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CAN INDIA REALISE ITS ECONOMIC POTENTIAL?

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NEW DELHI, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 19, 2022: PAGES 12 ₹3



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Raunchy video leak rocks Chandigarh University

Female student, boyfriend at centre of row arrested

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Anguished and fuming, slogan-raising students laid siege to the Chandigarh University in Mohali district as a raunchy video scandal rocked the campus on Sunday, amidst unsubstantiated rumours of suicide attempts by eight hostlers after they, along with some 50 others, were allegedly filmed while taking a bath by a fellow student. The siege that began late on Saturday night soon after the surfacing of "leaked objectionable videos" continued till late on Sunday evening, even as the police-district administration and the varsity management made ineffective attempts to pacify hundreds of pushing and jostling students demanding that the varsity Vice-Chancellor (V-C) come forward to hold talks with them.

The protests continued even as the management and the Punjab Police assured them that the accused girl, who was promptly arrested by the police, had only shared her personal raunchy video with a male friend in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. The youth was also arrested for sharing the "objectionable videos" of girl students on social media. His arrest



Police talking to the protesting students and assuring them of action against the accused. PTI

came after the Punjab Police shared his mobile number, which was then tracked by the Shimla police and eventually led to his arrest from near his house in Rohru. Till the filing of this report, the accused was being detained by Shimla police, and would be handed over to the Punjab Police, which had already sent two police teams to the hill State.

However, the claim by the cops that only one girl's video was leaked by her boyfriend on social media was rejected by the irate students, who described it as a "cover up". Even as Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann ordered a probe into the matter, the university authorities claimed that no such incident took place. **Continued on Page 2**



Students on a dharna outside their university in Punjab. PTI

Girl only shared her video, no suicide bid: Cops

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

The Mohali district police chief Vivek Sheel Soni on Sunday said that the woman student, accused in the incident, had shared "only her own videos" with her male friend in Shimla, and the police did not find videos of other girls from her mobile.

At the same time, the SSP stated that social media posts about some students attempting suicide are false.

"One student suffered from an anxiety attack," he said.

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Bhagwant orders probe

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Sunday ordered a high-level probe into the "unfortunate" incident of female students' "objectionable video leak", while promising to take "severest of severe" action in the matter.

"Anyone found guilty will not be spared and severest of severe action will be taken against the perpetrators of this heinous crime," said Mann, who is yet to return from his Germany visit. Already, Mohali police have registered an FIR in the case at Gharuan police

station under Section 354-C (viewing and /or capturing image of a girl or woman going about her private acts where she thinks no one is watching her) of the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act and have arrested the accused female student of the Chandigarh University studying in the first year of a postgraduate course.

Stating that the daughters are our dignity and pride, Mann said: "I am upset to learn about the entire matter and I have asked the District Administration to undertake an in-depth enquiry about the incident."

'30 Indians trapped in Myanmar'

MEA: 30 brought back, others still hostage after being lured on vows of jobs in Thailand by gang

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

At least 30 Indians are reportedly trapped in Myanmar and are being held hostage there after an international gang offered them jobs in Thailand and instead took them to Myanmar. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has warned Indians to be wary of international job rackets.

In all, 60 Indians were duped and taken to Myanmar. While half of them are back in India, at least 30 Indians are still being held hostage there. Efforts are on to bring them back safely. MEA sources said here on Sunday that the trapped Indians are now in the area of Myawaddy where ethnic armed groups have control and the zone is not in the Myanmar Government's jurisdiction. The military junta rules Myanmar.

They also said the Indian Government has, so far, managed to bring out 30 Indian nationals from that area. The Indian Embassy in Yangon is working with the Government of Myanmar to rescue the remaining 30 Indian nationals kept hostage with the ethnic groups. Myawaddy area is in

southeastern Myanmar's Kayin state bordering Thailand

The Indian Government is also trying to rescue its citizens through various contacts among the business community, sources said, adding efforts are on to bring out all the Indians as soon as possible.

On July 5, the Indian Mission issued an advisory cautioning against unscrupulous elements offering jobs. "The mission has observed in the recent past that some IT companies engaged in digital scamming/forged crypto activities located in remote eastern border areas of Myanmar are recruiting Indian workers from different places through their recruiting agents on the pretext of potential employment opportunities in the IT sector," it said.

After initial recruitment, the Mission said, Indian workers are taken to Myanmar illegally without proper documentation leading to their "entrapment".

"In view of the above, Indian nationals are hereby requested to exercise due caution and verify the antecedents of the recruiting agents. It is advisable to have all requisite information (job description, company details, location, employment contract, etc.) before accepting any employment that has been offered," it said.

Myanmar is one of India's strategic neighbours and it shares a 1,640-km-long border with a number of northeastern states including Nagaland and Manipur.

CAPSULE

BAJRANG PUNIA BAGS BRONZE IN BELGRADE

Belgrade: Ace grappler Bajrang Punia became the only Indian to claim four medals at the World Wrestling Championships by clinching a bronze in the current edition, here on Sunday. Bajrang, who won a bronze in last year's Tokyo Olympics, eked out a close 11-9 win on points over Sebastian C Rivera of Puerto Rico in one of the bronze medal bouts.

DELHI COPS TO GRILL JACQUELINE AGAIN

New Delhi: Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez has been summoned for questioning on Monday by Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing in connection with an extortion case linked to alleged conman Suresh Chandrashekar, officials said. This is the second time that she has been called for questioning by Delhi Police for her alleged role in the case, they said.

DIRECT TAX KITTY GROWS 30% TO ₹8.36 LAKH CR

New Delhi: Gross direct tax collections grew 30 per cent to Rs 8.36 lakh crore till September 17 of current fiscal year on higher advance tax mop-up buoyed by the economic revival post-pandemic, the Finance Ministry said on Sunday. After adjusting for refunds amounting to Rs 1.35 lakh crore, net direct tax kitty grew 23 per cent to Rs 7 lakh crore.

4 DETAINED IN NIA RAIDS AGAINST PFI IN 40 PLACES

New Delhi: The NIA on Sunday searched 40 places in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in connection with a case against the Popular Front of India for allegedly running training camps to commit terror acts and promote enmity between groups on the basis of religion, an official said. **P4**

China doing mass DNA tests in Tibet

Bio-database being made to monitor Tibetans: Report

ANI ■ NEW DELHI

China's oppression of Tibet is not hidden from anyone and the Communist nation is now carrying out mass DNA testing to create a biological database of people to monitor them. A recent report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) mentioned that there is an arbitrary collection of DNA from residents in several towns and villages throughout Tibet and the so-called Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) in particular, reported *Tibet Press*.

These developments clearly indicate that China, confident of its technological surveillance

is moving into the next phase of its repressive and authoritative policy which is of Bio-Security.

The CCP has implemented Bio-Security as an agency to control the population, specifically those in the occupied regions of Tibet, East Turkistan and Southern Mongolia.

Earlier, China used biological means to sterilise thousands of Uyghur Muslims, which has shown horrific results. And the recent mass DNA collection drive occurring in Tibet where HRW identified drives in 14 distinct localities across seven prefectural-level areas indicate how wide this project. With the forthcoming 20th National People's Congress, one can conclude that President Xi Jinping wants to have a smooth meeting that will eventually see him elected as the President for an unprecedented 3rd term, said *Tibet Press*. **Contd on Page 2**

AAP unveils 6-point plan to make India No.1

Kejriwal's agenda to end poverty, give healthcare, jobs, security to all

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With an eye on its national expansion plan ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday unveiled a six-point agenda to "make India the number one country in the world."

