

"There are general financial rules. I want to ask Arvind Kejriwal why he didn't follow the general financial rules. Does he think that he stands above laws and constitution of nation?" BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said at a Press conference. Bhatia said, "Arvind Kejriwal and corruption have become synonymous".

"The Kejriwal Government violated the provisions of tender and procurement in order to



favour favourite companies and gives tender to them. The appointment of DIMTS as a bid management consultant for this tender was done to facilitate wrongdoing," Bhatia alleged. "The main agenda of Kejriwal is to go astray and hang up the right work. But if you know how to deviate from the main issue, then the public also knows how to shock you," Bhatia said.

Claiming that Kejriwal has no right to remain in the chair of Chief Minister, the BJP leader said each department of the AAP Government is involved in corrupt activities with "contracts and tenders being tailor-made to benefit the friends of Kejriwal".

"First, it was excise policy, now there are irregularities in the purchase of buses... Kejriwal and corruption have become synonymous". How can you claim to be 'hardcore honest'? People have understood you are 'hardcore corrupt'... You have no right to remain in chair of chief minister," the BJP leader said. The BJP spokesperson said AAP has not responded to "charges of irregularities", but raised another unrelated issue to divert attention.



BJP welcomes LG's nod to probe DTC bus purchase

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Saturday welcomed Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena recommendation to probe the alleged corruption in the procurement of 1,000 low-floor buses by the DTC.

Bidhuri said the BJP MLAs had met the Lieutenant Governor and the Central Vigilance Commission regarding this matter and now the recommendation to investigate this matter has brought to light another scam of the AAP Government.

Bidhuri said in this case a work was also awarded and there was a scam of crores not only in the purchase of 1,000 DTC buses but also in the name of their maintenance. On January 15, 2021, the Delhi Government had ordered for the purchase of 700 buses from JVM and 300 buses from Tata



and their annual maintenance contract, but on March 12, 2021, after the complaint of Bidhuri and all other BJP MLAs, the Lieutenant Governor put both the orders on hold till the further notice," Bidhuri added.

"These buses were being bought for Rs 875 crore. Not only this, a contract was also signed for the annual maintenance of these buses, in which Rs 3500 crore was fixed at the rate of Rs 45 per kilometer. Surprisingly, there was a guarantee of three years but the payment of maintenance amount was fixed from day one.

AAP hits back at LG, says buses never purchased, tenders cancelled

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After Delhi's Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena approved a probe into the purchase of 1,000 low-floor buses by the Delhi Government, the AAP on Sunday hit back at him saying buses were never purchased and tenders were cancelled.

In a series of Press conferences, AAP MLAs claimed the CBI had registered a preliminary enquiry and the agency could not find anything a year ago. The AAP however, said it is not against any probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or any other agency in the matter.

But, it is "unfortunate" that Saxena, who is facing allegations of corruption, has endorsed a probe into tender process for procurement and maintenance of buses by the Delhi Government "for the second time" in a month even as the CBI is already conducting a "preliminary inquiry" into the case and yet to claim any breakthrough.

"But, the LG (Saxena), who wakes up every morning and starts levelling fake and baseless corruption charges against his own Delhi government, has recommended CBI probe into the matter yesterday for the second time in a month just to deflect public attention



chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj told a press conference. The Arvind Kejriwal government put the tender process on hold after "some inquiry" was initiated against it, he said. "It was decided not to go ahead with the tender process till the conclusion of the inquiry. It is still on hold for the past two years and we could not purchase even a single bus," Bharadwaj said.

The CBI, which had registered a PE (preliminary inquiry) case in the matter, has also been conducting a probe into it for about one-and-a-half years but it is yet to claim any breakthrough.

"But, the LG (Saxena), who wakes up every morning and starts levelling fake and baseless corruption charges against his own Delhi government, has recommended CBI probe into the matter yesterday for the second time in a month just to deflect public attention



from the corruption charges levelled against him," the AAP spokesperson charged. "Only three weeks ago, he had recommended a CBI probe into the matter," he said, adding it is "unfortunate". The AAP leaders have levelled three "big and serious allegations" of corruption against Saxena "with proof", Bharadwaj said.

"But instead of coming out and say that he is ready to face a probe, Saxena is staging a new drama every day by levelling baseless allegations against the Kejriwal dispensation," he said.

In a video message, AAP MP Sanjay Singh hit out at Saxena on the issue and alleged that the LG has been levelling one after another "baseless allegations" against the Kejriwal government as "he wants commission from the contractors" in award of the government works. "You deal with the contractors directly



for commission in award of work.

This business of loot and corruption that you ran at KVIC is not possible in Delhi govt," he said. He demanded that the BJP-led Centre order a probe into allegations of corruption against Saxena and "put him behind the bars". In another press conference, Durgesh Pathak, the AAP MLA from Rajinder Nagar, said that LG wants re-investigation of cases in which the CBI has already given a clean chit. "LG has only one aim behind the allegations, he wants contractors to pay him a cut in all tenders. I plead before the LG, if you want a cut, talk to the contractors directly, why are you harassing us?," said Pathak.

Atishi, AAP MLA from Kalkaji said that Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal is now a national alternative to the Prime Minister.



Tourists use a cloth to shield themselves from the heat as they visit India Gate, in New Delhi on Sunday

Govt issues gazette fixing MCD seats at 250

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has issued a gazette notification fixing the total number of seats in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi at 250 from the existing figure of 272. The total number of seats reserved for the members of the Scheduled Castes in the MCD in proportion to their number is also determined to be 42.

The previous three corporations in Delhi comprised 272 wards. While the North and South corporations accounted for 104 wards each, the East corporation had 64 wards under its jurisdiction.

"In pursuance of sub-section (5) of section 3 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act 1957, as amended by the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2022, the Central government hereby determines the total number of seats of the Councillors in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi as two hundred and fifty (250)," reads the notification.

Further, in accordance with sub-section (6) (as amended) of section 3 of the aforesaid Act, the Central Government also determines the total number of seats of the Councillors in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to be reserved for members of Scheduled Castes as forty-two (42), based on the ratio to the total number of seats as the population of Scheduled Castes bears to the total population of Delhi (Census 2011)," it said.

The process of redrawing of municipal wards is going on at a good pace. It is expected the exercise will be completed by November 2022. At least two meetings are held every week for better results and to further expedite it, sources said.

The reunified MCD had formally come into existence on May 22 with IAS officers Ashwani Kumar and Gyanesh Bharti assuming charge as the new civic body's special officer and commissioner, respectively.

The erstwhile MCD, established in 1958, was trifurcated in 2012 during Sheila Dikshit's tenure as chief minister. It was recently reunified by merging three civic bodies — North, South and East Delhi municipal corporations or NDMC, SDMC and EDMC. Experts in July had said the civic polls here are not likely to take place before 2023 as redrawing of civic wards is an "extensive exercise".

After redrawing of MCD seats, BJP says ready for polls

New Delhi: Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta and the Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri while welcoming the decision of the Ministry of Home Affairs to decide the number of wards for municipal integration to 250 and to reserve 42 seats for Scheduled Castes, said BJP is fully prepared for elections.

Gupta said due to the integration of Municipal Corporation, now the development of Delhi will be at double the speed because now the Central Government will have the power in most of the cases. "The whole of Delhi has seen

that after Kejriwal came to power, he left no stone unturned to cripple the corporation. The fund was stopped so that the development works could be obstructed and the corporation employees did not even pay the salary, but despite this the BJP ruled corporation did a better job with limited resources.

The Kejriwal government had looted the dues of the corporation in its false propaganda and when the corporations started asking for their funds so that they could pay salaries to their employees, Kejriwal raised his hands," he added.

L-G inspects Siri Fort Sports Complex, Qutub Golf Course



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday inspected the Siri Fort Sports Complex and Qutub Golf Course and took stock of the sporting and recreational facilities being provided by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). The LG also instructed the concerned officials to carry out the necessary maintenance works within two months.

As per a senior official, Saxena, accompanied by DDA Vice Chairman and other senior officials, inspected the shooting range, swimming pool, indoor badminton stadium, and other facilities at the Siri Fort Sports Complex and instructed officials to maintain higher levels of cleanliness and upkeep.

"The LG interacted with the members and users at the Sports Complex who apprised him of lack of cleanliness in certain areas to which Saxena issued immediate instructions to carry out the necessary maintenance works within two months," he said. Saxena

stressed on ensuring cleanliness and hygiene inside the toilets bathrooms and changing rooms for the users. The LG pointed out minor structural damages and instructed the officials to spruce up the buildings so as to give it a refurbished look. He also asked the officials to enhance public amenities including a restaurant at the Sports Complex, he stated.

"With its strategic location in South Delhi and its well-equipped facilities in 27 sporting disciplines, the Siri Fort Sports Complex attracts a large number of athletes and sports enthusiasts apart from general users from different parts of the city.

The sheer aesthetic value of the complex also adds to its appeal among the users," he informed.

"The LG also inspected the Qutub Golf Course and appreciated the world-class facility developed by DDA in the heart of the national capital. Saxena inspected various facilities at the Golf Course, and interacted with the visitors and the members.

CBSE Class X Compartmental results: Delhi Govt schools record rise by 16%

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After the CBSE 10th and 12th compartment exams' results were declared, the Delhi Government on Sunday claimed that there has been an unprecedented increase of 16.02 per cent in Class 10th board results in the city Government's schools, and now the overall passing percentage of Class 10th has increased from 81.27 per cent to 97.29 per cent. Officials said this rise in passing percentage in Class 12th results



has increased from 96.29 per cent to 98.21 per cent. Delhi's

Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia congratulated all the students, teachers and parents, and said that due to Corona, school education and student's mental and emotional well-being has been adversely affected over the last two years.

"The academic session of 2021-22 was also disrupted repeatedly by Corona and there was a significant reduction in learning opportunities for children, however, the CBSE board examinations proceeded as per usual. While our students performed brilliantly in this year's

exam, some could not pass in one or two subjects and had to reappear in compartment examinations," said Sisodia. "Thanks to the unmatched hard work, planning and support from our teachers, more than 33,000 class 10th and class 12th students from our schools have succeeded in overcoming the challenge of the compartment exams," said Sisodia.

"This result will surely boost their confidence and propel them to do better in their studies over the course of

the future. It is a momentous occasion for all, and goes on to show that one should never give up, no matter what the odds are," said Sisodia. Sisodia said that there has been an increase of 1.68 per cent in the 12th board results after compartment examinations this year as compared to the same in 2018-19.

"While the 12th result after compartment exams was 96.53 per cent in 2018-19, it is 98.21 per cent after compartment examinations results in 2021-22," said Sisodia. "Similarly, if

we look at CBSE class 10th compartment results, in 2018-19, 42,216 children appeared in the CBSE 10th compartment examinations and 38.84 per cent of them passed. In the session 2020-21, out of the 46,62 students who appeared for the compartment examination, 30.84 per cent passed.

But this year, of the 34,502 children from Delhi Government Schools that appeared for the CBSE 10th compartment examinations, 95.88 per cent of them passed," Sisodia added.

Lumpy skin disease: City Govt to buy 60K doses of goat pox vaccine

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After lumpy skin diseases found in 173 cattle, the Delhi Government has decided to purchase 60,000 doses of goat pox vaccine to inoculate healthy cattle in the capital. These vaccine doses will be administered free of cost.

Development Minister Gopal Rai on Saturday said that 173 cases of lumpy skin disease have been found among cattle in Delhi, mostly in the south-west district. This is for the first time that the Delhi government has reported cases of lumpy skin disease in the city.

A senior official said there has been no increase in the cases since last evening. No death has been reported so far. "Delhi has a cattle population of 80,000. The central



government which is finalising the rate contract with the supplier has assured that 60,000 doses will reach us soon," he said. "We had a meeting with officials of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying on Saturday and requested them to make the

vaccine available as soon as possible," the official said.

The government will adopt the ring vaccination strategy in which healthy cattle in a 5 km radius of the affected areas will be given goat pox vaccine with the Uttarkashi strain of the virus, he said. In Delhi, most

cases of lumpy skin disease have been detected in the Goyla dairy area, Rewla Khanpur area, Ghumanhera and Najafgarh.

Lumpy skin disease is a contagious viral disease that spreads among cattle through mosquitoes, flies, lice and wasps by direct contact, as also through contaminated food and water. It does not transmit from cattle to humans.

The symptoms include high fever, reduced milk production, skin nodules, loss of appetite, increased nasal discharge and watery eyes, among others.

According to the Centre, the disease has spread in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh and more than 57,000 cattle have died due to it.

Visitors throng Kartavya Path

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the New Delhi Municipal Council is busy in replacing signages in the newly-christened Kartavya Path, hundreds of people from across the national capital thronged the India Gate on Sunday evening, turning it into a "picnic" spot once again.

For many families, the iconic India Gate became their favourite weekend destination for resuming their pre-COVID-19 routines from jogging, walking or taking their toddlers for a stroll.

Signages around the India Gate hexagon are mounted on stainless steel-made unipoles with horizontal plates bearing white text on green background. Late Friday night, one of the signages with three green plates bore name of two streets -- Sher Shah Suri Marg and Dr Zakir Hussain Marg -- while 'Rajpath' inscribed earlier in the

top plate could be seen scraped off, as also from other signages that bore the old name. On Sunday, another signage was seen with 'Rajpath' erased from the middle plate, flanked by 'Akbar Road' plate above and 'Ashoka Road' plate below it.

Meet Barkha and her family who came from Sitaram Bazar to India Gate for a Sunday picnic. With bedsheet spread, snacks and cold drinks stacked inside a basket beside them, they called it a perfect weather for a picnic.

With her 15-year-old Aryan playing with her cousins and other members of her family clicking each other's pictures, it turned out to be a fun day for her family. When asked about the picnic plan, Barkha's husband Anirudh said, "It feels good to be back here post lockdown. Feels like we have got a fresh air to breathe, free space for children to play and some time for

family to bond." Aryan who was playing with her cousins said, "Today, was our holiday, so we insisted to come here. It looks so beautiful with lights lit and most importantly the place looks so clean. I hope it remains the same always."

A Sweden national was busy jogging along with his group of colleagues. He landed in New Delhi last night for a work-related purpose. While jogging with his colleagues, he

said, "I landed here last night and today here I am at the iconic tourist spot. It feels good. This is the first time I have been here. I will keep coming for my morning walks here till I am here."

There was a good strength of police deployment at the Kartavya Path ensuring that the public does not cross the road to the other side where the statue of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose has been installed.



Plans to open one lakh shakhas by 2025: RSS

3-day coordination meeting begins in Raipur

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The top functionaries of the Rashtriya Swaymsevak Sangh (RSS) on Sunday discussed ways to strengthen the Sangh Parivar and reach out to all States in the country by expanding its 'Shakhas' base to one lakh by 2025 to coincide with its centenary. The RSS currently has around 60,000 Shakhas across the country.

The RSS, the ideological mentor of the BJP, is holding its three-day annual national coordination meet in Raipur.

The meeting discussed various organizational and national issues including security and religious conversion as it sought to draw a road-map to have at least one lakh 'Shakhas' by 2025. The 'Samanvaya Baithk' that commenced on Saturday is being attended by RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat, and BJP president J P Nadda among others will end on



Monday. RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale and five of the outfit's Joint-general secretaries are part of the discussion. Besides, Bhartiya Majdoor Sangh's Hiranaymay Pandya, VHP's Alok Kumar, ABVP's Ashish Chouhan, Bhartiya Kisan Snagh's Dinesh Kulkarni and Vanvasi Ashram's Ramchandra Kharadi are also attending the meet.

In the backdrop of coming assembly polls in around a dozen states by the year-end and next year, representatives of 36 RSS organizations are attending the coordination meeting. The RSS is looking at significantly expanding its shakha (branches) network by 2025 to mark its centenary year. "The meeting looked at expansion and planned ways to reach

out to all states in the country", sources said. The RSS and BJP leaders discussed the strategy to win back states-Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand—where BJP is not in power, sources said.

Chhattisgarh which is slated for assembly polls in November 2023 has been a special focus of discussion in the meet, they said. "Religious conversion in Chhattisgarh is one of the main issues", sources said.

Issues relating to national security were part of the agenda of the meeting, they said. The annual coordination meeting of the RSS and the BJP takes stock of key organizational and current national issues. "Various issues related to the society and national security would be discussed", RSS Chief publicity-in-charge Sunil Ambekar said earlier this week.

This apart, various outfits of the RSS are presenting their progress reports in the meeting.

In some of the meetings in the past senior BJP central Ministers too have taken part and given presentations of their ministries.