The six-point agenda includes better healthcare facilities for all, five years to alleviate poverty in India, employment for every youth, security and equal opportunity for women, world-class infrastructure and full prices for crops for farmers.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai at the AAP's national convention, in New Delhi on Sunday. RANJAN DIMRI/PIONEER

Addressing the party's first-ever 'Rashtriya Janpratinidhi Sammelan', at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, Kejriwal said India cannot

become number one by delivering extensive speeches on foreign lands. "You will have to give everyone excellent education, healthcare, employment,

ensure safety of women, fair price for crops to make India number one," he said while unveiling the AAP's agenda. **Continued on Page 2**

NSCN(IM) to resume peace talks: Zeliang

Parleys with Centre were stalled in May

PTI ■ DIMAPUR

Nagaland's United Democratic Alliance Chairman T R Zeliang claimed that the National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) has agreed to resume peace talks with the Centre to try to resolve irritants to the Naga peace talks. Zeliang, who is also the co-chairman of the State Government's core committee on the Naga political issue, said an NSCN-IM delegation is likely to leave for Delhi on Monday. Negotiations between the Centre and the National



United Democratic Alliance Chairman TR Zeliang

Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) have been stalled since May.

A two-hour-long meeting among members of the core committee and representatives of the NSCN-IM was held on Saturday in Chumoukedima.

The meeting was convened after the Centre asked the core panel headed by Chief Minister Nephthiu Rio to convince the outfit to come forward to resume the peace talks and ink a final solution.

Continued on Page 2

PM Modi's NCC card, Ram temple models among most sought-after picks at e-auction

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's National Cadet Corps (NCC) alumni card, multiple models of the upcoming Ram temple in Ayodhya, and a statue of the mascot of the recently held Chess Olympiad in Chennai are among the most sought-after items at an online auction of mementos gifted to Modi that kicked off on the weekend.

Items finding demand from the online bidders also include a model statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Commonwealth Games sporting memorabilia.

The auction is being held on the website www.pmmementos.gov.in, which has one section that lists items under

the heading "Most Participated Auction". A memento given by the NCC in the form of an alumni card displaying Modi's photograph, "Life Member", the year 2021, and "Directorate: Guj, DD & DNH" is among these sought-after items.

Until about 8.30 P.M. on Sunday, the alumni card had received over 30 bids.

Other items in this category include the least expensive piece with the base price of ₹100.

A miniature image of Lord Ganesha standing beneath a gold-bedecked canopy while donning a 'yajnopavita' and wearing necklaces had received 33 bids by 8.30 PM on Sunday with a quote price of ₹6,200.

Yet another statue of Lord Ganesha had quote price of ₹7,200 against the base price of

₹1,100.

Then there is a metal 'shankh' (conch) which had 338 bidders with the last quoted price of ₹32,000 by 8.30 PM on Sunday. With a base price of ₹8,600, it is also most in demand in the auction list.

Other most participated items include a trident (trishul), statue of Tirupati Balaji Maharaj (sculpture) which has a base price of ₹21,600 but has already reached an auction price of ₹1,91,000. So far 31 bidders have shown interest in it.

Metallic swords and a metallic mace, a metallic 'shankh' a trident, and a replica of Tirupati Balaji Maharaj's wooden idol, are also in the 'Most Participated Auction' category. **Continued on Page 2**

Policemen pose as insurance agents, solve 25-yr-old murder

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Not willing to give up, Delhi Police cracked a 25-year-old murder case after policemen went undercover for months as life insurance agents to trace the suspect. The long quest for the murderer began after Kishan Lal, a resident of Tughlaqabad area of Delhi, was stabbed to death on a cold February night in 1997 and the killer was untraceable.

Lal, who worked odd jobs, had left behind his wife Sunita, who was pregnant with their first child at the time. Litigation started in the case and the Patiala House Court declared absconding suspect Ramu, a daily-wage earner, as a proclaimed offender. He was living in the same neighbourhood as Lal and had absconded after the murder.

His case file from the pre-digital era continued to gather dust for over two decades until a team of the Delhi Police's North District, which is trained to handle old cases, laid its hands on it in August 2021.

A year later, Sunita got a call from the Delhi Police and was asked to reach Lucknow immediately.

The Delhi Police had caught hold of a 50-year-old man, whom they believed was her husband's killer. They wanted her to confirm the identity of the suspect. Sunita, who was accompanied by her son Sunny (24), confirmed to the police that the man was Ramu before she fainted.

"The woman had lost all hopes of getting justice and even closed doors on our police team that reached out to her last year when they started working on this old case. But it was understandable on her part since a lot of time had lapsed," Deputy Commissioner of Police (North District) Sagar Singh Kalsi said.



The officer heaped praise on the four-member team for cracking the quarter-century-old case, noting that it had no eyewitnesses of the murder, no photographs of the accused or clue of his whereabouts. The team had Sub-Inspector Yogender Singh, Head-Constables Puneet Malik and Omprakash Dagar under

Inspector Surrender Singh with Assistant Commissioner of Police (Operations) Dharmender Kumar as their guide, Kalsi said.

"It was pretty much a wild goose chase for the team where they were hoping to get one substantial clue for several months. During the period, the team went undercover on sev-

eral occasions for investigation within Delhi and in Uttar Pradesh," the DCP said.

The team posed as life insurance agents when it went to Uttam Nagar in Delhi, where they had traced a relative of Ramu on the pretext of helping them with money for their deceased kin, Kalsi said.

The team also managed to reach Khanpur village in district Farrukhabad of Uttar Pradesh under the same guise when it met relatives of Ramu, he said. It was in Farrukhabad that the police chanced upon a mobile number belonging to Aakash, the son of Ramu. Further efforts led the police team to a Facebook account of Aakash through which he was traced in Lucknow's Kapurthala area, the officer said.

The police met Aakash and enquired the whereabouts of his father Ramu, who now lived under the name of Ashok Yadav. **Continued on Page 2**

Govt ready for debate on all issues in House: Yogi

All-party meet held on eve of Monsoon session

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana, on the eve of the Monsoon session, presided over a meeting of all political parties and sought their cooperation for the smooth conduct of the proceedings of the House.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also joined the meeting.

Leaders of all the Opposition parties assured the Speaker to extend their cooperation in the smooth conduct of the proceedings of the House.

Chief Minister Adityanath assured that the Government was ready for debate on all issues and would extend its cooperation to the Opposition parties. He said it was the duty of the elected representatives to fulfill the aspirations of the people they represented.

"It would add to the dignity of the House and the mem-



bers if they concentrate their attention on addressing the issues of the people," the chief minister said and added, "The people of the state have elected the members of the House with great expectations and UP Assembly is also the largest state assembly of the country."

Speaker Mahana, seeking the cooperation of the opposition leaders, said, "UP being the largest state assembly is the role model for the rest of the states." He said positive dialogue and debate on issues of the people strengthened the spirit of democracy. The speaker urged the leaders of all opposition parties to follow the principles of parliamentary dignity while raising their issues in the assembly.

Earlier, addressing the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee of the

House, Mahana said the first day of the session would be adjourned after expressing condolence on the death of the sitting members of the House.

On September 20, the House will felicitate the members whose birthday is falling on September 20. On September 22, after the Question Hour, the entire day will be reserved for debate on issues to be raised by the women members of the House. The UP Assembly has 47 women MLAs.

Mahana said this was an innovative idea and UP Assembly was the first assembly to reserve a day of the session for women members only.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna said the government would seriously consider all the issues to be raised by the opposition parties during the session.

He said the government was committed to positive action on the issues to be raised by the opposition parties. He also sought the cooperation of the opposition parties for the peaceful conduct of the proceedings of the House during the session.

Akhilesh to lead SP march to Vidhan Bhawan today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav will lead a march from the State office of the party at Vikramaditya Marg to Vidhan Bhawan on the first day of the Monsoon session of the State legislature on Monday.

All the MLAs and MLCs of SP will gather at the state office of the party at 9 am and march towards Vidhan Bhawan at 9:45 am.