Cong makes prez poll more 'transparent'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With controversies surrounding the upcoming Congress presidential polls amid the mega Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi, the grand old party has made certain technical changes in its election format to make it more 'transparent'.

For the first time, Congress will issue QR code-based cards to all delegates in all States and UTs where there are Congress committees.

"Those who want to file a nomination should check if they have a delegate identity card available with them. Only people with valid identity cards will be allowed to sign on the nomination papers for the position of Congress president," said the party.

To file the nomination for the president election, the candidate will have to look for the names of 10 supporters. If a candidate wants to get these 10 supporters from different states, the list of all 9,000+ delegates will be available at the Delhi party office from September 20. Once the nomination is signed and handed over to the chief returning officer, they will get the entire list of delegates, mentioned

the procedures.

Ahead of the crucial election leaders including Party MPs Manish Tiwari and Shashi Tharoor demanded transparency and availability of the names of delegates following which the party leadership agreed to make significant changes to the polling process with Tharoor appreciating the move.

"Anyone who wants to file nomination for the post of Congress president will be able to see the list of all 9,000 delegates who make up the electoral college. This list will be available at the office of the party's central election authority from September 20," said party's chief Central Election Authority Madhusudan Mistry.

Shashi Tharoor, Karti Chidambaram and Manish Tewari, had written to Mistry, demanding "transparency, fairness" in the election process. The other two MPs who wrote are Pradyut Bordoloi and Abdul Khaleque.

The Congress President's election will be held on October 17 and nominations can be filed from September 24 to 30. "If anyone desires to get nominations from ten supporters from different states, the list of all 9000+ delegates will be available in my office at



AICC, Delhi from 20th September (11 AM to 6 PM), before they file their nomination on 24th September," Mistry added.

Mistry said the changes done on demand of party members should resolve the anxiety of anybody about the process of filing their nominations without knowing the names of the delegates.

Shashi Tharoor has written now written to Mistry saying their concerns have been met. "I am pleased that this clarification has come in the form of his constructive reply to our letter (attached). In view of these assurances, I am satisfied.

Many will be glad to move on with an election process that in my view will only strengthen the party," Tharoor said in a tweet message amidst the speculations that he is likely to be contesting the presidential election. Tharoor said all he and his colleagues were doing was only seeking clarification, not confrontation.

Tharoor said he spoke to Madhusudan Mistry to end the "unseemly controversy" that had arisen after the "malicious leak" of a private letter from 5 MPs to him. "I stressed that as loyal Congressmen we were seeking clarification, not confrontation," he said. Manish

Tiwari was the first leader to have asked the authorities to publish the list of names who would participate in the voting process. The demand gathered support from the other MPs and was seen as a rebellion coinciding with the exit of former J&K chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad from the party.

In the joint letter, the 5 MPs said if there is any concerns with releasing the electoral rolls publicly, then the central election authority must put in place a mechanism to securely share the information with the electors and the potential candidates.

SC to hear pleas challenging CAA validity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear over 200 PILs Monday including a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act. A bench headed by Chief Justice U U Lalit is scheduled to hear the petitions challenging the validity of the CAA whose enactment had triggered widespread protests across the country.

According to the list of businesses uploaded on the apex court's website, a bench comprising the Chief Justice and Justice S Ravindra Bhat has posted 220 petitions for hearing, including the lead plea by the Indian Union of Muslim League against the CAA.

Several PILs pending for a couple of years in the top court will also be taken up for hearing. The CJ-led bench is also scheduled to hear some other PILs including a plea filed by an organisation, We The Women of India, for creating adequate infrastructure under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act across the country for providing effective



legal aid to affected women. The plea had said domestic violence continues to be the most common crime against women in India despite the law being enacted more than 15 years back.

Hearing the batch of pleas on December 18, 2019, the top court had refused to stay the operation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), but had issued notices to the Centre. The amended law seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslim immigrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Jain, and Parsi communities who came to the country from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014. The top court had issued notice to the Centre and had

sought its response by the second week of January 2020. However, due to the COVID-19-induced restrictions, the matter could not come up for a full-fledged hearing as it involved a large number of lawyers and litigants.

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), one of the petitioners that have challenged the CAA, said the act violates the fundamental Right to Equality and intends to grant citizenship to a section of illegal immigrants by making an exclusion based on religion.

The plea by IUML filed through advocate Pallavi Pratap seeks an interim stay on the operation of the law. The plea filed by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has said the Act is a "brazen attack" on core funda-

mental rights envisaged under the Constitution and treats "equals as unequal".

"The impugned Act creates two classifications, viz, classification on basis of religion and the classification on the basis of geography, and both the classifications are completely unreasonable and share no rational nexus to the object of the impugned Act i.e., to provide shelter, safety, and citizenship to communities who in their native country are facing persecution on grounds of religion," the plea has said.

Several other petitions have been filed challenging the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, including by RJD leader Manoj Jha, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, and AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi.

Other petitioners include those by Muslim body Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, All Assam Students Union (AASU), Peace Party, CPI, NGOs 'Rihai Manch' and Citizens Against Hate, advocate M L Sharma, and law students have also approached the apex court challenging the Act.

CBI arrests 4 for graft, seizes ₹1.56 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Sunday said it has arrested a resident engineer of a Gurugram-based private company and three others in an alleged bribery of Rs 15 lakh and recovered Rs 1.56 crore during searches at their premises.

A case was registered against Resident Engineer Anil Kumar Singh, Voyants Solutions Private Limited, Gurugram (Haryana) and others including two Directors and an employee of private company based at Mathura and unknown public servants on the allegations that the said Resident Engineer of the private company (the Consultant appointed by NHAI to monitor the progress of a project awarded to Mathura-based private company on Sitarganj-Bareilly Section of NH74) had demanded bribe from the officials of the latter firm for passing their bills under the project, the CBI said.

The accused Resident Engineer and the employee of a Mathura-based firm were intercepted and trapped by the CBI while exchanging a bribe



amount of ₹15 lakh. Two other accused (named in FIR) were also caught, the CBI said in a statement.

Searches were conducted at eight locations belonging to the accused including at Pilibhit, Gurugram, Mathura and Noida which resulted in the recovery of huge cash of ₹1.56 crore, incriminating documents pertaining to the transactions and the project, and digital devices, including mobiles, it said, adding, all the four arrested accused will be produced before the Competent Court.

Besides Singh, the three others named as accused in the FIR are Directors of SRSC Infra Private Limited, Mathura—Bedram Sharma and Parsuram Sharma and Anand Mohan Sharma, an employee of the company.

4 held for using fake letterhead of MEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case against four persons for allegedly sending a fake note verbale (diplomatic note) on the letterhead of the External Affairs Ministry to the French Embassy here requesting the grant of tourist visas to a couple from Haryana and Punjab.

The case follows the culmination of a Preliminary Enquiry (PE) following a reference from the Deputy Police Liaison Officer, French Homeland Security Service, Julian Noret of the French embassy here. The four accused are Yogesh and Baljeet Pahwa of Panipat and Harpreet Kaur and Surinder Pal Shinde of Kapurthala in Punjab.

The CBI received a reference dated February 7 this year by the DPLO of the French embassy stating that a fake letter dated January 28 purportedly issued by the CPV

Division of the External Affairs Ministry through which it was requested that entry visa multiple entry for France be issued to Yogesh (Passport No.: M 8804754) and Harpreet Kaur (Passport No.:U-6165891).

"The reference discloses prima facie operation of a major racket to misuse Government of India/Ministry of External Affairs CPV Division letters to get visas in foreign embassies," reads the FIR.

On the basis of the reference, a PE was registered March 23 and its outcome along with the reference from the French embassy disclosed commission of offences of criminal conspiracy, cheating, forgery for purpose of using forged document as genuine on part of accused Yogesh, Harpreet Kaur, Baljeet Pahwa and Surinder Pal Shinda and unknown others. All these four persons have been named as accused in the case.

Swami Swaroopanand dies in MP ashram at 99

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Dwarka peeth Shankaracharya Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati, once known as a "revolutionary sadhu" for participating in freedom struggle, who spoke his mind on religious and political issues and questioned the "deification" of Saibaba of Shirdi, died of cardiac arrest in his ashram in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday.

He was 99. Swami Swaroopanand, who was the Shankracharya of Dwarka-Sharda Peeth (in Gujarat), and Jyotish Peeth (in Uttarakhand), was not keeping well for over a year, his aide said.

He breathed his last at his Ashram in the Narsinghpur district around 3:30 PM, Swami Sadanand Maharaj, second-in-command (known as Dandi Swami) of the Dwarka Peeth,

told PTI. An Ashram release said the Shankaracharya died of cardiac arrest.

He was on dialysis and used to be on and off ventilator for the last couple of months. He was also suffering from age-related issues and was a diabetic, the Ashram sources said, adding that a special facility was built at the Ashram to treat him.

He will be given a "bhoo samadhi" (burial) on the campus of the Ashram around 3 to 4 pm on Monday, the release said. "His bhoo Samadhi in sitting position which is given to 'sanyasis' will take place around 3-4 pm at his Paramhansi Ganga Ashram, Jyoteshwar, in Goteagaon in Narsinghpur on Monday," it said. Swaroopanand Saraswati was born as Pothiram Upadhyay in Dighori village in the Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh in

1924. He had left his home in pursuit of God at the age of 9. He became a freedom fighter in the Quit India movement in 1942 and was called as "Revolutionary Sadhu". He was jailed twice, once for 9 months and another of 6 months.

Pothiram Upadhyay became Shankracharya (of Dwarka Peeth) in 1981, his followers said. His 99th birthday was celebrated on tejj that fell on August 30, they said. Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh was one of the thousands of followers of the Shankracharya.

One of his disciples, a former Congress MLA and ex-Jabalpur Mayor Kalyani Pandey told PTI that the Shankracharya had prevailed over the then Prime Minister Rajeev Gandhi to get the locks of the then Babri mosque, which housed the idols of Lord

Ram, in Ayodhya opened. "He yearned for a Ram Temple in Ayodhya. He wanted it to be constructed on the lines of Lord Shiva temple at Angkor Wat in Cambodia," she said.

The Shankracharya was once detained when he was leading a yatra for the construction of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya, his followers said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep sadness at his death and offered condolences to the seer's followers.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted in Hindi, "Dwarka peeth Shankaracharya Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati ji's death has caused a feeling of anguish in me. Besides making India's cultural and religious traditions prosper, he also worked for social welfare. My deepest condolences to his followers from the bottom of my heart."



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during his visit to the Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute of Diplomatic Studies in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

PTI

Genetic screening can prevent cancer, says AIIMS

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Genetic testing and risk-reducing surgery of the body part having errant genes can be the best way to prevent hereditary gynecological cancers like ovary, cervical and uterine in at-risk patients, top oncologists said pointing out that such cancers comprised 5-19% of the total cancers and are on increase in the country.

In this regard, AIIMS at its cancer institute at Hajar in Haryana has already started working on preparing a set of protocols to help people consider how the results of genetic testing will affect them and their families. "A majority of cancer diagnoses are due to unknown causes; however, 5-10



per cent of individuals may develop cancer due to an inherited genetic mutation. This can lead to hereditary cancer syndrome, which increases the risk for various cancers. Genetic screening is relatively low cost and should be offered to more at-risk patients. "This technology is a hope for many

those at risk of cancer. For instance, a mother who has cancer wants to know if her baby in the womb will also have cancer. The genetic screening can detect this fear and accordingly preventive steps can be taken," said Prof Sushma Bhatnagar, Chief IRCH and National Cancer Institute(NCI)

AIIMS. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of ongoing lecture sessions on "Hereditary Gynecological Cancers: From Evidence to Practice," being delivered by Prof Ranjit Manchanda, Lead Precision Oncologist from Wolfson Institute of Population Health, Queen Mary University of London and Barts Health NHS Trust UK, she said a dedicated team at the AIIMS, Hajar is now preparing a protocol detailing how to counsel and manage such high risk cases.

Prof Bhatnagar felt that there has been limited work done in this field in India so far. "Statistics indicate that in India there is probably a higher burden of familial cancers, for example with up 20-25% in

women with ovarian cancer, which appears to be higher than what is seen in the West," she said.

Prof Manchanda who is on a visit to AIIMS as Infosys Chair of Oncology stressed on importance and nuances of screening, and the need for raising awareness about how an early genetic test can help some women avoid cancer.

Prof Manchanda said that identification of women harbouring these mutations not only allows their optimum treatment but also helps to identify unaffected at risk relatives who can then access screening and prospective strategies. This will prevent cancers in their relatives and reduce the burden of disease in

the population. "With wider availability and affordability of genetic testing, counseling and specialized risk reducing and treatment to include these strategies as part of their clinical practice."

Prof SVS Deo, Head Surgical Oncology AIIMS said that lack of awareness about these cancers among doctors and laymen, limited availability of genetic counseling and testing services and reluctance to avail these services are major roadblocks.

He said that of 300 women counseled for the genetic testing, just 40 opted for risk reduction surgery of the erring genes. Till now, genetic testing facilities are available in AIIMS, Delhi and Tata

Memorial Cancer Hospital besides a few hospitals in the private sector.

About 5 to 10 percent of all cancers are estimated to be caused by an inherited risk for cancer, doctors explained and that genetic counseling and testing can help people understand their risks for developing cancer. "These tools may also help them learn how to manage their risks with personalized cancer screening and identify steps they may take to reduce their cancer risks. "For example, if testing shows that the person has a high cancer risk, the counselor may also talk about the best ways to manage it. These may include lifestyle changes, early detection, watching for signs and

symptoms of cancer, medicines to reduce cancer risk, or even preventive surgery," explained Prof. Deo.

Prof Rajiv Sarin from Tata Hospital Mumbai highlighted that genetic testing has become a promising avenue for the prevention, prognosis, and treatment of cancers while Prof Neena Malhotra, Head, IVF Unit AIIMS, Delhi highlighted the importance of preserving childbearing function as these women are young and keen to have pregnancies. "The cancer treatments lowers the child-bearing potential but with advancements in field of IVF it is now possible to share their gametes prior to treatment and freeze them to be used once treatment is over."

3rd stealth frigate ‘Taragiri’ launched

TN RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) on Sunday launched the third Stealth Frigate of Project 17A “Taragiri”, a frigate when it is commissioned will among other things state-of-the-art weapons, sensors, an advanced action information system, an integrated platform management system and supersonic surface-to-surface missile system.

The keel of Taragiri was laid on September 10, 2020 and the ship is expected to be delivered by August 2025.

The 149.02 M long and 17.8 M wide ship, propelled by a CODOG combination of two Gas Turbines and 02

Main Diesel Engines, has been designed by the Indian Navy’s in-house design organization viz. Bureau of Naval Design. The MDL has undertaken the detailed design & construction of the ship which is also overseen by Warship Overseeing Team (Mumbai). Designed to achieve a speed of over 28 knots at a displacement of approx. 6670 tons, the vessel was launched with an approximate launch weight of 3510 tons.

In view of the state-mourning announced by the Government of India over the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who passed away on September 8, the event was limited to a

Technical Launch as the event is tide dependent, any change in the schedule was not possible.

The first ship of the Project 17A, ‘Nilgiri’ was launched on September 28 2019 and it is expected for sea trials in the first half of 2024. The second ship of P17A class ‘Udaygiri’ was launched on 17 May 2022 and is expected to start sea trials during the second half of 2024. The keel of fourth and final ship has already been laid on June 28.

The total value of the Project 17A is around Rs. 25,700 Crore.

“The indigenously designed ‘Taragiri’ will have state-of-the-art weapons, sensors, an advanced action information system, an inte-

grated platform management system, world class modular living spaces, sophisticated power distribution system and a host of other advanced features,” an official statement said.

The ship will be fitted with a supersonic surface-to-surface missile system. “The ship’s air defence capability, designed to counter the threat of enemy aircraft and anti-ship cruise missiles will revolve around the vertical launch and long range surface to air missile system,” the statement said.

According to the statement, two 30 mm rapid-fire guns will provide the ship with close-in-defence capability while an SRGM Gun will enable her to provide effective

naval gunfire support. “Indigenously developed triple tube light weight torpedo launchers and rocket launchers will add punch to the ship’s anti-submarine capability,” the statement added.

The ship was named by Mrs Charu Singh, President, NWWA (Western Region), wife of Vice Adm Ajendra Bahadur Singh, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, FOC-in-C Western Naval Command who was the chief guest on the occasion in presence of Vice Adm Narayan Prasad AVSM NM, IN (Retd), Chairman and Managing Director, MDL. VAdm K M Deshmukh AVSM, VSM, CWP&A and other dignitaries were present at the launch.