SP spokesman Rajendra Chaudhary said the MLAs and MLCs would march via Raj Bhawan and reach the Gandhi statue at Hazratganj and enter the Vidhan Bhawan from gate number 1.

The MLAs will carry placards bearing slogans on issues of unemployment, inflation, crime against women, deterioration of law and order, poor state of public health system and problems of the youth and farmers. Chaudhary said the party would forcefully raise the issues faced by the common people.

He alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party government had unleashed a reign of terror against the opposition



party leaders and the government was working with vendetta against opposition.

He alleged that the law and order had collapsed in the state with sharp rise in incidents of murder, loot and dacoity, rape and other crimes against women.

He charged that social harmony was in danger as the BJP was pursuing politics of hate and division.

The SP legislators will march to Vidhan Bhawan to protest against the alleged poor law and order situation, rising inflation and unemployment. The march will also attempt to draw attention towards issues concerning the youths, farmers and women.

An announcement in this regard was made by the party's chief whip and former minister Manoj Pandey at the SP headquarters here on September 14.

Another minor raped, murdered in UP; one held

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Attack on the modesty of A minors and killing them to conceal the crime continued unabated in the State with fresh case of rape and murder being reported from Budaun on Sunday. The police once again reacted promptly and arrested the accused within a few hours of the recovery of the body of the girl. According to reports, the body of a missing 15-year-old girl was found by the police near a railway station in Budaun district. The teenager from a village under Faizganj Behta police station of the district had gone to the Asafpur railway station on Saturday evening after which she went missing and later her body was found by the police. The body was sent for autopsy and a case was registered by the police. The girl's family alleged that she was raped and then murdered. The family also questioned the police investigation as the cops initially refused to register a case of rape and murder and said that they would wait for the post-mortem report.

The police said that on Sunday morning, on the basis of evidence collected from the villagers, they picked up Vikas Yadav, a resident of the same locality, and on being grilled, he confessed to the crime.

Policemen pose as insurance agents, solve...

From Page 1

He told the team that he has not met his father in a long time and only knows he now runs an e-rickshaw for a living in the Jankipuram area of Lucknow.

"This happened recently and the case that was progressing slowly for almost a year suddenly caught pace. The police team, which was undercover, suspected that the information that someone has been inquiring about him might reach Ramu and he may again go into hiding," DCP Kalsi said.

Hot on the killer's pursuit, the police team opted for the guise of agents of an e-rickshaw company and contacted several drivers in the Jankipuram area. They interacted with them on the pretext of providing them subsidies on new e-rickshaw under a central government initiative.

"During one such interaction, an e-rickshaw driver led them to Ashok Yadav (Ramu), who was staying near a railway station on September 14. He was apprehended for questioning; he first denied being Ramu or having ever lived in Delhi," the officer said.

Delhi doctors hold bicycle rally in city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Medical Organization (NMO), a medico-social organization of qualified doctors and students organised an annual event cycle rally from UCMS to Dr RML Hospital via MAMC, LHMC and NMO office in the heart of the national Capital on Sunday morning. Over 200 students and doctors participated in the event.

"This is our annual health event aiming to bring together our members as well as inculcate a healthy lifestyle in them. There are many benefits of cycling like it help increase muscular strength and flexibility, decrease stress levels, improve posture and decrease body fat levels, said Dr Sarvesh Pandey an Orthopedician and Vice president of the RML Resident Doctors Association. Chief guests at the event were Dr Aruna Vanikar (President UG Board, NMC) in UCMS, Dr PN Pandey (Director and Prof and Head of Department of Neurosurgery, MAMC), Dr Virender Kumar, (Director Professor , Paediatrics, Director LHMC) and SP Singh, Member of Parliament.

China doing mass DNA tests in...

From Page 1

As a result, it is quite clear that the ultimate goal of the recent revealed mass DNA collection drive without the consent of Tibetans, is to keep the Tibetans busy and engaged so that they, along with the millions of Chinese who continue to be unhappy and resent the communist government in its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic with its zero-covid policy would not come together and form a united entity protesting against the regime.

Tibet under Chinese occupation has been repressed since 1949 when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established.

Yet even with the naked eye, one can witness how since the 7th Tibet Work Forum, which was held from August 29-30, 2020 - the level of repression and oppression has drastically

increased and is at an unprecedented rate currently, reported Tibet Press.

However, the collection of genetic material is not new to China as its ministry of public security runs the world's largest forensic DNA database, which probably contains more than 100m profiles. This activity involves gathering samples from criminal suspects or victims of crime, similar to what western countries do.

But since 2017 Beijing under the leadership of Xi Jinping has transformed the functioning of this activity and launched a campaign to collect DNA from 10 per cent of all Chinese men with the sole purpose to trace a man's male relative. This move was decried by several activists as they saw it as a means through which perceived troublemakers would be punished and threatened by

involving his parents and family.

Such an intention and ploy were a functioning modus operandi by Beijing, especially in the occupied regions.

For Tibetans, it was common knowledge that if you have family and links in Tibet you must be apolitical even if you are personally far away from the direct clutches of Beijing's authoritarian rule. The reason is that your family members were immediately questioned, threatened and even sentenced due to your actions that occurs far beyond the jurisdiction of Beijing, reported Tibet Press.

In 2018, a former Tibetan political prisoner, Tenzin Woesser who crossed the Himalayas and sought refuge was subject to mental torture personally and saw physical violence acted upon his mother

in Tibet by the Chinese authorities. For more than a fortnight his mother was forcefully held in detention and demanded that her son returns to Tibet.

This is just one of many incidents whereby not only Tibetans but those under the current Chinese Communist Party (CCP) come across in their day-to-day life, reported Tibet Press.

Whether it is Tibet, East Turkistan (Xinjiang) or South Mongolia, there have been several reports related to China's coercion and frequent announcements about new laws and regulations to control the masses.

Such blatant actions including such Bio-Security measures which totally disregard the core of humanity that all humans possess, call for united actions against China.

PM Modi's NCC card, Ram temple models among most sought after...

From Page 1

"Tirupati Balaji is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Lord Balaji is shown as having a 'tilaka' on his forehead, a 'shakha' (conch) on his left shoulder, a 'chakra' (disc) on his right shoulder, Bhudevi (Goddess of the Earth), and Sridevi (Goddess of Wealth) at his heart. His right hand is in Abhaya mudra while the left rests on his waist," reads the description on the auction website.

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan had presented it to Prime Minister Modi.

The intricately detailed metallic "shankh" is an exquisite item that is housed in a red velvet box. "The embossed conch shell depicts Lord Vishnu resting on Sheshnag, with Goddess Lakshmi masaging his feet. The upper

portion of the shell is decorated with floral motifs. Vishnu is shown holding his attributes such as the mace, the lotus, and the conch shell while his fourth hand rests on his thigh," reads its description. It measures 10 cm in length, weighs 1150 g, and has received over 38 bids as of 8.30 p.m on Sunday.

With great fanfare, India recently hosted the FIDE Chess Olympiad in Chennai. Thambi, a chess knight, was its official logo. A statue depicting the official logo and mascot of the 2022 Chess Olympiad in Chennai is also among the most desired items in the auction

"It is a chess knight named Thambi and designed in the traditional Tamil attire, saying vanakkam (with folded hands). The name is a symbol of brotherhood, and it indicates that we all belong to one fraternity," reads its description on the website.

The "Most Participated Auction" category also includes a mace, an ornate sword, a metallic statue of Ashok Stambh, and a Nataraja statue.

The auction also includes a gold-plated miniature sculpture of an elephant with its trunk raised upwards, and a wooden chess board with 32 brass chess pieces kept inside a briefcase.

"MODIAGAINPM", a statue of PM Modi giving a speech, is also in demand. It is a framed photo of a mission statement written in English, surrounded by floral borders on each side, with the first letters of each line forming the phrase "MODIAGAINPM".