Assam man alleging recruitment exams graft arrested; Oppn slams State Govt

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Opposition parties on Sunday slammed the Assam Government and the State police for arresting a youth who had alleged that corruption was taking place in recruitment to 26,000 Grade III and IV posts, and demanded that the ‘real culprits’ be punished instead of the “whistle-blower”.

The youth, identified as Victor Das, had a few days ago tweeted, tagging Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Director General of Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, and claimed that some officials and former MLAs were demanding Rs 3-8 lakh as bribe for giving jobs in the ongoing recruitment exercise.

Following this, he was called for interrogation and eventually arrested by the Guwahati Police on September 9.

“One Victor Das has been

arrested for spreading false rumors and indulging in a conspiracy to foment discord between various sections of society over selection to Government posts,” the Guwahati Police had tweeted.

He was later remanded to seven days of police custody by a local court.

The arrest has led to a huge backlash with all the opposition parties criticising the government’s action.

The chief minister said, “These are mentally very weak people who claim that the BJP will benefit by giving jobs. He alleged that former MLAs demanded money, but could not tell any name. He gave some vehicle numbers. Is this a James Bond film where someone comes in a car and demands money?”

A Congress delegation, led by state unit chief Bhupen Kumar Borah, went to meet Das at Panbazar Police Station, but they were not allowed to

enter the premises.

“Today with APCC team I was stopped & not allowed to meet Victor Das, who is in police custody, whereas he was the whistleblower. We shall not only fight against the injustice meted to him but also fight for the unemployed youth of the state, reeling under this corrupt BJP govt,” Borah tweeted.

Condemning the arrest, Rajior Dal president Akhil Gogoi alleged there is “no democracy” in the state as complainants are being arrested for highlighting corruption.

AIUDF MLA Rafiqul Islam said the government has chosen to ‘shoot the messenger instead of punishing the real culprit’.

Sharing a cartoon of Mahatma Gandhi’s three famous monkeys on Twitter, the Aam Aadmi Party’s Assam unit sarcastically said that people should remain mute, deaf and blind when they see any corruption, otherwise the complainant will be sent to jail.

The Assam units of the SFI and DYFI, in a joint statement, said that more doubts have been created by arresting Das.

“The police should have searched for evidence and arrested the culprit, but they are not doing so. We demand a high-level probe into the entire incident,” they added.

More than 14.30 lakh candidates applied to appear for the recruitment examinations against over 26,000 Grade III and IV posts of various government departments, with the examinations scheduled on August 21, 28 and September 11. The government came under heavy criticism for suspending mobile internet services in up to 27 districts to prevent possible malpractices during the first two days of written examinations.

On the third and last day of the examinations on Sunday, however, internet services were not disrupted.

Rahul begins Kerala phase of Yatra as support from people increases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■
KOCHI

Rahul Gandhi MP began the Kerala phase of his Bharat Jodo Yatra on Sunday morning from Kaliyikkavila, the border town with Tamil Nadu.

Thousands had lined up along the highway to greet the young leader and his associates as he commenced the walkathon on Sunday morning.

K Sudhakaran, president, KPCC, V D Satheshan, Leader of Opposition, and other Congress stalwarts were in attendance as Rahul Gandhi led the team of Yatris through the national highway.

He interacted with the people who had turned out in large numbers. Instead of making public speeches, he opted to communicate with the groups about the significance of the Yatra.

“I do not have any ill will towards anybody. This is a Yatra to drive home the point



that we are all one despite the differences in culture and language,” he told the gatherings.

Rahul Gandhi had discussions with weavers of Balamapuram, the village known for its quality handwoven textile products. Similarly artisans and craftsmen had gathered to meet the young leader to brief him about their woes.

The first phase of Sunday’s walkathon concluded at Madhavi Mandiram, the ancestral home of freedom fighter

late G Ramachandran.

Mahatma Gandhi had stayed in this house during his visit to this part of the country in 1932 and since then it is being considered as a shrine by Congressmen.

On Monday, Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to meet leaders of the Latin Catholic Church who have declared an indefinite agitation against the construction of the International Container Terminal at Vizhinjam near Thiruvananthapuram.

This Yatra is to drive home the point that we are all one despite the differences in culture and language, he told the gatherings

The construction of the port being built by Adani Group has come to a standstill for more than a month following the agitation by the Church which allege that the award of the works to the corporate group was in violation of human rights as well as civil rights.

“The livelihood of the fishermen community along the coastal belt is in peril because of this port and we will not allow the construction of this port,” said Susai Pakyam, former arch bishop of Thiruvananthapuram Diocese.

Jammu’s Gujar leader Khatana nominated to RS

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Gujar leader from Jammu Gulam Ali Khatana has been nominated by the President of India Droupadi Murmu to the House of Elders.

While Khatana will be the lone member from Jammu and Kashmir in the Rajya Sabha, he will be the second Gujar Muslim leader from the region to go to Rajya Sabha. Choudhary Mohammad Aslam, a veteran Congress leader had earlier represented J&K in the Rajya Sabha between 2005 to 2008.

The appointment notification was released by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs late Saturday evening.

“In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-clause (a) of clause (1) of Article 80 of the Constitution of India, read with clause 93) of that Article, the President is pleased to nominate Gulam Ali to the Council of States to fill the vacancy caused due to retirement of one of the nominated members,” an order issued by the Union Ministry of Home

Affairs stated.

On Sunday, senior BJP leaders felicitated him at the party headquarters in Jammu.

Welcoming the announcement, BJP UT president Ravinder Raina said he was grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda for giving representation to a tribal Gujar leader in the Rajya Sabha.

51 year old Gulam Ali is an alumnus of Government College of Engineering and Technology (GCET). He is currently serving as the BJP spokesperson in Jammu and Kashmir. Khatana joined politics soon after completing his Electrical Engineering degree. As a student leader he remained in the forefront of various agitations and fought for the student rights under the banner of Jammu Joint Students Federation (JJSE).

In the initial years, he joined the Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party and later switched over to the BJP at the peak of the Amarnath



land row. He served the party in various wings including the Scheduled Tribe cell.

He also remained associated with the Muslim Rashtriya Morcha and worked in the close company of Gujjars and Bakewals in the remote areas and bringing them to the mainstream.

Expressing his gratitude after his nomination to the Rajya Sabha Gulam Ali Khatana said, “I am a small

party worker and by nominating him the party leadership has sent a right message to the masses”. Khatana said, “I will try to come up to the expectations of the people and raise their issues on the floor of the house”.

Khatana’s nomination to the upper house of the Parliament is also directly linked with the ongoing tug of war between the members of the Gujar and Pahari com-

munity in the Pir Panjal region. Ahead of the maiden assembly polls the Bharatiya Janta Party is trying to strike a balance by fulfilling the aspirations of both the groups. On one hand the party is toeing with the idea of giving political reservation to the Paharis and on the other hand they are equally empowering Gujar leaders on the ground to end decade long discrimination.

UP Min slams Muslim leaders for opposing survey of pvt madrasas

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh’s Minority Affairs Minister Dharampal Singh has slammed the Muslim leaders opposing the survey of private unrecognised madrasas, saying they never enroll their children in theological schools and that is the reason for opposing the survey.

“There should be no cause of concern over the survey. Leaders like Asaduddin Owaisi send their children to private schools and pay exorbitant fees. In madrasas only poor children are enrolled and they will be benefitted by the survey, so the Muslims leaders are questioning the survey and attributing political motives to it,” Dharampal Singh said on Sunday. Moreover, the Minister said as the survey would bring out the sources of funds of a large number of



private unrecognised madrasas, this could be one of the reasons for opposing the survey.

“Owaisi has described the survey as a mini NRC (National Register of Citizens), but neither he nor his children were ever students of a madrasa. Let him first enroll his son in a madrasa then he will earn the right to speak about the madrasas,” the minister said.

With the Uttar Pradesh government ordering a survey

of private madrasas, proprietors of theological schools fear that their institutions may be declared illegal and “run over by bulldozers”. The clerics had expressed the fear on September 6 in New Delhi at a meeting of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, (Arshad Madani faction) and organisations of Islamic clerics belonging to the Deobandi school of Sunni Islamic thought. The UP government had then said that these apprehensions had no basis.

Kerala’s stray dogs’ attacks continue despite SC strictures

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■
KOCHI

Despite the concern expressed by the Supreme Court over the spree of stray dog attacks in Kerala, the canines continued tormenting the people without any restraint as Sunday alone accounted for more than a dozen dog bites from different parts of the State. Two bike riders who fell down from their vehicles following attacks by stray dogs succumbed to their injuries on Sunday.

M B Rajesh, who was sworn in as local administration minister last week following the resignation of M V Govindan on his appointment as CPI(M) secretary, told reporters at Kozhikode on Sunday that the animal birth control program in the State has gone haywire. There should be at least 150 ABC centres in the State to sterilize the stray/street dogs. We have called for a meeting on Monday at Thiruvananthapuram,” said Rajesh.

The Minister’s statement is



an indirect admission that all was not well with the local administration department and the health department in the State. Veen George, the Health Minister had denied in the legislative assembly that everything was perfect in the health department and the concerns over the dog bites were the creation of the media.

Till last week of August 21 persons succumbed to rabies which they contacted from dog bites, according to the department of health. Nearly 2 lakh persons were bitten by dogs over the last eight months, says the department of health statistics. The Supreme Court which heard a petition filed by concerned citizens has said that it would pronounce the interim judgment on September 28.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Legalpath, Complete Lawyers LLP
Address/Phone 931859106 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice thereafter the user/holder shall be responsible for the use of the same. (Sd/-) Sauri Sauri (Advocate)

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that my client, Shri BHARAT BHUSHAN SAHNI, son of Shri S.L. Sahni, resident of L-2/33-A, Ground Floor, DDA LIG Flats, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019 have lost/misplaced the original documents issued by DDA (i.e. Allotment Letter-cum-Demand Letter, Possession Letter and Possession Slip) in respect of Property No. L-2/33A, GROUND FLOOR, DDA LIG FLATS, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019, NEW DELHI-110019 allotted by DDA vide File No. F.37(110)/76-HB(M/JI). An FIR to this effect has been lodged in PS-Crime Branch, Delhi bearing LR No. 777127/2022 dated 09/09/2022. Any person (s) claiming any right, interest over documents or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact above named person at above address/phone no. 9818340201 or to Dy. Director (LAB) H or Director (H)-1, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi, within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.



party will be ‘Azad’ (independent), like his name, in its ideology and thinking.

“My party will be Azad. Many of my colleagues said we should name the party as Azad. But, I said never. But, it’s ideology will be independent, which will not join or merge with any other. That may happen after my death, but not till then,” he said.

The former leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha said the emphasis will be to struggle for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir’s statehood and protection of job and land rights of its people.

“My party will be development-oriented. Its agenda will

be to give employment opportunities to the people,” he added, as he reminded people of his developmental works when he was the chief minister of J-K.

Azad said he was not against any political party, whether national or regional.

“Many people across party lines are my friends,” he said.

Referring to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s famous speech in which he had asked people to give him blood and in return he will give them freedom, Azad appealed the people of J-K that he will spill his blood for them if they support him.

“But, I request you not to fall prey to false slogans,” he said.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s speech in Parliament when Azad retired from the Rajya Sabha, the former Congress leader said “a human being does get emotional”.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
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(A)	1.	29/PGM/AO/SM(JAL-OA)/22-23, M/o of Sewer line and MSPS/SPS at Expressway (Annual Maintenance of Manhole and related civil work in green belt R.H.S. along Noida Gr. Noida Expressway) Noida. Cost - 47.39Lac.
	2.	30/PGM/AO/SM(JAL-OA)/22-23, M/o of Sewer line and MSPS/SPS at Expressway (Annual Maintenance of Manhole and related civil work in green belt L.H.S. along Noida Gr. Noida Expressway) Noida. Cost - 47.95Lac.
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WORLD HAS TWO SIDES, BUT THE CHOICE IS OURS

There are dark and beautiful sides; we have to choose right




AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Yes, there are two sides of this world. Unfortunately, we are too focussed on the dark and ugly side. We don't see the beautiful side. Lord Krishna has described in the Bhagavad-Geeta about how wonderful this world can be if we make the right efforts. The Lord states, "A self-controlled person, by giving up all acts, which are against Dharma, lives happily in the house having nine gates." (5.13) But what do we normally choose to do? We repeatedly cross 'maryada' in the false belief that we will escape punishment. Nobody escapes; every act of ours is being recorded for rewards and punishments. This is the 'Karmaphala' principle.

The Lord continues, "One who is capable of tolerating the urge caused by lust and anger is a true yogi; he is a happy person." (5.23) God is not unkind; He has allowed all enjoyments which are not against Dharma. (7.11) All of us are generally aware of what sins are and what pious acts are. But we repeatedly cross the 'Lakshman Rekha' in the false belief that this is a lot of fun. And surely we are punished. On the other hand, if we obey Dharma, then, we are protected, because God is all for it. Dharma is so dear to God that He incarnates when there is decline in it, and there is ascendancy of immorality. (4.7)

Lord Krishna informs how one can enjoy unlimited bliss, as He states, "A person having consciousness unattached to sense objects,



enjoys that happiness within, which is extraordinary. He, having consciousness linked to the Brahman, experiences eternal bliss." (5.21) What do we erroneously believe? That all enjoyments are through sense objects. Yes, they give enjoyment but of the temporary nature, and they leave us unsatisfied.

Lord Krishna illuminates, "Beyond the senses, there is unlimited bliss, which can be experienced through intelligence. A yogi realizes it and thus does not get distracted at all from the absolute essence, that is God." (6.21) What do we do? We limit ourselves to the satisfaction of the mind – the leader of our senses. (15.7) The following example will clarify. A yogi, one who is linked with God, begins to get positive responses from God, which are unbelievable, because God is so very different from us and unimaginably great. A yogi is, therefore, not attracted to pleasures of the senses.

I will narrate a few of God's greatest qualities, which make Him so different from us. Unlike us, who are driven mostly by self-interest, God has only our interest, because He is complete, whereas we are eternally small and, consequently, incomplete. Nothing else was possible in Cosmic Design. By God being interested eternally in our welfare, this shortcoming is easily overcome; we just have to take God's shelter by giving up our 'ahankar' (ego). We are God's 'ansas' (parts), while God is the source. (15.15) Lord Krishna informs, "Whatever there is opulent, effulgent or even energetic, all that you should know as produced from a fragment of My splendor." (10.41)

Yes, we are forever in deprivation, being small, but God is ever ready to provide what we need; we just have to make the right efforts. Isn't that the most practical way to keep this creation functional for millions of years? Unlike an owner, who treats the world as an object for his or her enjoyment, God is ready to provide what we need for our enjoyment. Unlike a powerful person, who loves to be served, God is forever ready to serve us; we just have to qualify for this privilege. (9.22)

(The author is a spiritual teacher)

Streamlined logistics can boost growth

The logistics industry is reaping benefits from the rollout of the Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti & technology adoption



ABHISHEK CHAUDHARY

The Indian logistics sector provides livelihood to more than 22 million people, and improving the sector will facilitate 10 per cent lower indirect logistics cost, which will spike 5 to 8 per cent in growth of exports. This will pave the way for a strong Indian economy backed by solid infrastructure.

At present, Indian logistics industry accounts for around 14.4 per cent of the country's GDP, but its overall cost is around 14 per cent of the GDP, whereas the BRICS average is 11 per cent. Though different studies claim varied logistics cost number, ranging from 8 per cent to 14 per cent of GDP, it is still highly debatable at the current juncture of transition. However, still a significant gap to pull back an economy is there.

In the financial year 2021, when the Indian logistics market was at \$250 billion, it has been estimated that the industry would grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10 to 12 per cent and the net worth of the market would be \$380 billion in 2025. The economy has rebounded post-pandemic and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected a GDP growth of 7.2 per cent for the current fiscal ending March 2023.

Logistics is the backbone of any robust economy and should have an unclogged pipeline for seamless flow of information, and uninterrupted supply chain management. Also, it is important for India to reign as the world's fastest-growing economy over the next few years, driving world growth.

There is a need for a single window clearance for logistics to move in the smoothest way possible.

Only 10 per cent of Indian logistics belongs to the organised sector. It is one of the most highly defragmented industries—and very complex with more than 20 government agencies, 40 PGAs, 37 export promotion councils, and 10,000 commodities. It also involves 12 million employment bases, 200 shipping agencies, 36 logistics services, 129 ICDs, 168 CFSs, 50 IT ecosystems, and banks and insurance agencies. Further, 81 authorities and 500 certificates are required for EXIM. All worked as separate entities, enough to discourage any interested investor.

In India, the logistics sector was an uncared for and a neglected child. It was merely a tool for transporting goods and services. Storage, monitoring, freight clearance, documentation, knowledge about the carrier and containers were never sought for or considered. This led to major mismanagement, delayed sharing of information, and the sector could never achieve its full potential. There was no connection between railways, airways, waterways and roadways, which crippled the sector and marred it with several known and unknown inefficiencies.

Further, the wide geographical diversity of India did not allow concentration of



IN INDIA, THE LOGISTICS SECTOR WAS AN UNCARED FOR. IT WAS MERELY A TOOL FOR TRANSPORTING GOODS AND SERVICES. STORAGE, MONITORING, FREIGHT CLEARANCE, DOCUMENTATION, KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CARRIER AND CONTAINERS WERE NEVER SOUGHT FOR OR CONSIDERED

(The author is Vice-President [Corporate Affairs], National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation)



information at one place for a quick perusal and for seamless movement. With a single window, dissemination of information could ease out. If this gets leveraged, both the vendors and consumers of the logistics services would save a lot of time, and stay informed about freight movement, while also controlling several hidden costs.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always considered logistics as an essential part of infrastructure development. He mentioned it in his address to the nation during the first phase of lockdown. In fact, it was one of the few sectors which had the permission to operate with limited workforce as the need and purpose was definite.

The PM Gati Shakti-National Master Plan, envisaged with this mindset, was launched last year in October 2021. The plan aims at breaking departmental silos and bringing in more holistic and integrated planning and execution of projects with a view to address the issues of multi-modal and last-mile connectivity. With synchronised and syndicated flow of data, it is hoped that productivity will increase, and there would be better supply-chain management, while also accelerating economic growth.

It holds a promise to give a new direction to the development of modern infrastructure through planning, implementation and monitoring, besides cutting down on time and cost overruns of the

projects. It was launched with the sole motive of bringing seven engines of economy, namely, railways, roads, ports, waterways, airports, mass transport and logistics infrastructure on one platform for economic growth and sustainable development.

The touchstone of the Master Plan is to have a world-class modern infrastructure and logistics synergy among different modes of movement—both of people and goods—and location of projects. All the plans under PM Gati Shakti have been proposed to smoothen the logistics knot between the GoI and the state departments.

Post-pandemic, or maybe prior to that, the business model of the industry was changing; it was gradually converging and getting digitised. Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) is an indigenous API integration platform, developed by leveraging National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation's (NICDC's) logistics data bank project, with the aim to create a nationwide single window logistics platform for end-to-end visibility; it is in alignment with the vision of PM Gati Shakti. The virtual gateway has been integrated with 30 systems of seven different ministries through 100+ APIs, covering more than 1,600 fields successfully.

As was proposed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget Speech, it has brought down

the logistics cost and time, and has eliminated tedious documentation. It is bringing efficiency and transparency in the logistics industry, thus making India cost competitive and 'Atmanirbhar' in the logistics sector.

Leveraged by this virtual gateway, recently, the Logistics Data Bank (LDB) has achieved the milestone of handling 50 million EXIM containers, clearing the roadmap for the New Logistics Policy. This means the sector has complete data of about these 50 million containers, which would reduce a lot of paperwork required for regulatory clearance for further instrumental use of these containers for movement. This would also reduce the lead time for the overall import-export cycle. It would also provide valuable information on empty container management, demand forecasting, lower inventory costs, and bring financial benefits and robust infrastructure.

The Government at this phase can expect more investment in the manufacturing sector as the first stage of confidence building in the logistics sector has been achieved with this milestone.

The LDB handles 100 per cent per cent of India's EXIM container volume. Conceived as one of the smart community projects between India and Japan during the initial stages of planning of Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor project, it has a futuristic outlook.

POINT COUNTERPOINT



RAHUL BABA HAD SAID INDIA ISN'T A NATION AT ALL. I THINK HE NEEDS TO STUDY INDIAN HISTORY.
—UNION HOME MINISTER
AMIT SHAH




AN ATROCIOUS TWEET...IS TYPICAL BJP MISCHIEF WHICH HAS BECOME DESPERATE AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL BHARAT JODO YATRA LAUNCH.
—CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY
JAIRAM RAMESH

TB haarega, desh jeetega: Push to end the disease

Multi-pronged policy interventions, including nutritional support, are paying rich dividends in the fight against tuberculosis

The pandemic has been a harsh learning curve for all of us. I am proud to say that not only did we manage to counter the virus through widespread testing, reaching the most remote parts of the country and ushering in community-level interventions to ensure that the protocols are followed, we also conducted the world's largest vaccination drive.

Further, the commendable efforts of our frontline health workers and programme implementers ensured that other healthcare services, not just for COVID-19, continued uninterrupted. In this regard, our efforts to counter another infectious disease, tuberculosis (TB), continued unabated during the pandemic.



BHARATI PRAVIN PAWAR

(The author is Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare)

Our Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi had presciently recognised the issue's seriousness in 2018 when he laid out his vision to eliminate TB by 2025 – five years ahead of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target. With less than three years to go for the deadline, it is essential that we build upon the achievements of the country's National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) and look for ways to sharpen strategies going forward.

We already have well-oiled policies in place that seek to mitigate the impact of TB in the community. Whether it is treatment that's available for free – irrespective of where the patient seeks care, public or private sector – or ensuring that screening and diagnosis is

done at the remotest of places, we have robust fundamentals.

At the same time, we have recognized the importance of not only focussing on the clinical nature of the disease, but to implement policies that blend health and social interventions to support people affected by the disease in a more holistic manner.

Here, I commend the TB programme for always being proactive in supporting policies that strive to strengthen social support measures for patients. In 2018, a detailed guidance document was developed which highlighted learnings from social support interventions across the country, which had the potential for further scaling up. These lessons or best practices, at their core, aim to support the

TB-affected patients over the course of their treatment period by ensuring targeted incentives and nutrition support.

Considering how important a nutritious diet is to counter TB, the government has introduced a crucial nutrition support scheme, Nikshay Poshan Yojana. Through the programme, each notified TB patient is entitled to Rs 500 each month for the entire duration of treatment via Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT). From the time of its launch in 2018, the total amount paid through DBT under NPY is upwards of Rs 1,488 crores to more than 57 lakh TB patients.

In addition, the TB programme is instituting a community support mechanism. Under this initiative, a wide

array of stakeholders – cooperative societies, corporate entities, elected representatives, non-governmental organizations, political parties etc., – will be presented with an opportunity to 'adopt' districts and blocks across states in India, in the fight against TB. The aim is to galvanize social support from different strands of society for TB patients, so that they are better equipped – physically and mentally – to fight the disease.

Such concerted support is essential for TB patients as they need to adhere to a strict treatment and care routine considering the strong anti-TB drugs, which are needed to counter TB. Ensuring that support comes from different groups and individuals is a good way to nurture a sense of

belonging to a common social order. A sense of togetherness in this difficult battle against tuberculosis is what this community support initiative will aim to forge. Those who wish to help would be able to choose their preferred form of support: nutrition, diagnostic and vocational. The support may also be applicable to immediate family members of the patient if the supporter chooses to.

Such an initiative can slowly but surely steel up the very foundations of our society at the grassroots, equipping the people with the right resources to combat this disease.

This spirit of collective mitigation is also in line with the ideals of Jan Andolan or people's movement against

TB. It was in 2020 that the 'TB-Mukt Bharat' campaign was launched, calling for a Jan Andolan against TB for the first time. The idea has been to generate greater awareness about TB, address stigma around it, and augment access to all available TB services under the national TB programme. The national TB programme's community support initiative is certainly in sync with the tenets of the country's Jan Andolan against TB. I am confident that as more and more people from disparate backgrounds, including corporate leaders, elected representatives and other influential community voices become involved in this movement, TB will be eroded from our midst. *TB harega, desh jeetega!*

Eastern Ukraine towns hit in overnight strikes

AP ■ POKROVSK (UKRAINE)

Through the debris-strewn rooms of the bomb-blasted house, the incessant ringing of a phone punctuates the crunch of broken glass splintering underfoot as police lay out a body bag.

But the call will never be answered.

The phone's owner crouches lifeless on the floor of his home, in a front room where the explosion from a missile - one of several to hit this eastern Ukrainian town - found him.

The missiles that rained down on Pokrovsk Saturday night and into the early hours of Sunday were part of a barrage of attacks on towns in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region that left at least 10 people dead Saturday, according to Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko.

They came as Ukraine pressed forward with a counteroffensive just to the north in the Kharkiv region, pushing Russian forces into a retreat from key areas.

Six of the dead were in Pokrovsk, mayor Ruslan Trebushkin said in a message posted on Telegram.

The industrial town about 40 kilometers from the front line had been hit twice before by missiles, in May and July, but never before by so many in one night.



A flash illuminated the night sky as a detonation sounded out across the town in the second of six explosions.

An ambulance raced through the darkened streets, and flames rose from a fire triggered by the missile strikes.

At least three of those who died were killed when one of the missiles struck between a row of small houses and near-

by train tracks, collapsing part of a nearby abandoned building, leaving one home burnt to the ground and severely damaging several more.

Oleksandr Zaitsev, 67, stood quietly outside his friend's house as the police arrived. His friend's wife had been calling her husband non-stop since the strike, he said, but nobody was picking up.

The house's windows were shattered, the walls were pockmarked from shrapnel, and the front door blown off its hinges. Inside, the police gently rolled Zaitsev's friend into a black body bag.

Next door, Yevhenia Butkova, 47, stood stunned in the center of her living room, trying to calm her two agitated pet dogs. Blood stained the

sofa where she and her husband had been watching television when the first missile struck.

On Sunday morning, he was recovering in a hospital after doctors removed shards of glass from his wounds, she said.

Chunks of debris from the ceiling littered the floor throughout the house, whose entrance was reduced to a

jumble of splintered wood, plaster, glass and brick. One of the plywood boards the couple had put over their windows for protection had been blown clean across the garden. But a combination of that and the plastic they had put over the glass probably saved their lives, Butkova said.

"It was all quiet in Pokrovsk, this was very unexpected," she said. "It was horrible."

Further down the row of single-story houses, an elderly couple swept rubble and glass from their small porch, dried blood still streaking their faces.

Mariia Trutko, 85, and her husband Oleksii Maksymenko, 75, had been sleeping when they were jolted awake by the blast. "I can't hear anything without my hearing aid, and then it hit so hard that I heard," said Maksymenko, a retired coal miner.

"Everything flew. ... I started bleeding, so we got up to see what that was, and then there was another one: boom!"

Their bed was littered with jagged shards of glass and plaster from the roof that covered them both, Trutko said. A large, square piece of glass lay on the pillow, and spots of blood stained the floor.

"Oh my God, we could never imagine going through something like this at this old age," Maksymenko said.

Last reactor at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant stopped



AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's atomic power operator said Sunday that the last reactor at Europe's largest nuclear power plant has been shut down after the plant was reconnected to the electricity grid.

The six-reactor Zaporizhzhia plant was disconnected from the grid last week after all its power lines were disconnected as a result of fighting in the area, and was operating in "island mode" for several days, generating electricity for crucial cooling systems from its only remaining reactor in operation.

Nuclear operator Energoatom said that one of the power lines was restored late Saturday, allowing plant operators to shut down the last reactor.

The company said the risk remains high that outside power is cut again, in which case the plant would have to fire up emergency diesel generators to

keep the reactors cool and prevent a nuclear meltdown. The company's chief told The Associated Press on Thursday that the plant only has diesel fuel for 10 days.

The plant, one of the 10 biggest atomic power stations in the world, has been occupied by Russian forces since the early stages of the war. Ukraine and Russia have blamed each other for shelling around the plant that has damaged the power lines connecting it to the grid. In a statement early Sunday, Energoatom urged Russian forces to leave the Zaporizhzhia plant and allow for the creation of a "demilitarized zone" around it.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations nuclear watchdog which has two experts at the plant, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Sunday. Its director has called for a safe zone around the plant to avert a disaster.

Greek leader: EU must respond as one to Putin's 'blackmail'

AP ■ THESSALONIKI (GREECE)

The European Union should have a coordinated response to the challenge posed by Russian President Vladimir Putin's "blackmail" with the supply of natural gas, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said Saturday.

He said Putin's invasion of Ukraine is meant to "legitimise a despotic authoritarianism and enable any local troublemaker" to do the same, a hardly veiled reference to Greece's neighbour Turkey and the increasingly aggressive rhetoric of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"In the Ukraine war, we stand with those defending themselves, we stand with

democracy and freedom...We know what it means to have an (aggressive) neighbour," Mitsotakis said.

Putin wants to turn European anxiety about energy into political destabilisation, Mitsotakis added in the keynote speech at the Thessaloniki International Fair, in which Greece's heads of government announce the coming year's economic policies.

The Greek premier reminded his audience that Greece had proposed months ago a cap on natural gas prices and a decoupling of electricity prices from those of natural gas and expressed his satisfaction that the European Union was coming round to such solutions.

"In the Ukraine war, we stand with those defending themselves, we stand with democracy and freedom...We know what it means to have an (aggressive) neighbour," Mitsotakis said

"Better late than never," he told reporters earlier Saturday, as he was touring the trade fair's exhibits.

Mitsotakis said his government will continue to sub-



sidise electricity bills "whatever the cost." But Greek officials also have said that subsidies will now include incentives to reduce consumption and, when possible, replace natural gas

with other fuel sources for heating. The prime minister announced a number of additional measures, such as a cost-of-living check of 250 euros paid to some 2.3 million ben-

eficiaries, raises in pensions and the minimum wage, tax cuts, a 150 million euro subsidy to farmers to compensate for higher fuel and animal feed costs, better wages for national health service and armed forces personnel and others. Taken together, he said, these handouts, excluding the electricity bill subsidy, would cost 5.5 billion euros.

Since early 2020, Greece has spent over 50 billion euros to support households and businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and now by the energy crisis and rising inflation. Inflation in Greece, running at an annual 11.4% clip in August, is slightly off its 12.1% peak in June, but still at levels not seen

since 1994.

The strong economy, expected to grow more than 5% in 2022, provides the government with the margin to spend extra. But, starting in 2023, heavily indebted Greece's government must also post primary budget surpluses, as agreed with the EU.

Next year is also going to see new elections, most likely more than one. The first ballot is not expected to result in any single party gaining a majority of seats in Parliament and a coalition government looks highly unlikely. That would result in a second round of elections, which would be fought under a different electoral law that will give the winning party a 30-seat bonus.

China legislator criticises sanctions on visit to Russia

AP ■ BEIJING

Chinese state media say the country's top legislator decried sanctions against Russia during a recent visit to the country, underscoring China's backing of Moscow in its war on Ukraine despite claims of neutrality.

The official Xinhua News Agency said Li Zhanshu urged greater cooperation on "fighting against external interference, sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction, among others," in a meeting with Russian lawmakers Thursday.

Li also held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin ahead of an expected meeting this month between Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping at a regional gathering in Uzbekistan. That would mark Xi's first trip outside China since the pandemic began in early 2020.

Li is a member of the Communist Party's all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee and is considered one of Xi's closest confidants, the two having worked together for decades. Ranked third in the Communist Party hierarchy, Li is the highest-level official to travel abroad since the start of the pandemic.

The meeting at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization — a political, economic and security forum that China and Russia dominate — comes as Putin faces setbacks in his attempt to conquer Ukraine and Xi prepares for a congress of the ruling Communist Party that is expected to grant him a third five-year term as leader. Xinhua said Russia also backed Beijing's condemnation of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit last month to Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy that China threatens to annex by force. "Li thanked the Russian side for firmly supporting China on the Taiwan question," Xinhua reported.

China's Communist Party Congress to confer more power to President Xi

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's ruling Communist Party is all set to amend its constitution at the next month's key once-in-a-five-year Congress to grant more powers to President Xi Jinping besides endorsing a record third term for him to lead the country for another five years or beyond.

Xi's position is to be further elevated after the ruling Communist Party announced this week that it would amend its constitution at the upcoming national party Congress, according to analysts.

The meeting of the 25-member Politburo, the principal policy making committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which met last Friday, said: "it was stressed at the meeting that the 20th CPC National Congress is a convention of great significance to be held at a crucial moment".

"Under the firm leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, efforts should be made to



unite the whole Party and all the Chinese people and lead them in building on past achievements," the meeting said, dropping clear hints that Xi will continue to lead the party.

His continuation is regarded as a major policy change in the leadership structure as all Xi's predecessors - except founder Mao - retired after two-five-year terms.