A white T-shirt autographed by India's men's

hockey team, which won a silver medal at the Commonwealth Games 2022, is also in that category, with a starting price of Rs 3 lakh, according to the auction website. On Saturday, G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Culture, had told the media that these items had been put up for public auction in 2019 with open bidding, 1,805 gifts were put up for bid in the first round of the auction at the time while 2,772 items were in the second round. In September 2021, there was an online auction with 1,348 items up for grabs.

In 2022, 1,200 gifts and souvenirs have been made available for purchase through an online auction. The souvenirs are on display in New Delhi's National Gallery of Modern Art besides being viewable on the website.

Girl only shared her video, no suicide bid...

From Page 1

"I want to make it clear that we did not get any video of other women (from the accused mobile)...We are also not giving a clean chit to anyone. The prime accused has been arrested...The student said she only recorded her own video. And in our investigation also, we have found out that there is one video. Electronic devices and mobile phones have been seized and will be sent for forensic examination," said Mohali Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Soni, while addressing the media. Soni also claimed that the videos never went viral.

"Other girls in the hostel saw the accused shooting her own video which she sent to her boyfriend in Shimla. They panicked and thought she shot the videos of all others," he said, adding that if a girl and a boy share videos with each other, it is no offence.

Regarding the video clip that shows the hostel warden asking the accused girl about filming other girls, the SSP said: "The warden was asking the accused to clear the air on the number and kind of videos she had made."

At the same time, the SSP stated that social media posts about some students attempt-

ing suicide are false. "One student suffered from an anxiety attack," he said.

Joining in, Mohali Deputy Commissioner Amit Talwar also claimed that no student had attempted suicide during the protests that erupted on late Saturday night. "But some girls had fainted and were provided medical assistance," he said.

Later, as the students continued their protest at the campus till late Sunday evening, Chandigarh University's vice-chancellor Satnam Singh Sandhu paraded some of the girl students, alleged to have attempted suicide, to claim that no suicide attempt was made and she had just fainted. Kharar police have already arrested the accused girl student under section 66E (violation of privacy) - capturing, transmitting images) of the IT Act and 354C (voyeurism) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

AAP unveils 6-point plan to make India...

From Page 1

The meet was attended by all 62 AAP MLAs from Delhi, 92 MLAs from Punjab, two MLAs from Goa, and 10 Rajya Sabha MPs from Delhi and Punjab.

The AAP convener exuberated confidence in AAP's nationwide expansion saying, "Public loves our politics of honesty, free education, healthcare and welfare, after Delhi & Punjab their love will make us win Gujarat." Banking on the party's credentials, he stated, "Today AAP has a robust country-wide organisation with 1,446 elected representatives across 20 States."

Kejriwal said the AAP is being discussed all over Gujarat, despite the mainstream media "being threatened against giving any coverage to the party" as social

media has provided people with access to information.

"The AAP is just a 10-year-old party. It is fighting with powerful forces and killing many devils like corruption and price rise just the way Kanha (Lord Krishna) killed many devils when he was young," he said.

The national conclave was held amid a fierce faceoff between the Kejriwal-led party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the run up to the Assembly polls in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh later this year. Besides MPs and MLAs, more than 1,400 elected representatives in urban local bodies and panchayats from across 20 States have come to participate in the party's "Rashtriya Janpratinidhi Sammelan".

Launching a blistering attack on Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and the BJP, Kejriwal on Sunday accused them of trying to "crush" the AAP in the name of fighting corruption as they feared a defeat in Gujarat polls.

Kejriwal also alleged that the Modi Government has been trying to frame his party Ministers and leaders in false corruption cases as the BJP is "not able to digest the growing popularity of the AAP in Gujarat".

NSCN(IM) to resume...

From Page 1

The union government has been holding two separate parleys with the NSCN(IM) since 1997 and the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) comprising seven organisations since 2017.

The Centre signed a framework agreement with the NSCN(IM) on August 3, 2015, and also entered into an agreed position with NNPGs in December 2017.

On NSCN-IM discontinuing negotiations since May, Zeliang said, "They are not

happy with interlocutor A K Mishra over the omission of some of the politically important points, which were included in the formulation paper submitted by former interlocutor NN Ravi."

The NSCN-IM has told the core committee that the outfit would resume peace talks if "it is based on the framework agreement and on the formulation papers submitted by Ravi and the Centre's current interlocutor A K Mishra", the UDA chairman said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all concerned that my clients Sh. Prateek Mehta & Sh. Achal Mehta, both are sons of Sh. Rajendra Singh Mehta, both R/o D-119, 3rd Floor, Preet Vihar, Delhi-110092 (hereinafter called as Lessor)

Reliance Communication Ltd., through its power of attorney holder Sh. A. Mohan (hereinafter called Lessee), having its officials address Reliance Intratel Ltd., the presidency building, Tower B, 5th Floor, Sector 14, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001.

The Lessor had agreed to give the aforesaid premises (area on the terrace approx 800 sq. ft. given on rent as per Lease Deed) on lease to the lessee, with the monthly rent of Rs.9,000/- per month. The last rental payment made by the lessee was on 22nd day of March 2021, thus rental due amount pending at the lessee site since March 2021.

The Lessor shall be entitled to terminate lessee lease agreement with one month notice. The Lessor is giving a last opportunity to lessee to pay all the arrear rental amount within 45 days thereafter, lessor shall have right to dispose of the equipments etc., and recover the due amount from the date of this Public Notice.

Copy kept in my office for further necessary action.
Rajesh Kumar (Advocate)
Supreme Court of India
SCBA No.: K/1381
Off: Chamber No. 19, R.K. Garge Lane, Supreme Court Building, New Delhi-110001, Mob. 8851180713

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all concerned that my client Sh. Rajender Singh Mehta S/o Sh. J.S. Mehta, R/o D-119, 3rd Floor, Preet Vihar, Delhi-110092 (hereinafter called as first party)

Reliance Communication Ltd., through its power of attorney holder Sh. A. Mohan (hereinafter called second party), having its officials address Reliance Intratel Ltd., the presidency building, Tower B, 5th Floor, Sector 14, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001.

The first party engage in the business of maintenance of aforesaid lease premises the second party shall pay to the first party Rs.300/- per month as a maintenance charges, the said amount has not been paid since March 2021, the first party is giving last opportunity to the second party to pay all the dues within 30 days from the date of this Publication Notice. In case second party fails to pay within 30 days then the first party has right and entitlement to dispose off all equipments installed in the aforesaid premises and collect the dues amount.

Copy kept in my office for further necessary action.

Rajesh Kumar (Advocate)
Supreme Court of India
SCBA No.: K/1381
Off: Chamber No. 19, R.K. Garge Lane, Supreme Court Building, New Delhi-110001, Mob. 8851180713

Raunchy video leak rocks...

From Page 1

In an official statement, the private university claimed that the accused, who was arrested on Saturday night, shared her personal video with her boyfriend, while denying the reports that 60 such videos went viral.

The state's Additional Director General of Police Gurpreet Deo also visited the university campus, along with other senior officials, to take stock, and to reassure students that they had found only videos of the arrested woman.

Tensions prevailed on late Saturday night as the students came out of their hostel rooms to hold a protest,

and later videos of "unconscious" girls being evacuated flooded social media, amid claims that many of them had committed suicide.

On Sunday, Mohali Deputy Commissioner Amit Talwar clarified that the suicide claims had no truth, and some girls had just fainted and were provided medical assistance.

The accused student, as per the FIR, has been booked under Section 66-E of the IT Act and 354-C of the IPC, around 3 pm on Saturday, after six girls approached their hostel warden to complain that they suspected their fellow student of filming them, while taking bath. The Hostel

manager told the police that she called the accused and checked her cellphone but did not find any videos of other girls.