Xi, 69, who has been conferred the "core leader" status a title enjoyed by Mao is completing his second five-year term this year.

"The Party Constitution is the general charter of the CPC. Making amendments to the Party Constitution by the CPC at its 20th National Congress in

line with new circumstances and missions will help the whole Party better study, abide by, implement and safeguard the dignity of this fundamental document," an official press release issued after the politburo meeting said.

The change of constitution of the CPC set off speculation that Xi, who is the General Secretary of the party and head of the military besides the Presidency, will be bestowed with more power including the possible elevation conferring the title of the Chairman of the party, a position so far held only by Mao in the century-old party.

Except for Xi, the Congress will usher in scores of new officials at the centre including a new Premier as the incumbent Li Keqiang, the number two leader of the CPC, said he will retire. Analysts believe the move aims to better enshrine Xi's ruling philosophy into the party charter that governs 95 million members and this would further strengthen Xi's leadership position

Okinawa reelects Governor opposing heavy US troop presence

AP ■ TOKYO

Okinawa's incumbent governor who opposes an ongoing U.S. Marine base relocation forced by Japan's central government and calls for a further reduction of American troops on the southern island secured his reelection on Sunday despite concerns of escalating tensions between China and nearby Taiwan.

Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki, who is backed by opposition parties, was certain to win his second four-year term, according to exit polls by major Japanese media, including NHK national television and Kyodo News agency. Polls were held Sunday before his first four-year term is to end later this month.

Tamaki and his supporters declared his victory and celebrated with the chants of "ban-zai" soon after the exit poll results showed he beat two contenders — Atsushi Sakima, backed by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's governing



bloc, and another opposition-backed candidate Mikio Shimoji.

Final vote counts are expected early Monday. Tamaki's victory could deepen tensions between Okinawa and the central government.

The plan to move U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma from a crowded neighbourhood to a less populated area on the island has already been delayed for years. Okinawans call it a new

construction rather than a relocation and want the Futenma base closed down and removed from the island.

"My commitment to resolve the U.S. Military base problem for the future of Okinawa has never been shaken," Tamaki said. He said he will continue his endeavor to convey Okinawa's will to the central government.

During the campaign, Tamaki also vowed to do more to improve Okinawa's economy. Tourism on the semi-trop-

ical island known for its corals, marine life and unique culture was badly hurt by the pandemic.

Resentment and frustration run deep in Okinawa because of the heavy U.S. Presence and Tokyo's lack of efforts to negotiate with Washington over how to balance the burden of hosting U.S. Troops between mainland Japan and the southern island group.

Okinawa, where one of the bloodiest battles in the World War II was fought, was under American occupation until it returned to Japan's control in 1972.

Today, a majority of the 50,000 U.S. Troops based in Japan under a bilateral security pact and 70% of U.S. Military facilities are still in Okinawa, which accounts for only 0.6% of Japanese land.

Because of the U.S. Bases, Okinawa struggled with noise, pollution, accidents and crime related to American troops, Tamaki said.

Turkey says Greek Coast Guard fires on cargo ship in Aegean

AP ■ ISTANBUL

Greek Coast Guard ships opened fire on a cargo vessel sailing in international waters in the Aegean Sea, the Turkish Coast Guard said, escalating tensions between the regional rivals that have mounted in recent weeks.

There were no casualties in the shooting 11 nautical miles (13 miles) southwest of the Turkish island of Bozcaada on Saturday, the Turkish statement said. It added that after "harassment fire" from two Greek Coast Guard vessels, two Turkish Coast Guard ships



went to the area and the Greek boats left. Calls to the Greek Embassy in Ankara went unanswered Sunday, and it wasn't clear why the gunfire occurred.

The neighbouring countries have been embroiled in

disputes for decades and frictions have ratcheted up in recent weeks, with both sides alleging airspace violations. Greek officials have raised concerns about another outbreak of conflict in Europe, following

Russia's war in Ukraine.

Turkey says Greece is breaking international agreements by keeping a military presence on islands close to Turkey's Aegean coastline. It also has accused Greek air defenses of locking on to Turkish fighter jets during NATO exercises over the eastern Mediterranean.

Greece says it needs to defend its eastern islands — including tourist hotspots Rhodes and Kos, which are much closer to Turkey than to the Greek mainland — against its larger and militarily stronger neighbour.

China sends college students to quarantine under zero-Covid policy

AP ■ BEIJING

Almost 500 students at China's premier college for broadcast journalists have been sent to a quarantine centre after a handful of COVID-19 cases were detected in their dormitory.

The 488 students at Communication University of China, along with 19 teachers and five assistants, were transferred by bus beginning Friday night.

Quarantining anyone considered to have been in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus has been a pillar of China's "zero-COVID" policy. The quarantine centres include field hospitals, as well as converted stadiums and exhibition centres that have been criticised for overcrowding, poor sanitation and spoiled food.



As of last week, approximately 65 million Chinese residents were under lockdown, despite just 1,248 new cases of domestic transmission being reported on Sunday. Most of those were asymptomatic.

The lockdowns have sparked protests online and confrontations with health workers and police, and have exacted a

major toll on the economy, affecting global supply chains for electronics and other products. The weeklong lockdown in China's biggest city of Shanghai over the summer prompted an exodus of migrant workers and foreign business people, the repercussions of which have yet to be felt.

With the release of economic data this week, analysts will be looking for insights into how China's handling of the pandemic is impacting economic activity in the world's second-largest economy. Lockdowns have been accompanied by nearly daily testing, travel restrictions and the suspension of classes at all levels.

China has pursued the relentless enforcement of the policy, even as virtually every other country has sought to return to normal life with the help of vaccines and drugs to fight the virus.

Biden honours Sept 11 victims as shadow of Afghan war looms

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden marked the 21st anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, laying a wreath at the Pentagon in a somber commemoration held under a steady rain.

Sunday's ceremony occurred a little more than a year after Biden ended the long and costly war in Afghanistan that the U.S. And allies launched in response to the terror attacks.

In ending the Afghanistan war, the Democratic president followed through on a campaign pledge to bring home U.S. Troops from the country's longest conflict. But the war concluded chaotically in August 2021, when the U.S.-backed Afghan government collapsed in the face of a countrywide Taliban advance that returned the fundamentalist group to power.

A bombing claimed by an Afghanistan-based extremist group killed 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. Troops at Kabul's airport, where thousands of desperate Afghans gathered in hopes of escape before the final U.S. Cargo planes departed over the Hindu Kush.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Biden in his remarks Sunday will recognize the impact the 2001 attacks had on the U.S. And the world and honor the nearly 3,000 people killed that day when al-Qaida hijackers took control of commercial planes and crashed them into New York's World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field.



ognize the impact the 2001 attacks had on the U.S. And the world and honor the nearly 3,000 people killed that day when al-Qaida hijackers took control of commercial planes and crashed them into New York's World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field.

"I think you'll hear him talk about how America will stay vigilant to the threat but also look to future threats and challenges and be able to learn to meet those threats and challenges," Kirby said.

Biden marked the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan late last month in low-key fashion. He issued a statement in honor of the 13 U.S. Troops killed in the bombing at the Kabul airport and spoke by phone with U.S. Veterans assisting ongoing efforts to resettle in the United States Afghans who helped the war effort.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Thursday criticised Biden's handling of the end of the war and noted that the country has spiraled downward under renewed Taliban rule since the U.S. Withdrawal.

"Now, one year on from last August's disaster, the devastating scale of the fallout from President Biden's decision has come into sharper focus," McConnell said. "Afghanistan has become a global pariah. Its economy has shrunk by nearly a third. Half of its population is now suffering critical levels of food insecurity."

First lady Jill Biden will speak Sunday at the Flight 93 National Memorial Observance in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband will go to New York City for a commemoration ceremony at the National September 11th Memorial.

3 dead after 7.6 quake hits Papua New Guinea



AP ■ WELLINGTON

At least three people are dead after a powerful earthquake hit a remote part of Papua New Guinea Sunday morning, authorities say. Others were injured and infrastructure damaged in the magnitude 7.6 jolt that was felt across the Pacific country.

The three people died in a landslide in the gold-mining town of Wau, said Morobe Provincial Disaster Director Charley Masange. Other people had been injured from falling structures or debris, and there was damage to some health centers, homes, rural roads and highways, Masange told The Associated Press.

Masange said it could take some time to assess the full extent of the injuries and damage in the region. But he said the sparse and scattered population and lack of large buildings near the epicenter in the nation's largely undeveloped highlands may have helped prevent a bigger disaster, given the earthquake was so strong.

One resident from the town closest to the epicenter described his ordeal to the AP.

Renagi Ravu was meeting with two colleagues at his home in Kainantu when the quake struck.

Ravu tried to stand up from his chair but couldn't maintain his balance and ended up in a kind of group hug with his colleagues, while plates and cups crashed from his shelves to the ground, he said. His children, ages 9 and 2, had their drinks and breakfast spill over.

Ravu, who is a geologist, said he tried to calm everybody as the shaking continued for more than a minute.

Ravu said that about 10,000 people live in and around his town, which is located 66 kilometers (41 miles) from the quake's epicenter.

He said people were feeling rattled.

"It's a common thing that earthquakes are felt here, but it usually doesn't last as long and is not as violent as this one," Ravu said. "It was quite intense."

Ravu was sorting through the damage to his home, which he said likely included a broken sewer pipe judging from the smell.

He said friends elsewhere in Kainantu had messaged him with descriptions of cracked roads, broken pipes and fallen debris, but hadn't described major building collapses or injuries.

Fiery crash of bus, fuel tanker kills at least 18 in Mexico



AP ■ MEXICO CITY

A fiery crash between a tanker truck carrying fuel and a passenger bus has killed at least 18 people in northern Mexico, authorities reported.

Prosecutors in the northern border state of Tamaulipas said the crash on Saturday might have been caused by one of the truck's two tank trailers coming lose.

The collision left both vehicles completely burned. Police photos showed the bus was reduced to a tangle of smoking, charred metal.

Tamaulipas state police initially found nine sets of remains, but by early afternoon prosecutors said nine more had been recovered. The death toll could rise, they said.

The crash occurred before dawn on a highway that leads to the northern city of Monterrey.

The driver of the fuel truck apparently survived and is under investigation. The bus had apparently set out from the central state of Hidalgo and was headed to Monterrey.

The semi-truck was towing two tank trailers in tandem. Such double-container freight trucks have been involved in numerous deadly crashes in the past.

Jaishankar holds 'warm and productive' talks with Saudi counterpart in Riyadh

PTI ■ RIYADH

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday held "warm and productive" talks with his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan during which they discussed current global political as well as economic issues and agreed to work closely together in G-20 and multilateral organisations.

Jaishankar arrived here on Saturday on a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia to discuss ways to further strengthen relations between the two countries. It is his first visit to Saudi Arabia as External Affairs Minister.

On Sunday, Jaishankar co-chaired with his Saudi counterpart the first ministerial meeting of the Committee on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation (PSSC), established under the framework of the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council.

"Warm and productive meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister HH Prince @FaisalbinFarhan this afternoon. Co-chaired the Political,



Security, Social and Cultural Committee of the India-Saudi Partnership Council," Jaishankar tweeted in both English and Arabic.

The minister said that they discussed current global political and economic concerns. "Agreed to work closely together in G20 and multilateral organizations," he added.

India and Saudi Arabia enjoy cordial and friendly relations reflecting the centuries-old economic and socio-cultural ties. Saudi Arabia is India's fourth-largest trading partner.

Earlier in the morning, Jaishankar addressed diplomats at the Prince Saud Al

Faisal Institute of Diplomatic Studies in Riyadh.

During his address, the minister underlined the importance of the strategic relationship between the two countries and said that the collaboration between them holds the promise of shared growth, prosperity, stability, security and development.

"Addressed diplomats at the Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute of Diplomatic Studies in Riyadh this morning. Underlined the importance of India-Saudi Strategic Relationship at a time when the world is at crossroads," he said in a tweet.

Lankan President under fire over Govt expansion amidst economic crisis

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has come under fire from the Opposition over his government expansion with 37 state ministers and with moves underway to appoint at least 12 more Cabinet ministers soon at a time when the island nation is facing bankruptcy.

President Wickremesinghe on Thursday appointed 37 junior ministers, largely representing the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

The 37 new posts are in addition to the 20-member Cabinet of President Wickremesinghe, who took over in late July following Gotabaya Rajapaksa's exit. Talks are also underway to appoint at least 12 more Cabinet ministers soon.

The Opposition has vehemently condemned the president's move, arguing that the government could ill afford the expansion at a time when the country is going through its worst economic crisis and the recent tax hikes have heaped burden on the people.



"The president and the government have no regard for the suffering of the people who are facing high cost of living," said Sajith Premadasa, leader of the main Opposition party Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB).

Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake said the government isn't saving much by offering salaries of Members of Parliament (MPs) to the state ministers.

"They are being allowed huge fuel allowances when tuk

tuk operators have been allowed only limited fuel," he said.

Minister of Urban Development and Housing and Chief Government Whip Prasanna Ranatunga had said the new state ministers will not become a burden on the country as they are working without any ministerial privileges.

Also since all the state ministers will work on MPs salary, they will not be a big burden to the government, he said.

Wickremesinghe's office had said the state ministers have been strictly told to minimise expenditure on view of the hardships faced by the common people in the country. There will be no secretaries to state ministers and not even personal staff would be made available to them.

"We are willing to follow the guidelines, given the poor economic situation we are faced with," said Shanthan Bandara, state minister of media.

Stepping up: Next generation of royals to see more scrutiny

AP ■ LONDON

Prince William and wife Kate made a surprise joint appearance with Prince Harry and wife Meghan, warmly greeting a large crowd gathered outside Windsor Castle to remember their long-reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II.

Their "walkabout", the first time the brothers have appeared amicably together in public since March 2020, comes at a time when the younger generation of Britain's royal family must step up their responsibilities significantly.

William, long second-in-line to the throne, is now the heir apparent after his father, King Charles III, became Britain's new monarch upon his mother's death.

That means William and Kate, both 40 and parents of three young children, immediately assume a much more central role as the new face of the monarchy.

William and Harry had been on frosty terms terms since Harry quit as a senior royal and moved to the US two years ago. Their show of unity Saturday was reportedly initiated by William and left some observers hoping that Harry, 37, might return to the fray and support his elder brother in sharing the heavy workload now on William's shoulders.

"Certainly William and Catherine, as



the new Prince and Princess of Wales, will be even more in the media spotlight if that's possible," said Joe Little, managing editor of Majesty magazine. "Until Thursday, there was a buffer between him and the throne. That buffer has now been removed."It's a stark contrast to how thing were just two weeks ago, when William and Kate announced they were moving their family from central London to a more rural base in Windsor. Observers thought they were seeking more privacy and a more "normal" upbringing for their children, who just started a new year together at a private school.

Long before he became King Charles III, Britain's new monarch indicated that he wanted a "slimmed down" monarchy with a tighter core group of full-time working royals and lower expenses.

That was before Harry's move — and before the princes' uncle, Prince Andrew, was effectively banished from public life following sexual misconduct scandals.

Not many other recognizable "working royals" — members of the royal family who officially represent the monarch — were left to share the hundreds of official engagements and numerous overseas visits undertaken each year.

The group includes Charles and his wife, Camilla, now the Queen Consort; William and Kate; the queen's only daughter, Princess Anne; and the queen's youngest child, Prince Edward, and his

wife, Sophie. Also working royals, but much lesser known, are the queen's first cousin, Prince Richard, and his wife, Birgitte. In his first speech to the nation, which was broadcast Friday, Charles formally bestowed his own title, the Prince of Wales, to William. Kate is now the Princess of Wales, and is the first person since William's late mother, Princess Diana, to hold the title.

William and Kate also inherit Charles and Camilla's other honorary titles, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall. That means managing and taking income from the Duchy of Cornwall, an estate comprising land across the U.K.

Sweden holds election expected to boost anti-immigrant party

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

Sweden is holding an election Sunday that is expected to boost a populist anti-immigration party that is vowing to crack down on gang violence that has shaken many people's sense of security.

The Sweden Democrats won seats in parliament for the first time in 2010 and have steadily gained more votes in parliament with each election. The party's fortunes have risen following massive migration in recent years, particularly in Europe's crisis year of 2015, and as crime has grown in segregated neighbourhoods.

The populist party was founded by far-right extremists decades ago, but in recent years has worked hard to change its image. For many years, voters viewed it as unacceptable and other parties shunned it. That is changing. Polls ahead of the vote projected that the Sweden Democrats, which won 13% in 2018, would take about 20% of the vote this time and become the second-largest party in the parliament. That would put it only behind the center-left Social Democrats of Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson.