As the students started protests again on Sunday evening, the University has suspended classes for two days. Attempts were made to pacify the protesting students by Mohali SSP Vivek Sheel Soni and DC Talwar, but the students demanded that varsity Vice-Chancellor Satnam Singh Sadhu should come forward to hold talks. At the time of filing the report, Sandhu was addressing the students, who were protesting outside the office of Dean, Student Welfare (DSW).

AAP passes resolution against ‘BJP’s Operation Lotus’

Thousands of crores looted from people to run Operation Lotus, money used to purchase MLAs, says Sanjay

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP’s ‘Rashtriya Janpratinidhi Sammelan’ on Sunday passed resolutions which include Make India No 1 initiative and against Operation Lotus. The resolution against Operation Lotus was tabled by AAP Rajya Sabha MP, Sanjay Singh while AAP leader, Gopal Rai tabled a resolution seeking support and commitment for AAP National Convener, Arvind Kejriwal’s Make India No 1 initiative.

During the AAP first-ever national conclave, Singh alleged that thousands of crores of rupees have been looted from the people to run Operation Lotus. “This money was used to purchase Members of Legislative Assemblies of several States across the nation. Operation Lotus is the biggest cause of inflation in India.”

Funds are collected by imposing high taxes on the poor, which the BJP then uses to purchase MLAs. Those responsible for Operation Lotus are traitors to the nation. They should be charged with sedition and sentenced to life imprisonment,” said Singh.

Taking a dig at BJP, Singh said that BJP got flustered by seeing such a huge outpour of elected representatives at the conclave. “It was very obvious for them to get stressed.”

However, instead of answering the issues and questions in the conference, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra made baseless and false claims in his Press conference,” said Singh. “I have a few specific questions for him. These questions might be painful for him and his party

but the country should know the answers to these questions. How much money did the BJP spent to buy 285 MLAs across the country? It is all black money amassed through corruption.

How much money did they pay to each MLA or what post they offered to them? They gave Rs 25-50 crores to each MLA and their name has changed from Bhartiya Janta Party to Bhartiya Khokha Party. From where did they get the money to kidnap the MLAs and topple the state governments?,”

Photo by Ranjan Dimri



said Singh. Meanwhile, Rai, reading out the resolution, said that the Aam Aadmi Party, in its first Rashtriya Janpratinidhi Sammelan, takes a pledge to make India the number one country in the world.

Every Indian wants India to be counted among the richest countries in the world. Every Indian wants India to become the most powerful nation. Every Indian wants India to be the best



Photo by Ranjan Dimri

Raghav appointed AAP co-incharge for poll-bound Guj

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEWDELHI

The AAP announced on Sunday the appointment of Raghav Chadha, a Rajya Sabha MP, as co-incharge of the party’s unit in Gujarat, where Assembly elections are scheduled for this year.

Chadha has been given more responsibilities following his outstanding performance in Punjab earlier this year, where the AAP won a commanding 79 per cent majority by capturing 92 of 117 seats.

The AAP is portraying itself to be a key challenger of the BJP in Gujarat, which has been ruling the State for 27 years. As co-incharge, Chadha will be supervising the party’s political and election affairs in the state. “Intensifying its cam-



paigns in poll-bound Gujarat, the Aam Aadmi Party has appointed Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha as the Co-Incharge of the state unit,” AAP said in a statement.

Chadha thanked party chief Kejriwal in a tweet saying he will “sacrifice” his life to fulfil his duties. “Thank you

Sisodia criticises Cong, BJP

NEW DELHI: Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday took a jibe at the Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address at the party’s national conclave saying that PM Modi is reaping the benefits of the crops sown by the senior BJP leaders for the past more than 50 years.

Lambasting the Congress and the BJP, the AAP leader said that both these two parties used to taunt the AAP in 2012 and call it a fourth number party. “Now the AAP is a party of 1500 elected representatives across India,” he said. Sisodia

said that today, two models of politics exist in the country. The first model is wherein all party members are busy in making only one person No.1 and that person’s motive is to make his friends No. 1 in the world.

On the other hand, there is the AAP and CM Arvind Kejriwal who has only one dream in his eyes to make India the No. 1 country in the world.” “Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is only leader who is sowing the seeds to make India No.1. We shouldn’t believe that India has become a developed country by listening to speech-

es or claims of any leader. Until children are taught in schools that India has become a developed country, we must not believe that India has become a developed country, and keep working hard to fulfil this dream,” Sisodia said.

He said that when the AAP was formed in 2012, the BJP-Congress used to taunt us several times, and asked “What is AAP? It is just a four member party. But those people should now come and see that the Party has 1500 elected representatives across the country and has a government in two states now.

Kejriwal a megalomaniac, AAP resorting to old drama: Patra

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Terming AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal a “megalomaniac”, who is considering himself god after winning power in two States, the BJP on Sunday said the AAP is resorting to the “old drama” it does before every State poll.

Addressing a Press conference, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said that Kejriwal is a “megalomaniac” and “bayan bahadur” (one who makes big claims) who is considering himself a god after his party won polls in two states. “We are surprised that he did not say that US president Joe Biden is also afraid of the AAP,” Patra said in a swipe at Kejriwal.

With the Delhi Chief Minister suggesting that AAP leaders should be prepared for arrest by Central probe agencies, Patra accused him of “glorifying” corruption and said he has a history of defending his “tainted” colleagues before they had to quit due to mounting evidence.

“The man who took “commission” in liquor trade compares himself to “Kanha”. The AAP national convener likened his party to “Kanha”— Lord Krishna’s child form who slayed big demons,” Patra alleged.

Patra said that Kejriwal always claims before a State poll that his party is winning and others are “rattled.” “It seems Kejriwal’s certificate on honesty and dishonesty is more important than that of



the judiciary, he said.

As the war of words intensifies between the AAP and the BJP in view of the upcoming elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, the BJP spokesperson said the AAP has “disintegrated” in Himachal Pradesh while its president in Uttarakhand quit even though it had made big claims about its prospects in these two hill States.

Kejriwal had earlier launched a blistering attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP, accusing them of trying to “crush” the AAP in the name of fighting corruption as they feared a defeat in Gujarat polls due later this year.

Hitting back at Kejriwal for claiming that his party was “kattar imandaar” (hardcore honest), he said that no Government has seen so many of its ministers resigning due to various charges in such a short period as has the AAP dispensation.

Patra cited the cases of Jitender Singh Tomar and Sandeep Kumar among others.

They were strongly defended by Kejriwal in the same manner he is backing his deputy Manish Sisodia, an accused in the alleged excise scam, and jailed minister Satyendar Jain.

As Kejriwal made big claims about his party’s prospects and his government’s work in Delhi, Patra said he is all about “doing little and making a lot of noise”.

He is a unique chief minister who has no portfolio, the BJP leader said. Kejriwal has been making irrational claims because he has no real answer to the charges against his party’s leaders in corruption cases, he said.

In retaliation to Kejriwal’s veiled dig at Modi with the claim that those opposed to freebies to people are dishonest and traitors, Patra said those who seek evidence from the Army after surgical strikes on terror camps are the real traitors.

Seeking to pick holes in his claims about which AAP leaders will be targeted by the central probe agencies, he said the Delhi Chief Minister on the one hand says the CBI and ED are puppets of the Central Government and suggests on the other that they inform him about their next move.

As Kejriwal knows which of his ministers are corrupt, he very much understands who can face the consequences, the BJP spokesperson claimed.

CM knows which of his Mins, MLAs have committed fraud: LoP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at the Arvind Kejriwal Government, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Sunday said that the Chief Minister Kejriwal is afraid of arresting the tainted MLAs of Aam Aadmi Party.

He asked that if Kejriwal’s Ministers did not indulge in scams, then why are they getting so scared?