Andersson, the 55-year-old leader, enjoys high approval ratings. She became Sweden's first female prime minister less than a year ago and was at the helm as Sweden made its historic bid to join NATO following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Zeth Isaksson, a sociologist specializing in electoral behavior at Stockholm University, said her image has benefited from her experience in government, first as finance minister, through crises including the COVID-19 pandemic and, as prime minister, in the negotiations to join NATO.

"Magdalena Andersson is one of the most important factors in this election," Isaksson told The Associated Press.

But many voters have also tired of her party, which has been in power for eight years, blaming it for high taxes and for failing to stem the shootings that have made Sweden one of Europe's most violent countries.

Australia's PM says referendum on republic not his priority

AP ■ CANBERRA

Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who had started laying the groundwork for an Australian republic after elections in May, said Sunday that now was the time not for a change but for paying tribute to the life of Queen Elizabeth II.

Many regarded Australians' respect and affection for the late monarch as the biggest obstacle to the country becoming a republic with its own head of state.

Albanese, who describes himself as the first candidate with a "non-Anglo Celtic name" to run for prime minister in the 121 years that the office has existed, had created a new position of Assistant Minister for the Republic and appointed Matt Thistlethwaite to the role in June. Thistlethwaite had said there would be no change in the queen's lifetime.



"Now is not a time to talk about our system of government," Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corp. On Sunday. "Now is the time for us to pay tribute to the life of Queen Elizabeth, a life well lived, a life of dedication and loyalty including to the Australian people and for us to honour and grieve." Albanese has said previously that a republic referendum is not a priority of his first three-year term in government.

During her long reign, the queen connected to Australia in ways that no monarch before her had done. In 1954, she became the only reigning British monarch to visit Australia.

Such was her star power, an estimated 70% of Australia's population turned out to see her during a punishing two-month itinerary that took her and her husband Prince Philip to 57 towns and cities spread across vast distances. She visited 16 times, the final time in 2011 when she was 85.

Aid for flood victims arrives in hard-hit Pakistani province

AP ■ KARACHI

Two more US military planes loaded with tons of aid for Pakistanis affected by flooding from deadly monsoon rains landed Sunday in southern Sindh province, one of the worst-affected regions in the impoverished country.

Saif Ullah, spokesman for the country's Civil Aviation Authority, said each plane was loaded with about 35 tons of relief aid that would be distributed in the province by the World Food Program. The aircraft landed at Sukkur Airport in Sindh and Ullah said the U.S. Operation that began Thursday would continue until Sept. 16.

Pakistan has suffered under extremely heavy monsoon rains that started early this year — in mid-June. Multiple officials and experts have blamed the rains and resulting floodwaters on climate change. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last week called on the world to stop "sleepwalking" through the dangerous environmental crisis.

He has called repeatedly on the international community to send massive amounts of aid to Pakistan.Ullah said Sunday that two more flights bringing relief goods from the United Arab Emirates landed at Karachi airport. So far, U.N. Agencies and several countries have sent multiple plane-loads of aid, and authorities say the UAE has been one of the most generous contributors.

Near 1,400 people have been killed, 13,000 injured and millions left homeless by the heavy flooding since mid-June. The waters also destroyed road and communications infrastructure. Miles of cotton and sugarcane crops, banana orchards and vegetable fields could be seen submerged in floodwaters. Thousands of mud and brick homes caved in under the deluge leaving people homeless and sheltering in tents alongside damaged roads.

Pakistan's military chief Gen. Qamar Jawed Bajwa toured the badly affected district of Dadu in Sindh and its surroundings on Saturday.

Finmin mulls changes in insurance laws



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry is contemplating changes in insurance laws, including reduction in minimum capital requirement, with a view to increasing the insurance penetration in the country.

Insurance penetration in India increased from 3.76 per cent in 2019-20 to 4.20 per cent in 2020-21, registering a growth of 11.70 per cent. Insurance penetration measured as the percentage of insurance premium to GDP witnessed handsome growth during the year, mainly due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

The ministry is doing a comprehensive review of the Insurance Act, 1938 and also looking at making relevant changes to help push growth of the sector, sources said, adding the process is at a preliminary

stage. One of the provisions being considered is lowering the minimum capital requirement of ₹100 crore for setting up an insurance business, the sources said.

Easing capital requirement would allow entry of differentiated insurance companies like in the banking sector, which has categories like universal bank, small finance bank and payments bank.

With the ease of entry capital norms, sources said, there could be entry of companies focussed on micro insurance, agriculture insurance or insurance firms with regional approach.

So for them, the solvency margin requirement would also be different but without compromising on policyholders' interest, the sources said.

Entry of more players would not only push penetra-

tion but result in greater job creation in the country.

Presently, there are 24 life insurance companies and 31 non-life or general insurance firms, including specialised players like the Agriculture Insurance Company of India Ltd and ECGC Limited.

Last year, the government brought an amendment in the Insurance Act to allow increasing foreign holding in insurers from 49 per cent to 74 per cent. Besides, Parliament passed the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021, allowing the central government to pare stake to less than 51 per cent of the equity capital in a specified insurer, paving the way for privatisation.

In 2015, the Insurance Act was amended for raising the foreign investment cap from 26 per cent to 49 per cent. All these amendments since privatisation of the insurance sector have led to exponential growth. According to a study, India is likely to become the sixth largest insurance market in the world in the next 10 years, supported by regulatory push and rapid economic expansion.

Total insurance premiums in India will grow by an average 14 per cent per annum in nominal local currency terms over the next decade, making India the sixth largest in terms of total premium volume by 2032 from 10th largest in 2021.

‘Rising credit card and UPI payments indicate increase in consumption’



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rising credit card and UPI payments indicate towards increase in consumption amid recovery in economic activities with ebbing impact of Covid pandemic, said experts and market players.

As per the RBI's monthly data, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transaction increased from ₹9.83 lakh crore in April this year to ₹10.73 lakh crore in August.

Similarly, credit card spends through PoS (Point of Sale) terminal increased from ₹29,988 crore in April this year to ₹32,383 crore in August. The credit card spending on e-commerce platforms, which was valued at ₹51,375 crore in April, rose to ₹55,264 crore in August.

Rama Mohan Rao Amara, MD and CEO, SBI Card, said the outstanding on credit cards has grown at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 16 per cent between FY17 and FY22, as per the RBI's industry data.

"With the increased adoption and use of credit cards, there has also been an increase

in spends. Over the last few months, the industry has seen monthly credit card spends crossing ₹1 lakh-crore quantum consistently, indicating a robust consumption pattern. With the upcoming festive season, there is expectation and anticipation all around," he said.

Experts and market players are of the view that the increase in volume and value of digital transactions bode well for the economy. It also indicates that consumers are increasingly becoming familiar with different modes of digital payments, and giving up their inhibitions.

Anand Kumar Bajaj, founder, MD & CEO, PayNearby, opined that the increase in volume and value of payments through cards and UPI paints a positive picture of the digital payments landscape in the country.

The spurt, he said, indicates that Indian consumers are letting go of their inhibitions and becoming more open to online payment adoption.

"As consumers and merchants have experienced the ease and security of digital payment modes, it has brought a behavioral shift in them.

ISMA demands permission to export 80 lakh tonnes of sugar in 2022-23 marketing year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sugar industry body ISMA has demanded that the government should allow exports of 80 lakh tonnes of sweetener in the 2022-23 marketing year starting October in view of surplus production. Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) president Aditya Jhunjhunwala has written a letter to food and consumer affairs minister Piyush Goyal in this regard.

In the current 2021-22 marketing year ending September, the government has allowed sugar exports of 112 lakh tonnes and mills are likely to ship the entire quantities. In May, the government had imposed restrictions on export of sugar beyond 100 lakh tonnes, but later allowed another 12 lakh tonnes of shipments, taking the total to 112 lakh tonnes for 2021-22.

Sugar marketing year or season runs from October to September.

"We would like to request the government to allow 80 lakh tonnes of exports for 2022-23 SS (Sugar Season) ...," the ISMA President said in the letter.

As per preliminary estimate, Jhunjhunwala said the net sugar production, without considering the diversion of sugar for production of ethanol, is expected to increase to about 400 lakh tonnes in 2022-23 from 394 lakh tonnes in the current marketing year.

However, he said 45 lakh tonnes of sugar are expected to



get diverted for ethanol in 2022-23 marketing year as against 34 lakh tonnes in the current marketing year.

This means that actual sugar production in 2022-23 would be 355 lakh tonnes, the ISMA president said.

"Therefore, after considering domestic sugar consumption of 275 lakh tonnes in the next season (2022-23), it becomes imperative to export at least 80 lakh tonnes of surplus sugar out of the country in order to maintain optimum sugar balance in the country," Jhunjhunwala said. The exports of surplus sugar would also help in maintaining domestic sugar prices, which in turn boost liquidity position of mills enabling them to pay sugarcane farmers on time.

The ISMA president mentioned that the sugarcane crushing operations in 2022-23 marketing year is expected to start from October first week itself because of huge cane availability. Jhunjhunwala urged the government to announce the export policy for 2022-23 marketing year at the earliest so that mills can enter into future contracts and also plan their production in advance.

‘Serious ramifications on imposition of mandatory standard certification norms on polymer imports’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Plastic exporters body Plexconcil has urged the government not to impose mandatory standard certification norms on import of polymers as it will have 'serious' ramifications on the outbound shipments of the sector.

India's plastics exports have already recorded a contraction of 4.2 per cent to USD 3.27 billion during April-June 2022.

Polymers like PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride), Polypropylene, ABS (Acrylonitrile-Butadiene-Styrene), HDPE (High Density Polyethylene), LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene), LLDPE (Linear Low Density Polyethylene), and Polycarbonate are key raw materials for the plastic industry.

According to the Plastic Export Promotion Council (Plexconcil), the Department of Chemicals wants to impose mandatory Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) norms on polymers.

"This is very harmful for the plastic processing industry as polymers are already in shortage in the country due to not enough production in the country and imports are inevitable. Domestic processing industry will become uncompetitive," the council's chairman Arvind Goenka told PTI.

FPIs infuse ₹5,600 crore in Indian equities in September so far

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pumped in close to ₹5,600 crore into the domestic equity markets in this month so far on expected growth in consumer spending in festive season and better macro fundamentals compared to other emerging markets.

This comes following a net investment of staggering ₹51,200 crore in August and nearly ₹5,000 crore in July, data with depositories showed.

There is a clear trend reversal in FPI (Foreign Portfolio Investment) flows from July onwards since when overseas investors turned buyers in India after nine straight months of massive net outflows, which started in October last year.

Between October 2021 and June 2022, they sold a massive ₹2.46 lakh crore in the India equity markets.

V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said the trend of FPI flows into India is likely to continue. However, if



US bond yields continue to rise and the dollar index rises above 110, inflows may be impacted.

"I feel FPIs will continue buying Indian equities irrespective of the US Fed outcome," Jay Prakash Gupta, founder, Dhan, said.

According to data with depositories, FPIs pumped a net amount of ₹5,593 crore in Indian equities during September 1-9.

"FPIs are buying in India because India has the best growth and earnings story among large economies in the world. US, Euro zone and China are slowing down. India is the bright spot," Vijayakumar said.

Oil prices at seven-month low but no change in petrol, diesel prices in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

International oil prices have hit a seven-month low but there is no change in retail selling price of petrol and diesel in India as state-owned fuel retailers recoup losses incurred for holding rates for a record five months despite rising cost.

International benchmark Brent crude fell below USD 90 per barrel last week for the first time since early February as recession fears weigh on demand. It has since recovered and is trading at USD 92.84 per barrel, the lowest in six months.

Prices fell despite bullish developments, including Russia keeping the North Stream pipeline offline and producers cartel OPEC and its allies (OPEC+) cutting production.

But this has not led to any revision in retail petrol and diesel prices in India and they continue to be on freeze for a record-setting 158 days.

Responding to reporters' questions on no change in fuel prices, oil minister Hardeep Singh Puri had on Friday sought to link the no revision to losses state-owned fuel retail-



ers incurred in keeping rates unchanged when international oil prices surged to multi-year high.

"When (international oil) prices were high, our (petrol and diesel) prices were already low," he had said. "Have we recouped all our losses?" he went on to ask.

He however did not elaborate on the losses incurred on keeping rates steady since April 6. The basket of crude oil that India imports averaged USD 88 per barrel on September 8. It had averaged USD 102.97 in April, before rising to USD 109.51 in the following month

and USD 116.01 in June. Prices started to fall in July when the Indian basket averaged USD 105.49 a barrel. It averaged USD 97.40 in August and USD 92.87 in September so far.

State-owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) have not exercised their right to adjust the retail selling price of petrol and diesel in line with the international costs for over five months now to help the government manage runaway inflation.

Mcap of 7 top 10 valued firms climb over ₹1.33L cr; TCS, Reliance lead gainers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of seven of the top 10 most-valued firms climbed ₹1,33,746.87 crore last week amid a firm trend in equities, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Reliance Industries and Infosys leading the pack of gainers.

Last week, the BSE benchmark advanced 989.81 points or 1.68 per cent.

The market valuation of TCS jumped ₹32,071.59 crore to ₹11,77,226.60 crore.

Reliance Industries added ₹26,249.1 crore taking its valuation to ₹17,37,717.68 crore.

The market valuation of Infosys climbed ₹24,804.5 crore to ₹6,36,143.85 crore and that of ICICI Bank advanced ₹20,471.04 crore to ₹6,27,823.56 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of State Bank of India gained ₹15,171.84 crore to ₹4,93,932.64 crore and that of Adani Transmission went higher by ₹7,730.36 crore to ₹4,38,572.68 crore.

Appliances industry expects up to 35% growth in sales during this festive season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Appliances and consumer durable makers are looking for up to 35 per cent growth in sales during this festive season on increasing demand for premium products and price hikes.

Some of the companies, however, are "cautiously optimistic" about the sales of their entry-level mass products in the country's hinterlands.

Companies such as Panasonic, LG, Sony, Samsung, Haier, Godrej Appliances, Voltas, Thomson and BSH Home Appliances expect this festive sale, which started with the onset of Onam in the south, to be better than the last year and even cross the pre-Covid sales volume.

The festive season, which starts from Onam and covers Durga Puja and ends with Diwali, contributes around one-third of the overall annual sales value across categories of the industry, which is estimated to be around ₹75,000 crore.

Makers are finalising schemes such as extended war-



ranties, easy EMIs and investing in promotional activities to attract customers, but are worried also over sales of entry-level mass products as consumers from smaller towns are still holding their purses on discretionary purchases.

The industry is concerned about any possible impact on sales due to monsoon rain deficit in some parts of the country and the average price hike of 7-8 per cent, which it has taken this fiscal.

"The festive target setting for the country will depend on how the monsoons fare overall and the consumer sentiment overall. We are cautiously optimistic as far as the mass segment is concerned but the premium segment is expected to continue doing very well in festive as well and form the focus across categories," said.

Comviva expects 33% revenue rise

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IT company Comviva expects its revenue to grow by 33 per cent to around ₹1,600 crore in this fiscal driven by the enterprise business, a top company official said.

Comviva CEO Manoranjan Mohapatra told PTI that the company's 80 per cent business comes from telecom companies but banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) is growing well for the company.

"The BFSI growth is pretty good. FinTech continues to grow and bulk of the FinTech sales are now to banks and payment solutions.

Avaada Energy bags 300 mw solar project

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Avaada Energy on Sunday said it has won a 300 MW solar project at a tariff of Rs 2.83 per kWh from Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company (MSEDCL).

Avaada Group has been declared one of the winners in an auction conducted by Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company (MSEDCL) to procure power from 500 MW of grid-connected inter or intrastate solar projects (Phase-VIII) on a



long-term basis, it stated.

As per the terms of the tender, the projects can be set up anywhere in India and are required to supply power to MSEDCL at the state grid in case projects are set up in Maharashtra (Intra-State projects) and Western Region (WR) periphery.

Reliance Cap suitors seek extension of up to 4 months for submission of binding bids

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Suitors for debt-ridden Reliance Capital Limited (RCL) have sought extension of up to 4 months for submission of binding bids as part of its resolution process.

US-based asset management fund Advent has sought extension by 16 weeks, while Piramal Finance has sought additional time of 12 weeks, that is till December, sources said.

As per the current timeline, the last date for submission of binding bids, along



with Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of Rs 75 crore, is September 29.

There are other bidders also who have sought a similar extension of timeline for filing of binding bids, the sources said, adding IndusInd Bank has sought a 10 weeks' extension,

Oaktree has asked for 12 weeks and Zurich Re has requested for 8 weeks extension, saying that due diligence would take time.