Bidhuri said that Kejriwal is repeatedly apprehension of the arrest of his MLAs, so it is clear that he knows which of his Ministers and MLAs have committed fraud. That is why now it is clearly visible to them that those leaders will be arrested. “The liquor scam and education scam of Deputy CM Manish Sisodia has now come to the fore.

The two sting operations of the liquor scam that have come out clearly prove that the liquor contractors have returned half of their 12 per cent commission that is 6 per cent to the AAP in cash.

It has also been proved that this money was used in Goa and Punjab elections. In such a situation, if the investigating agencies think that Sisodia



should be arrested, then he will be arrested. Kejriwal’s victim card will not work now,” Bidhuri alleged.

“The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) scam against Transport Minister Kailash Gehlot has now become completely clear. Along with the purchase of buses, the benefit given to a particular company in their maintenance is not hidden from anyone.

It is also clear from the apprehension of his arrest by Kejriwal that he has also realized that the secret of this scam has also been exposed,” he said.

“Other AAP MLAs can also be arrested if they have indulged in scams. Kejriwal’s fear of arrest is haunting because he has come to know that the mask has now come off his face,” Bidhuri added.

Gang of cheats providing gigolos, masseurs busted

NEW DELHI: With the arrest of four people, including two women, the Delhi Police on Sunday claimed to have busted a gang of fraudsters who allegedly lured people in lieu of providing gigolos and masseurs services by offering them a handsome salary. Police said that the gang had cheated more than 100 people in the last two years. The accused have been identified as Shubham Ahuja, Udit Mehta, Neha Chhabra and Archana Ahuja.

According to Usha Rangnani, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Northwest district, a complaint was received in which the complainant alleged that he received a WhatsApp message on his mobile from an unknown number, offering him a male masseur job to go to people’s houses and give them massages on payment basis.

“He contacted given mobile number and he was asked to pay ₹3500 for the registration. The complainant paid the amount through Paytm. Further, he was induced to pay ₹12,600 for buying a massage equipment kit, ₹15,500 for preparing an entry card and ₹9400 for booking a hotel room etc,” said the DCP.

“For every-payment, the complainant was promised that he will get back whole amount in cash from their clients. After paying ₹9400, the accused asked for more money to get another entry card to which complainant refused and asked to refund his amount,” said DCP.

4 held for obstructing ACB team at Okhla MLA’s residence

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has apprehended four men for allegedly obstructing an Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) team, which raided AAP Okhla MLA Amanatullah Khan’s residence, from discharging its duties. The accused have been identified as Shakeel Ahmad (45), a resident of Jakir Nagar, Sikander (45), a resident of Jogabai Extension, Afsar (20) and Anwar (31), both residents of Batla House. Police said that they were arrested on Saturday.

The ACB had on Friday conducted raids at four premises in connection with alleged irregularities in recruitment in the Delhi Waqf Board and arrested Khan, also its chairman. “We have registered a case for obstructing the ACB officials in discharging their duty and four persons have been arrested in this case. Further investigation is in progress,” a senior police officer said.

A purported video of the incident is circulating on social media. In the 27-second video clip, a dozen men could be seen pushing away an official wearing the uniform of the Anti-Corruption Branch.

The video was shot on September 16 when the ACB officials were conducting multiple raids in Delhi in a case pertaining to financial misappropriation and other irregularities

in the functioning of Delhi Waqf Board. One of the men asks an official, “Why have you come here?”

As the ACB team reached Khan’s residence, it was allegedly attacked by his relatives and other people known to the AAP MLA, the ACB has said. The ACB seized Rs 24 lakh in cash, two unlicensed weapons and some cartridges during Friday’s raids.

According to the ACB, Khan illegally recruited 32 people in the Delhi Waqf Board, violating all norms and government guidelines, amid allegations of corruption and favouritism. He also rented out a number of properties of the Delhi Waqf Board illegally, it alleged.

On Friday, police said three FIRs were registered after the ACB raid. One of them was against Aam Aadmi Party MLA Amanatullah Khan’s close aide Hamid Ali (54) after an unlicensed weapon and some cartridges were recovered from him. He has been arrested in this case, the senior police official said.

The second case was registered against Kaushar Imam Siddique, a resident of Jogabai Extension, in Arms Act. A country-made pistol and three live rounds were recovered from his premises, the senior police official said, adding that efforts are being made to arrest him.

Jasmine misusing post, office of DDC: Parvesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEWDELHI

The BJP MP, Parvesh Verma, has written to Delhi Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena, alleging that Jasmine Shah, who working as Vice Chairman of Dialogue and Development Commission (DDC), is also acting as official spokesperson of AAP Party, which is in violation of established procedures as persons drawing salaries from consolidated fund of Delhi are treated as Government servant and bound by the provisions of Rule 5 of CCS (Conduct) Rules, 1964

While sharing links to YouTube videos, in his letter, Verma said that Shah is openly misusing the post and office of DDC by attending national TV programmes as official spokespersons of Aam Aadmi



Party for political gains in violation of rule 5 of CCS(Conduct) Rules, 1964. Verma also cited the MHA rule, which states that honorary workers, who are prominent in the public or political life of the country cannot reasonably be expected to sever their lifelong association with the political parties to which they belong, as a working arrangement, therefore, rule 18 (now rule 8) (connection with the press), 20 (now rule 9) (criticism of Government) and 23 (now

rule 5) (taking part in politics) of the Government Servant’s Conduct Rules ought not to be enforced against such persons in so far as participation in politics is concerned.

“In all other respects, however, such persons should be governed by the provisions of the Government Servant’s Conduct Rules. The Government of India do not consider it proper to fix the amount of honorarium at such a figure that the honorary character of the employment is lost.

Moreover, if the person desires to maintain his non-official status and does not wish to be regarded as a Government servant, it follows that the remuneration allowed to him as honorarium should be nominal and not equivalent to what would have been

allowed to him as salary if he had been appointed to a regular post.” Verma further cited the rules in his letter.

“As Jasmine Shah is drawing pay, allowances and other facilities at par with the Minister of Delhi Government, which is a substantial amount, and thus as per instructions issued by the MHA, Jasmine Shah has lost the honorary character of the employment and violated provisions,” Verma said.

“It is humbly requested that such misuse of public machinery for political gains by Jasmine Shah, who is enjoying the pay, allowances and perks of the post of DDC Vice Chairman, is a gross misconduct and issue of public money and is in violation of the instructions issued by the MHA.

Kids participate in PM cross-country slum race

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Thousands of children and youth from the slums of the national Capital participated in the ‘Prime Minister Narendra Modi Cross Country Slum race’ organised by Delhi BJP on Sunday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah flagged off the race hosted as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s birthday celebration programmes under ‘Sewa Pakhwara’ at Dhyanchand Stadium.

Shah said the race was aimed at the prime minister’s goal to bring all sections of the society to the mainstream of national life. Along with education, this race will connect these children with sports and boost their confidence, he added. Delhi BJP chief Adesh



Gupta said the race has revealed the talent in slums and unauthorised colonies of the city.

Around 10,000 children and youth from all parts of the city participated in the race out

of which 32 were given prizes, Delhi BJP said in a statement. The cross country race was divided into four age groups including boys and girls in the age group of 10-15 years who participated in the 2.5 km cat-

egory. Another category of 2.5 km race was open to all age groups. The 5 km race was organised for those in the 16-20 yrs age group or above. All the participants were given t-shirts, certificates and medals.

PFI case: NIA raids 40 places, detains 4

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday conducted searches at 40 locations in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in connection with a case against the radical outfit, Popular Front of India (PFI), for allegedly running training camps to commit terror acts and promote enmity between groups on the basis of religion. The searches covered 38 locations in Telangana (23 in Nizamabad, four in Hyderabad, seven in Jagtial, two in Nirmal, one each in Adilabad and Karimnagar districts) and two locations in Andhra Pradesh (one each in Kurnool and Nellore districts). The NIA said in a statement.

"The accused were organising camps for imparting training to commit terrorist acts and to promote enmity between different groups on the basis of religion. During the searches, incriminating mate-



rials, including digital devices, documents, two daggers, cash Rs.8,31,500 etc. have been seized. Four persons have been detained for questioning," the agency said, adding, further investigation in the case is in progress. Telangana Police on July 4 first registered the case against the PFI cadres in Nizamabad. The NIA later

took over the probe. After initial probe, the state police arrested Abdul Kader, Sheikh Sahadulla, Md Imran and Md.Abdul Mobin . Later, the case was re-registered by NIA on August 26. Following multiple reports from different Central agencies and state police forces to the Centre over the alleged anti-national

activities of PFI, the Union Home Ministry has tasked various security agencies to update the database of its activities and keep a strict vigil on its funding channels and foreign connections. The government's move came after a top-level meeting held in Ministry recently to review the security situation in country in which

Union Home Minister Amit Shah took stock of the activities of the PFI and issued directives to various security agencies to prepare a fresh dossier on its activities. Various stakeholders have sought a ban on PFI but the Centre is yet to take a call on the issue.

Recently, the Delhi Police also submitted a report in the Delhi High Court that the protests in Capital's Shaheen Bagh area in the backdrop of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) were not an independent movement but it was fanned and supported by the Popular Front of India and its political arm Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI).

The Ministry had earlier handed over Bihar PFI case to NIA in which a "terror module" was recently unearthed by Bihar Police with the arrest of three persons for their alleged links with PFI and their nefarious agenda to indulge in "anti-India" activities.

PM a 'pathological liar', says Ramesh as Modi takes credit for cheetah project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remark that "no constructive efforts" were made for decades to reintroduce cheetahs to India after the big cats were declared extinct in the country.

Former Union Minister Jairam Ramesh called the PM a "pathological liar" and shared a letter on social media to show that Project Cheetah was launched in 2009 in his capacity as the then Environment Minister.

"Our PM is a pathological liar. I couldn't lay my hands on this letter yesterday because of my preoccupation with the Bharat Jodo Yatra. This was the letter that launched Project Cheetah in 2009," said Ramesh who is now Party general secretary and chief of communications of the party.

Ramesh had written to MK Ranjitsinh of the Wildlife Trust of and asked him to prepare a roadmap for the reintroduction of the Cheetah and include a detailed analysis of different potential sites.

In his remarks on Saturday, Modi said, "It is unfortunate that we declared cheetahs extinct in 1952, but for decades no constructive efforts were



made to reintroduce them in India. Now, with new strength and vigour, the country has embarked on the project of reviving the population of cheetahs during this 'amrit kaal.'"

While on the day when the cats were released Ramesh had alleged the Prime Minister "hardly ever acknowledges continuity in governance" and the Cheetah project was the latest example of that, Congress

termed it a "tamasha," orchestrated by the PM to another diversion from pressing national issues and the Bharat Jodo Yatra'.

In 2012, a UPA government's plan to reintroduce the big cats was struck down by the Supreme Court after some conservationists argued that importing the African cheetah for reintroduction in India was against the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) reintroduction guidelines.

Five years later, in 2017, the National Tiger Conservation Authority filed an application before the court, arguing that the IUCN had accepted the reintroduction of a species as a legitimate process. The court then gave a go-ahead to the plan while ordering a detailed study on the matter.



Cong-ruled States pass resolution to appoint Rahul party president

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Three States units of Congress — Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry — have passed a resolution calling for the appointment of Rahul Gandhi as the party president.

AICC sources said Himachal Pradesh Congress too is scheduled to move the same on Monday favouring Rahul to be anointed as the chief of the grand old party again and when the momentum towards elections peak up other States Congress are also likely to do the same making it certain for Rahul Gandhi to get elected for the top post.

The resolution to make Rahul Gandhi the Congress chief was proposed by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot - who was seen as a strong contender for the post - at the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) meeting in Jaipur.

Rajasthan and Puducherry became the first to pass such resolution said to persuade Rahul Gandhi to take over the reins of the party again.

Rajasthan Congress state in-charge Ajay Maken, organisation election officer (PRO) Rajendra Kumpawat, state president Govind Singh Dotasra and party members from different districts of the state were present at the meeting held in Jaipur.

Puducherry Pradesh Congress also, through a resolution, demanded that Rahul Gandhi be made the next

Congress President. According to sources, the Himachal Pradesh state unit will also be passing a similar resolution during its September 19 meeting.

While passing the resolution authorising the incoming Congress president to appoint state chiefs and AICC delegates, the Chhattisgarh Pradesh Congress Committee (CPCC) also passed a resolution that Rahul Gandhi be made the party's president.

The passing of the resolutions is seen as an initiative of Gehlot and Baghel to reaffirm their loyalty to the Gandhi family, others see it as a genuine attempt to convince Rahul Gandhi to take on the party reins.

With Rahul Gandhi playing truant over his position on contesting the party's presidential polls, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Sunday said Rahul will always have a "pre-eminent place" in the party irrespective of whether he is president or not as he is the "acknowledged leader" of the rank and file.

Chidambaram said consensus for the post may be there once Rahul changes his mind for which is underway.

"Rahul Gandhi has though declined to take on the mantle of party presidency but may change his mind," Chidambaram who is also a Congress Working Committee member said, just days ahead of the notification of polls to elect the AICC chief.

'Parties that believe Opp unity minus Cong possible live in fool's paradise'

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Senior Congress leader Sjairem Ramesh on Sunday asserted that non-BJP parties that believe Opposition unity without the grand old party as the fulcrum is possible are living in a "fool's paradise".

Without naming any outfit, he said many regional parties have backstabbed the grand old party in the past to serve their own self-interests, and that such parties should stop using the Congress as a punching bag.

"There cannot be any opposition unity without the Congress as its fulcrum. That is fundamental. If any non-BJP outfit thinks any alliance sans the Congress can provide a stable government for five years, it is living in a fool's paradise."

There can never be any opposition unity minus the Congress," Ramesh said in an interview with PTI in Kolkata, where he had come to attend a party programme.

Although he dubbed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as the "B-team" of the BJP, Ramesh stopped short of analysing the role of the Trinamool Congress, which too, like the Arvind



Kejriwal-led party, is opposed to the Congress, by saying, "It (TMC) has Congress in its name." "We have said this before...There is ample evidence to prove that AAP is the B-team of the BJP. If you look at its history or the background of its leaders, you will know it. Regarding the TMC, I am yet to make my assessment, but I think they too, have Congress in their name," he said.

Without naming anyone, Ramesh said those who talk of opposition unity without the Congress only want to weaken the opposition front and the grand old party. "In an alliance, you give something and receive something in return. It is an understanding. So far, the Congress has been offering, and everyone has benefited

from it. And after getting benefits, they have been trying to use the Congress as a punching bag to weaken it. This has to stop now," he said.

Terming the Congress the "big elephant of Indian politics", Ramesh said no one should make the mistake of "writing it off". Speaking on the ongoing Bharat Jodo Yatra, he said a strengthened Congress and a more durable and constructive opposition would be the end product of the march.

"We have started the Yatra over national issues. The country is going through a situation where our politics, economy, and institutions are falling apart due to the BJP and its divisive politics. Another motive of the Yatra is to galvanise the rank and file of the Congress ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls," the former union environment minister said.

Ramesh said the Yatra was not aimed at state elections in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls. When told that the Congress is speaking of "Bharat Jodo" when the party itself is in disarray, Ramesh said the outfit is trying to fix its internal issues.