According to sources, the Committee of Creditors (CoC) will be meeting in the coming week to decide on a time extension to maximise the value for lenders and ensure maximum binding bids for Reliance Capital's assets.

The timeline for filing of the final resolution plan with the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) is November 1, 2022.

Rlys revenue up 38% to ₹95,487 till Aug-end

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The overall revenue of Indian Railways at the end of August 2022 was ₹95,486.58 crore, showing an increase of ₹26,271.29 crore or 38 per cent over the corresponding period of last year, an official statement said on Sunday.

The revenue from passenger traffic was ₹25,276.54 crore, an increase of ₹13,574.44 crore (116 per cent) year-on-year.

Passenger traffic also increased compared to last

year in both the segments -- reserved and unreserved. The growth from the long distance reserved mail express trains has been sharper than the same in passenger and suburban trains, the Railways said.

The other coaching revenue stood at ₹2,437.42 crore, higher by ₹811.82 crore (50 per cent) over the corresponding period of last year.

This is being fuelled by robust growth in the parcel segment of Indian Railways, the statement added.

Mahindra Lifespace to buy land parcels with sales potential of Rs 3k-4K crore in FY-2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Mahindra Lifespace Developers is looking to acquire a few land parcels this fiscal to build housing projects with sales potential of ₹3,000-4,000 crore, a top company official said.

The company will acquire these land parcels either through outright purchase or by forming Joint Development Agreements (JDAs) with



landowners.

Mumbai-based Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd, part of Mahindra Group, is one of the leading real estate players in

the country. The company's market cap recently touched USD 1 billion (about ₹8,000 crore).

In an interview with PTI, the company's Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Arvind Subramanian said Mahindra Lifespace is looking to acquire new land parcels for business expansion in three focus cities — Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR),

Pune and Bengaluru.

He highlighted that the company already acquired a land parcel this fiscal that has a Gross Development Value (GDV) of ₹1,700 crore and the deal pipelines are strong.

"Last year, I had set a guidance of ₹2,500 crore worth of new land acquisition. All these numbers are GDV, so the sales value of the new land that we acquire and not the cost of land acquisition.

Honda lines up ₹260 cr to upgrade sales network

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese automaker Honda along with its dealer partners plans to invest around ₹260 crore to upgrade its dealerships across India to make them more premium as it gears up to drive in sports utility vehicles in the market starting next year, as per a senior company official.

Honda's dealer network in the country currently comprises 330 facilities in 242

cities.

The company, which is present in the country through a wholly-owned unit, had initiated the project in 2019 but it had to be scaled down due to the impact of the pandemic on the dealers' business.

"With Covid situation improving a lot, we have renewed our focus on revamping the entire sales network and putting it on a fast track. There are still some challenges about capacity and time, but effort is



to maximise the number of revamped outlets in this year and next year," Honda Cars India Vice-President

(Marketing and Sales) Kunal Behl told PTI in an interaction.

The move to make the outlets premium is to cater to the changing customer outlook and also coincides with the company's upcoming product push in the sports utility segment starting next year, he added.

"The investment in collaboration with our dealer partners in the remaining network will be around ₹260 crore," Behl stated.

Swiatek is US Open champion

World No.1 women's singles tennis player defeats Ons Jabeur 6-2, 7-6 in final to bag her third Grand Slam title

AP ■ NEW YORK

World number one Iga Swiatek defeated Tunisia's Ons Jabeur to win her second Grand Slam title of the year with a straight sets victory in the US Open final on Saturday.

Polish star Swiatek overcame a spirited second set fightback from fifth seed Jabeur to win 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) in 1hr 52min at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The victory followed Swiatek's win at the French Open in June, making the 21-year-old the first woman since 2016 to win two Grand Slams in a single season.

Swiatek's 10th career title also extended her remarkable record in tournament finals.

She has now won her last 10 finals, without dropping a set.

But the loss was another agonising near-miss for Jabeur, who had been bidding to become the first woman from Africa to win a Grand Slam.

The 28-year-old from Tunisia had also been beaten in the final of Wimbledon in July.

Jabeur impressed en route to the final, dropping only a single set and stitching together a string of assured performances.

But she was in trouble almost from the get-go against the clinical Swiatek, who was into her stride quickly with her serve and signature forehand functioning smoothly.

Jabeur by contrast looked jittery and and was broken to



love in her first service game.

Swiatek held easily to go 3-0 up with only eight minutes gone in the first set.

Jabeur did threaten a revival when she held and then broke to close the gap to 3-2.

But the fifth seed was let down again by her shaky service game, a problem throughout Saturday's final, and Swiatek broke back for a 4-2 lead.

Jabeur was broken again as she served to stay in the set and Swiatek took the first set.

Swiatek threatened to run

away with the second set after breaking Jabeur and holding to go 3-0 up.

Yet Jabeur showed great determination to break Swiatek to cut the deficit to 3-2.

Once again however Jabeur was unable to make the service break count and Swiatek broke again for a 4-2 lead.

This time, though, Jabeur dug deep to claw her way back into the contest, assisted by a slice of luck when a Swiatek return clipped a net cord to clinch a service break.

Jabeur held to level the score at 4-4 and suddenly the momentum had shifted.

The next three games went with serve and Jabeur was left serving to stay in the match. She fought off a match-point at 5-6 and 30-40 down before holding for 6-6.

Jabeur recovered from 4-2 down to lead 5-4 in the tie break, but it was Swiatek who showed greater composure, converting her second match point when Jabeur smacked a return long.

Iga says 'sky's the limit'

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Iga Swiatek believes "the sky is the limit" after she crowned her rise to the pinnacle of women's tennis with a third Grand Slam title at the US Open on Saturday.

A second Grand Slam title on Saturday and a victory at the French Open in June are part of seven tournaments she has won this year, which included a 37-match winning streak as she swept to the top of the rankings.

Swiatek, whose favourite surface is clay, says the fact that she was able to triumph in New York could prove to be a psychological watershed for her game.

"At the beginning of the season I realized that maybe I can have some good results on WTA events," she said. "I also made it to semi-final of the Australian Open.

"But I wasn't sure if I was on the level yet to win actually a Grand Slam, especially at the US Open where the sur-

face is so fast.

"It's something that I wasn't expecting for sure. It's also like a confirmation for me that sky is the limit.

"I'm proud, also surprised little bit, just happy that I was able to do that."

Swiatek believes her ability to block out distractions, and mould her gameplan to suit matches as they are evolving is a sign that she has become a mentally tougher player.

"I'm mostly proud of the

fact that mentally I'm not kind of breaking up in those important moments," Swiatek said. "I have, like, after the matches, even if I lose, I kind of have no regrets because I know I'm doing 100%.

"I'm proud that I have much more solutions and options on court than I had before tennis-wise, but yeah, also mentally.

"I'm really proud of that because I just know how it feels to not have ideas on court, not have anything you can change to make the match better. Right now it's been a long time since I didn't have any idea."

'No regrets' as Jabeur targets world top spot

AP ■ NEW YORK

Ons Jabeur insisted she had "no regrets" after losing to Iga Swiatek in the US Open final as she targeted the Pole's world number one ranking next year.

Jabeur's 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) loss on Saturday was her second successive defeat in a Grand Slam final after also coming off second best at Wimbledon in July.

"I have nothing to regret because I did everything possible," said Jabeur, who will return to number two in the world on Monday.

Swiatek remains comfortably in the rankings' top slot with twice as many points.

The 28-year-old Jabeur, however, is already drawing up a battle plan for 2023.

At the Australian Open, she will have no points to defend having missed the 2022 tournament before she suffered a shock first round exit at the French Open.

Despite being the Wimbledon runner-up, ranking points were stripped from the event by the WTA after the All England Club banned Russian and Belarusian players.

"Points-wise, I don't have defending points in Australia, in French Open, in Wimbledon, which is good. It's a good thing, I'm definitely going for the No. 1 spot," said Jabeur.

"I still have the Masters (WTA Finals in Fort Worth). I will maybe show myself there and build more confidence to really get ready for the next season because I feel like I have a lot to show."

Jabeur, a late bloomer on the tour having still been outside the top 30 at the end of 2020, believes history shows that time remains on her side when it comes to her Grand Slam future.

It took her until she was 26 to capture a maiden WTA title in 2021 at Birmingham, adding Madrid and Berlin

trophies this year.

"I struggled to win my first WTA title. It took me time," she added.

"So I believe this will take me time. The most important thing is accepting it, learning from the finals that I lost.

"But I'm not someone that's going to give up. I am sure I'm going to be in the final again and I will try my best to win it."

In the meantime, Jabeur acknowledged that 21-year-old Swiatek, who now has three Grand Slam titles after also winning the French Open in 2020 and this year, is the sport's most formidable force.

Swiatek has 10 career titles. She has won her last 10 finals without dropping a set. "Physically she's everywhere. It will always be great to compete against Iga," said Jabeur.

"I was joking when I said I don't like her. I'll forgive her when she gives me a Rolex or something!"

Neymar takes PSG back to top



AP ■ PARIS

Neymar notched his 10th goal of the season but a lethargic Paris Saint-Germain needed a second-half Gianluigi Donnarumma penalty save to secure a 1-0 win over Brest in Ligue 1 on Saturday.

The result took PSG back to the top of the table and maintains their unbeaten start to the campaign under new coach Christophe Galtier.

PSG are top on goal difference from Marseille, who also remain unbeaten in the league after beating Lille 2-1 in Saturday's other game.

Lens had briefly seized first place after beating Troyes 1-0 on Friday, but are now two points

behind the leaders in third position.

Despite their victory, PSG put in their least convincing performance of the season so far against a Brest side who just two weeks ago lost 7-0 at home to Montpellier.

Galtier may reflect that he should have made more changes to his starting line-up, with Saturday's match falling in between their 2-1 midweek Champions League win over Juventus and a trip to Israel to play Maccabi Haifa this Wednesday.

"It is always difficult to play on the back of a Champions League game. So much energy goes into these matches, physically as well as mentally," Galtier

told broadcaster Amazon Prime.

"I wouldn't say we were trying to play within ourselves but there was maybe not the same desire to make the effort that we have seen so far this season."

Nuno Mendes and captain Marquinhos were the only PSG players who started against Juventus to be rested, with Juan Bernat and Danilo Pereira coming in.

Galtier resisted the temptation to rest any of his superstar front three, saying beforehand that he had thought about leaving out Lionel Messi but realised the Argentine "doesn't need a breather".

"I wanted to start our strongest attack to put the game to bed early and make substitutions sooner," he reasoned.

Summer signings Nordi Mukiele and Carlos Soler spent the afternoon on the bench, while Spanish international Fabian Ruiz came on for his debut as a second-half substitute.

RANGERS-NAPOLI ON WED

The Champions League game between Scottish club Rangers and Napoli has been rescheduled from Tuesday to Wednesday because of the limited police resources available following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, with away fans urged to stay away from the match.

UEFA said Sunday that the game has been pushed back by 24 hours because of a "severe limitations on police resources and organizational issues related to the ongoing events surrounding the national mourning" for the queen.



Raspadori shines in Napoli's Serie A win

AP ■ NAPLES

Giacomo Raspadori made Napoli provisional leaders of Serie A with the late winner in Saturday's 1-0 home win over Spezia which put them ahead on goal difference from 10-man AC Milan, 2-1 winners at Sampdoria.

Italy forward Raspadori struck the decisive goal in the final moments of a stodgy encounter at the Stadio Maradona, sweeping home Hirving Lozano's cross to net his first goal for Napoli on his second start after arriving on loan from Sassuolo last month.

"It's a moment that will stay in my head and heart," Raspadori told DAZN.

"I missed two chances which I should have scored but thankfully the team put me in the position to score and I kept my head."

Earlier, Junior Messias gave Milan the lead at Samp after just six minutes when he fired in

first time at the end of a neat passing move started by Rafael Leao.

Ten minutes later though, Leao collected a yellow card for raising an elbow and he was dismissed two minutes into the second half when he attempted an overhead kick and caught Sampdoria centre back Alex Ferrari in the face.

Against 10 men, the initiative briefly swung to Sampdoria and Filip Djuricic levelled in the 57th minute when he flicked a near-post header past Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan.

Milan netted the winner 10 minutes later after Gonzalo Villar handled Olivier Giroud's header from a corner and the Frenchman buried the penalty kick given after a review by referee Michael Fabbri.

Elsewhere, another late strike from Marcel Brozovic gave Inter Milan a hard-fought 1-0 win over Torino to offer some relief from recent blues.

Real maintain perfect start

AP ■ MADRID

Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo came through in the absence of Karim Benzema to keep Real Madrid perfect this season.

Vinicius and Rodrygo scored second-half goals as Madrid came from behind to defeat Mallorca 4-1 for its fifth straight win in the Spanish league on Sunday.

Madrid was without the injured Benzema and other regular starters as coach Carlo Ancelotti rotated his squad ahead of the team's Champions League match against Leipzig on Wednesday.

Mallorca got on the board first at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium with a header by Vedat Muriqi off an assist by Lee Kang-in during a set piece in the 35th minute.

Madrid got the equalizer three minutes into first-half stoppage time with a well-placed shot by Federico Valverde into the top corner.

Vinicius put Madrid ahead from inside the area after a nice pass by Rodrygo in the 72nd, then Rodrygo found the net himself in the 89th after a couple of nifty moves to get past three Mallorca defenders inside the area.

Defender Antonio Rudiger closed the scoring in stoppage time with a shot from close range after a set piece taken by Toni Kroos.

Madrid is the only team in the top five European leagues with five straight victories. It hadn't won five in a row to start its season since 2009-10.



Barca trounce Cadiz

AP ■ BARCELONA

Xavi's Barcelona secured a 4-0 win over rock bottom Cadiz on Saturday in a match interrupted by a medical emergency in the stands.

Barca have 13 points from five matches.

Freddie de Jong scored first on 55 minutes with Polish striker Robert Lewandowski doubling the advantage ten minutes later.

Barca's star signing of the close season Lewandowski now has six goals in five Liga matches.

Barcelona scored twice more late on, through Ansu Fati on 86 minutes and Frenchman Ousmane Dembele, who made it 4-0 in stoppage time.

"It wasn't a great game, but

it was a good one," said Xavi, who takes his team to Bayern Munich for a Champions League match on Tuesday.

Atletico Madrid beat Celta Vigo 4-1 in an open match to climb into the top four on 10 points.

Argentine striker Angel Correa put them ahead after nine minutes.

He was set up by compatriot Rodrigo De Paul, who scored the second on 50 minutes.

Antoine Griezmann came on shortly after the hour and was soon celebrating with fellow substitute Yannick Carrasco who made it 3-0.

Celta pulled one back through Gabriel Viega Novas before an own-goal from Unai Nunez on 82 restored the three-goal gap.

WTA Chennai Open: Alison Riske-Amritraj starts favourite

PTI ■ CHENNAI

World No. 29 Alison Riske-Amritraj headlining the singles field when international tennis returns to the city with the WTA250 Chennai Open starting Monday.

Alison, who reached the pre-quarterfinals of the US Open before going down to Caroline Garcia, will be the favourite in a field that includes a handful of top-100 players. Alison is coming off a good performance in the US hard court season and will be eager to build on that in the land of her in-laws. She is married to Stephen Amritraj, son of former India Davis Cup non-playing captain Anand Amritraj.

Having played well to improve her ranking from outside 50 to 29 in 2022, the

American would be hoping to end the season well and inside the top-20.

Former Grand Slam finalist Canadian Eugenie Bouchard, 28, one of the more popular names in the fray, is expected to steal the spotlight provided she notches up a few wins.

The withdrawal of world No.17 Frenchwoman Garcia, who lost in the semifinals of the US Open and Elise Mertens (No.33) due to scheduling issues and injury respectively has robbed the tournament of some star power and would put the focus on Riske-Amritraj and put her in pole position to add to the collection of three WTA Tour titles.

The American player will open her campaign against Russia's Anastasia Gasanova and could run into the winner

of the Arianne Hartono-Katie Swan match in round two.

The No.1 seed's main challenge could likely come from No.2 seed Varvara Gracheva (Russia), Magda Linette (Poland), the third-seed and No.4 seed Tatjana Maria of Germany, who reached the semifinals of the Wimbledon championships.

FOCUS ON BOUCHARD

Former Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard of Canada, who is on a comeback trail and received a wild card into the singles draw, will be among the big attractions. Having slipped out of the spotlight after a few fruitful years and a runner-up showing at Wimbledon and an injury last year. The Canadian would look to work her way back up the rankings (she is currently



No.968) and the event here appears to be one of the small steps.

She meets Joanne Zuger of Switzerland in her opening match and a good run here could boost her confidence as he tried to get back to back to where she belonged some years ago.

Veteran Belgian Yanina Wickmayer, a former top-20 player, can be expected to pose a challenge to China's sixth-seed Qiang Wang.

In the doubles, Indian duo of Sharmada Baluu and Riya Bhatia received a wild card while Raina has teamed with Rosalie van der Hoek. It has to be seen if they can earn some success in the event.

INDIANS VS SEEDED OPPONENTS

The two Indians in the

singles main draw, courtesy wild cards, have been drawn to face seeded players in round one. While the country's top player Ankita Raina will run into Tatjana Maria, the second-ranked Karman Kaur Thandi faces eighth-seeded Chloe Paquet of France.

The two would have their task cut out against their opponents. Raina, who a few weeks ago made the final of an ITF event in Britain, needs to bring out her best to entertain any hopes of an upset against the experienced Maria, a mother of two, who played well to reach the semifinals at Wimbledon.

Thandi up against Paquet, ranked outside the top 100, will be keen to make the best use of the wild card and put up a good show.

ENGLAND CRUSH INDIA IN 1ST WT20I

PTI ■ CHESTER-LE-STREET

The Indian women's cricket team failed to click with both the bat and ball, proving to be a no match against a dominant England side in a nine-wicket drubbing in the first T20 Internationals here.

Sent into bat by England skipper Amy Jones, the Indian batters came a cropper against leg-spinner Sarah Glenn's four-for and were restricted to a measly 132 for seven in their stipulated 20 overs at Riverside Ground on Saturday night.

Bowling her full quota of four overs, Glenn finished with excellent figures of 4/23 and posed problems for the Indian batters throughout. With luck on her side, Sophia Dunkley raced to a 44-ball 61 to complete the chase in just 13 overs, even as India endured a forgettable night on the field in wet conditions.

All-rounder Deepti Sharma top-scored for the tourists with a 29-ball 24 and the second best score was 23 by opener Smriti Mandhana.

In between, captain Harmanpreet Kaur blazed away to 20 off 16 balls before being bowled by Glenn.

That summed up India's batting as none of them managed to make a substantial contribution.



Wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh too got a start but fell to medium pacer Freya Davies after racing to 16 in 12 balls.

The big-hitting Shafali Verma gave up her wicket after making 14 off 13 balls, caught by Bryony Smith off the bowling of Glenn, to leave India at 47 for two in the seventh over.

Even as they maintained a good run rate, India lost wickets at regular intervals to give England the upper hand in the first of the three T20Is.

India were 83 for four when Ghosh got out in the 12th overs. But all they could manage in the next overs was just 49 runs.

Chasing 133, England were off to a blistering start with both Dunkley and here opening partner Danielle Wyatt (24 off 16 balls) getting quick runs to put up 60 in only 6.2 overs.

First up, Dunkley survived a caught behind courtesy of a no-ball from Renuka Singh, then Shafali fluffed a straightforward catch at mid-off when the batter was on 15. Renuka was the unlucky bowler again.

There were a number of thick edges too, in between. Having got the reprieves, Dunkley went on to record her highest score in the format while sharing a stand of 74 runs for the second wicket with Alice Capsey, who remained not out on a breezy 32 off 20 balls.

During her unbeaten stay in the middle, Dunkley hit eight fours and a six.

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We forcefully played in wet conditions: Harmanpreet

PTI ■ CHESTER-LE-STREET

India women's team captain Harmanpreet Kaur said the side "forcefully played" in wet conditions in the first T20I against England here, resulting in a nine-wicket defeat for the tourists.

India defeated England at the Commonwealth Games semi-final just a month ago, but the T20 series did not start well for them on Saturday night.

"We were not able to get the runs we were expecting. I just feel we forcefully played because conditions were not 100 percent fit to play," Harmanpreet said after the match.

However, the Indian skipper backed her teammates and added that despite the wet conditions which could have resulted in injuries anytime, everyone in the team continued to give their best.

"Still I am happy the way girls put the effort because when there are chances to get injured but they are ready to play."

"That's what you need to

have team-mates in the team (for) who can score in whatever conditions and I am happy the way we put our efforts," she further said.

India also ended up losing a key member of the side when Radha Yadav's diving effort in the second over of England's chase resulted in a shoulder injury and the latter left the field in pain.

The 23-year-old's sudden departure from the field meant that India were short of a bowler who could have turned things around for the visitors.

"I know it was not 100% conditions to play cricket and still we were putting efforts."

"I know the ground was too wet and there were so many chances to get injured and one of our players got injured also. She was our main bowler and that's why we were lacking," Harmanpreet noted.

"We were one bowler short and the way we were trying to put efforts (meant a lot)," she said. "I am really happy girls were coming forward to give 100%," she added.

Oz whitewash Black Caps



AP ■ CAIRNS

Steve Smith century helped give retiring Australia skipper Aaron Finch a winning send-off on Sunday with a 25-run victory in the final ODI against New Zealand at Cairns. Chasing the home team's 267-5, built on the back of Smith's masterful 105, the Blacks Caps were all out for 242 in the last over with Mitchell Starc taking 3-60. It capped a disappointing Chappell-Hadlee series for the visitors. Australia won the opening game by two wickets before a 113-run thrashing of the Black Caps in the second.

"For us to get to 260 after probably our slowest start ever was just amazing," said Finch, who was out for five in his 146th and last ODI. "Our bowling has been good, everyone has contributed."

"Been a fun ride, I've loved every bit of it," he added of his ODI career.

New Zealand started the chase confidently, racing to 49 before Sean Abbott temped Devon Conway (21) into a drive that Smith caught.

Cameron Green accounted for opener Finn Allen after a breezy 35, caught low by Josh Hazlewood to leave them 57-2 in the 12th over.

Some unplayable bowling starved New Zealand of runs with Alex Carey stumping Tom Latham for 10 off Adam Zampa's spin and Smith taking a comfortable catch to remove Daryl Mitchell (16) off Hazlewood.

When skipper Kane Williamson was run out for 27 after a comical mix up with Glenn Phillips they were in trouble at 112-5.

But a 61-run partnership between Phillips and Jimmy Neesham (36) then a 51-run stand with Mitchell Santner left them needing 46 from the last five overs and in the hunt.

Phillip's departure for 47 then Santner for 30 in the space of six balls, both caught near the boundary, ended any chance they had.

"Slightly improved performance but Australia really showed their quality again," said Williamson.

"We need to learn to adjust to conditions quicker and try to put the teams under pressure when we can."

STANDING OVATION

Williamson won the toss and sent Australia in and, after a moment's silence to mark the death of Queen Elizabeth II, Finch was given a guard of honour as he strode to the crease.

He survived a big shout for lbw on one but didn't last long, bowled by Tim Southee as he attempted a drive from the 13th ball he faced, walking off to a standing ovation.

It ended a career in which he made 5,406 runs at 38.89, hitting 17 centuries to leave him behind only Ricky Ponting (29), David Warner and Mark Waugh (both 18) in the Australian pecking order.

Finch will remain in charge of the Twenty20 side for the World Cup at home next month.

His long-time opening partner Warner was rested with Josh Inglis handed an opportunity that he failed to grab, caught behind off Trent Boult for 10.

It left Australia on 16-2 with a nervy Smith and Marnus Labuschagne facing 22 dot balls as they struggled to settle.

But they persevered and built a crucial 118-run partnership before Labuschagne mis-hit a pull shot and was out for 52, caught by Neesham off Boult.

Undeterred, Smith powered to his 12th ODI century off 127 balls, hitting 10 fours and a six before being bowled by Santner. Alex Carey added a composed unbeaten 42.

making 14 off 13 balls, caught by Bryony Smith off the bowling of Glenn, to leave India at 47 for two in the seventh over.

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SL beat Pak by 23 runs in 2022 Asia Cup T20 final

PTI ■ DUBAI

Dasun Shanaka-led Sri Lanka beat Pakistan by 23 runs in the final of 2022 Asia Cup T20 tournament which was played at Dubai International Stadium on Sunday.

Pakistan were bowled out for 147 runs in 20 overs in reply to 171-run target. The win on Sunday was Sri Lanka's sixth triumph in Asia Cup history.

Earlier, Pakistan pacers started with a bang before Hanuka Rajapaksa's brilliant 71 not out took Sri Lanka to a challenging 170 for 6.

It was a good toss to win for Babar Azam until Rajapaksa's calculated assault at the death saw 50 runs being scored off last 4 overs.

Young Naseem Shah (1/40 in 4 overs) and the uber cool Haris Rauf (3/29 in 4 overs) bowled with a lot of pace and fire extracting movement off the track as they broke the backbone of the Lankan batting within the Powerplay overs before Rajapaksa scored one of his finest fifties considering the situation that his team was in.

The spinners leg-spinner Shadab Khan (1/28 in 4 overs) maintained his prolific consistency that has been one of the hallmarks of Pakistan team in this tournament.

However, Rajapaksa (71 of 45 balls) and Wanindu Hasaranga (36 off 21 balls) added 58 quick runs after Sri Lanka were left gasping for breath at 58 for 5.



There was another 54 run stand with Chamika Karunaratne and Sri Lanka did cross the 160-run mark.

Shah, the 19-year-old pace sensation bowled one of the most lethal off-cutters seen in this tournament as it pitched back of length but moved in sharply, giving no time to in-form Kusal Mendis (0) to bring his bat

Shah, the 19-year-old pace sensation bowled one of the most lethal off-cutters seen in this tournament as it pitched back of length but moved in sharply, giving no time to in-form Kusal Mendis (0) to bring his bat

down. While Dhananjaya de Silva (28 off 21 balls) did hit some picturesque cover drives, there was no support literally from the other end.

Pathum Nissanka (8), got a fuller outswinger from Rauf, which he mistimed while Danushka Gunathilaka (1) got a nice outswinger (inswinger for left-hander) which was fast and full, pegging his stumps back.

Once the pacers dismissed three out of the top four batters, the pressure increased and De Silva offered a simple return catch to Iftikhar, who isn't even their regular spinner.

While pacers forced the Lankan batters with pace and movement, if any player, who could be blamed for atrocious shot selection would be Dasun Shanaka, who was clean bowled by Shadab trying to hoick a fuller delivery from the wrist spinner over cow corner.

However Rajapaksa with his all-round strokeplay did give Sri Lankan total lot of respectability. He hit six fours and three sixes and the flick off Naseem for a maximum was a treat for the eyes.

Max wins Italian GP

AP ■ MONZA

Max Verstappen won the Formula One Italian Grand Prix on Sunday to leave him in touching distance of his second straight Formula One title.

Championship leader Verstappen claimed his first win, or podium finish, at Monza after fighting from seventh on the grid to beat Charles Leclerc over the line on another difficult day for Ferrari.

The Red Bull driver is 116 points ahead of Leclerc in the drivers' standings after winning a race whose final six laps were run with the safety car after Daniel Ricciardo slid off the track.

"We had a great race, we

were quickest on every compound," said Verstappen.

With six races left, Verstappen can win the driver's crown at next month's Singapore GP.

The Monza crowd booed and whistled loudly as the cars came over the line as they were denied the chance to see their man Leclerc try to overtake dominant Verstappen, who won his fifth GP in a row.

George Russell of Mercedes rounded off the podium. Leclerc's teammate Carlos Sainz surged from 18th on the starting grid to fourth.

"It was really good on the tyres, it was really enjoyable to drive today," Verstappen said. "A great day for us. It took a bit of time, but finally we won it."



Harsh Gill wins WBC Asian Boxing Council title

PNS ■ GREATER NOIDA

India's Harsh Gill and Sung Jin Kwak from Korea. India's Harsh Gill won the World Boxing Council (WBC) - Asian Boxing Council Continental title contest against Sung Jin Kwak of Korea. The 8th edition of The Punch Boxing was hosted by Crowne Plaza Greater Noida on September 9.



West & North Zones advance to Duleep Trophy SF

PTI ■ CHENNAI/PUDUCHERRY

West Zone and North Zone secured semi-final berths in the Duleep Trophy by taking the first-innings lead in their matches against North East Zone and East Zone respectively.

While West obtained a massive 367-run lead over North East Zone at the M A Chidambaram Stadium and opted for batting practice on the fourth and final day on Sunday, North rode on a superb ton by debutant Yash Dhull (193) to overhaul East Zone's total. The Ajinkya Rahane-led West Zone were 268 for five when the match ended. Aith Sheth remained not out on 102 (101 balls, 10 fours, 1 six), and Shams Mulani fell for 97 (115 balls, 12 fours), as the match meandered to a draw.

North East bowlers did a lot better in the second innings and had their opponent three down for 49 and 65 for 4 before Mulani and Sheth came together for a 179-run partnership.

Medium-pacer Dippu Sangma (3 for 70) removed Het Patel (7), Rahul Tripathi (24) and Hardik Tamore (24) to keep the West batters in check.

In Puducherry, North,

resuming on overnight 433 for three, added a further 112 runs before being dismissed for 545. Himanshu Rana made 81 and captain Mandeep Singh hit a patient 63.

North Zone looked set for a huge total but the hard-working left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed came up with a five-wicket haul to restrict Mandeep Singh & Co.

Shahbaz Ahmed's scalps included Mandeep, Himanshu Rana, Nishant Sindhu. He ended the 131-run stand between Mandeep and Himanshu Rana which went a long way in helping East stop North's charge.

BRIEF SCORES

At Puducherry: East Zone 397 all out in 136.4 overs (Virat Singh 117) and 102 for 3 drew with North Zone 545 all out in 148.5 overs. (North took first-innings lead and qualified)

At Chennai: West Zone 590 for 2 in 123 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 228, Ajinkya Rahane 207 not out, Prithvi Shaw 113) and 268 for 5 in 64.3 overs (Ait Sheth 102 not out, Shams Mulani 97) drew with North East Zone 235 all out in 81.5 overs (Ankur Malik 81, Ashish Thapa 43). (West took first-innings lead and qualified).

England set 130 to win South Africa series

AP ■ LONDON

England were set a target of 130 to win the third Test against South Africa, and with it the series, at The Oval on Sunday.

South Africa were dismissed for 169 -- the highest total so far of a low-scoring match - in their second innings on the fourth day, with no Proteas batsman making more than captain Dean Elgar's 36.

England skipper Ben Stokes led the hosts' attack with 3-39, while Stuart Broad took 3-45.

Ollie Robinson's return of 2-40 in 15 overs meant the Sussex seamer had taken 51 wickets in his 11 career Tests at a miserly average of 19.80.

Only one England bowler since the end of the Second World War has taken more wickets at a better average -- express quick Frank Tyson, whose 76 Test wickets cost just 18.56 apiece.

Victory would mean England had won six of their seven Tests since a new leadership duo of Stokes and coach



Brendon McCullum took charge at the start of this season.

Earlier at lunch, South Africa captain Dean Elgar led from the front as the tourists built a slender lead.

The Proteas were 70-1 in their second innings, 30 runs ahead, at lunch on

the fourth day of this curtailed match. Elgar, South Africa's most experienced batsman, was 35 not out and Keegan Petersen was unbeaten on seven after England captain Ben Stokes struck with just his third delivery of the match to remove Sarel Erwee.

In a three-match series level at 1-1, South Africa have so far managed just one individual fifty -- Erwee's 73 in their innings and 12-run win in the first Test at Lord's.

But in the 35-year-old Elgar they have a batsman who has scored nearly 5,000 runs in 79 Tests, including 13 hundreds, at an average just shy of 40. That experience was on display as he took advantage of anything short and wide, rather than risk a drive that might have led to an edge to a packed slip cordon, while twice cutting Anderson for four through a vacant point region.

Erwee made 26 during a sound opening stand of 58 with his skipper as the sun started to shine in south London.

But Erwee was undone when pace-

man Stokes brought him forward with a ball that swung late to find the outside edge. Joe Root, diving forward at first slip, held a fine catch.

Earlier, Marco Jansen took 5-35 in 12.2 overs, his maiden five-wicket haul in Test cricket, as South Africa restricted England to a first-innings lead of 40 runs.

England, resuming on their overnight 154-7, lost their last three wickets in 16 legal balls for the addition of just four runs. They were dismissed for 158 in reply to South Africa's 118.

Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada, who struck twice on Sunday to remove tailenders Ollie Robinson and Jack Leach, took 4-81 in 13 overs.

Jansen had been unlucky to be dropped from the South Africa side that lost the second Test by an innings and 85 runs at Old Trafford.

But at the Oval he has led the way for the Proteas, top-scoring with 30 in their meagre first innings before starting with the ball.