BJP national president JP Nadda during a felicitation event to mark the joining of 15 district panchayat members of JD(U) Daman and Diu unit, in New Delhi on Sunday PTI Photo

Indian Navy holds exercise with Japan in Bay of Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Navies of India and Japan held bilateral complex exercises, including anti-submarine warfare and air defence, for a week in the Bay of Bengal as part of the sixth edition of Japan India Maritime Exercise 2022, JIMEX 22.

The exercise ended on Saturday with the two sides bidding farewell to each other with a customary steam past Indian Naval ships were led by Rear Admiral Sanjay Bhalla, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet.

Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) ships Izumo and Takanami were led by Rear Admiral Hirata Toshiyuki, Commander Escort Flotilla Four. JIMEX 22 witnessed one of the most complex exercises undertaken jointly by the two navies. Both



Sixth edition of the Japan India Maritime Exercise 2022 JIMEX 22 hosted by the Indian Navy concluded in the Bay of Bengal with a customary steam past on Sunday PTI Photo

sides engaged in advanced level anti-submarine warfare, weapon firings and Air Defence exercises. Shipborne helicopters, fighter aircraft and submarines also took part in the exercise. Indian Navy and

JMSDF ships replenished each other at sea under the agreement on Reciprocal Provision for Supply and Services (RPSS). The exercise, which marked the tenth anniversary of JIMEX since its inception in 2012, con-

solidated the mutual understanding and interoperability between the two navies. Incidentally, the joint exercise were held days after India and Japan held the two plus two dialogue in Tokyo on September 8.

Both the sides reaffirmed their resolve to commitment to uphold rules based global order respecting sovereignty of nations and stressed upon the need for all countries to peacefully resolve disputes without resorting to threat or use of force or any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo. The two countries also agreed to hold the first ever joint fighter jets exercise.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar represented India while Yasukazu Hamada and Hayashi Yoshimasa respectively from Japan took part in the dialogue.

The '2+2' dialogue took place more than five months after Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited India for the annual India-Japan summit. This year also marks 70 years of diplomatic relations between India and Japan.

Calling for respecting international laws, the two plus two dialogue stressed that global cooperation is required more than ever to address security challenges that have become more acute. Rajnath said after the meeting there is consensus on both sides that a strong India-Japan relationship is very important for a free, open, rule-based and inclusive Indo-Pacific based upon sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.

India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) shares many commonalities with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). India has also devel-

oped maritime cooperation with regional partners in consonance with our inclusive vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), he said. Jaishankar said the dialogue takes place in the backdrop of a complicated global environment.

"We are two nations committed to promoting a rules-based order, ensuring respect for international law and norms, and safeguarding the global commons. To our endeavors in that regard are now added necessity of creating resilient and reliable supply chains in aftermath of the Covid pandemic," he said.

Conflicts and climate events have further aggravated global economic situation, creating deep anxieties in respect of energy and food security. Trust and transparency are our shared concerns in a digitized world, he said.

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

Counter-terrorism, peace-keeping, reformed multilateralism, climate action and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines will be among the key focus areas for India during the high-level UN General Assembly session that begins this week here.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will arrive in New York on Sunday to participate in the high-level 77th session of the UN General Assembly, which kicks off on September 20 with the opening of the General Debate. Jaishankar will address world leaders from the UNGA podium on September 24, after a packed week of more than 50 official engagements including bilat-



eral, plurilateral and multilateral meetings at the high-level session and on the sidelines. The General Debate, during which world leaders deliver national statements from the UNGA podium, begins on September 20.

The US is traditionally the second speaker after Brazil on the opening day of the General Debate but since President Joe Biden is attending the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II in London on September 19, he will address world leaders on the second day of the high-level session on September 21. The session comes after two years of disruption caused by the

COVID-19 pandemic. During the high-level week, the Transforming Education Summit, SDG Moment, and a High-Level Meeting as part of the year-long commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities will be among the highlights.

India's Permanent Mission to the UN said in a video posted on Twitter that the five S's - Samman (Respect), Samvad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), Shanti (Peace) and Samridhhi (Prosperity) - set out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be India's "guiding light" in its approach to the 77th session of the General Assembly.

It said India will continue to showcase commitments and achievements in women-led development, particularly women's leadership and political participation at the grassroots level, and attach greater prominence to issues relating to counter-terrorism.

'MSG compound made from sodium, glutamic acid causes high BP, cardiac ailments'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Popularly known as Ajinomoto, Monosodium glutamate (MSG) compound made from sodium and glutamic acid, one of the most common naturally occurring amino acids used in Chinese preparations like chowmein has come under the health scanner. A team of researchers from the Biochemistry Department of Allahabad University has blamed the MSG for not only chronic diseases like hypertension and cardiac ailments but also on health of the foetus

The research has been published in the Indian Journal of Clinical Biochemistry.

MSG is prepared with plant-based ingredients such as sugar cane, sugar beets, sodium, cassava or corn. It is an important part of Asian cuisine and is usually added to noodles, fried rice, soup etc.

MSG leaves a long-lasting taste (umami) that characterises these food items. Umami is the core fifth taste alongside the sweet, sour, bitter, and salty taste buds.

Scientists at the AU's department of biochemistry, working under Professor S.I. Rizvi, said MSG, even at low doses, could be detrimental to health.

The AU research on MSG toxicity has shown that even at concentrations, which come under the prescribed limits, MSG may cause oxidative stress, inflammation and other

health issues. Besides, the umami taste can cause MSG addiction in children. Prof Rizvi said, "All these adverse effects may predispose an individual to diseases such as hypertension, heart problems and a faster rate of ageing."

The finding assumes importance since the consumption of foods rich in MSG has increased tremendously in recent years. All fast foods, including packed chips, momos and some packed foods contain large amounts of this compound.

MSG increases the production of certain chemicals in the body, which may be highly harmful. The same type of change is often seen in COVID-19 patients, he added.

"The experimental study carried out on rats given a fixed dose of MSG revealed that after three weeks of continuous intake of this salt, some alterations were also seen in the brain region," said Prof Rizvi.

The scientists tested the effect of MSG at two different concentrations, 30 mg and 100 mg per kg body weight. Although the 30 mg dose did not cause any effects, at the 100 mg dose, there were a host of side effects which could be hazardous to health.

"This study is an eye-opener as growing children may especially be vulnerable to toxic effects of MSG," said Prof Rizvi, adding that children and growing foetuses have a leaky blood-brain barrier and could be affected by toxic effects of MSG.

K'taka CM rejects rail infra proposals of Kerala Govt

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The bilateral talks held between the Governments of Kerala and Karnataka here on Sunday on various projects failed to yield results as Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai turned down the proposals of his counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan, citing environmental concerns.

Bommai rejected all the key infrastructure related proposals of Kerala, saying it will damage the eco-sensitive zones and wildlife sanctuaries. Vijayan called on Bommai in the city this morning to hold discussions on various pro-

jects and issues of mutual interest, as decided at the South Zonal Council meeting.

The projects that Vijayan and Bommai discussed were Kanhangad-Kaniyoor Railway Line via Panathur, Thalasseri-Mysuru Railway Line, underground tunnel passing through Bandipura National Park and proposal to increase bus services at night in this eco-sensitive zone.

Addressing reporters after the meeting, Bommai said, the Kerala government sought co-operation for its various railway projects including Kanhangad-Kaniyur Rail Line route, and other highway pro-



jects. The proposed Kanhangad-Kaniyur rail line project has a 40 km route in Kerala and 31 km in Karnataka."

"However, this project is not very beneficial for



Karnataka. Besides, it will pass through the rich biodiversity and ecologically sensitive areas of the Western Ghats. So, the Kerala CM was clearly told that it was not possible for the State of

Karnataka to give extended co-operation for this project." "... The Railways had said that it will review the project if both the states agree to it. We rejected it because there is no benefit to Karnataka from this Railway Line," he said.

Another Railway project that the state rejected was the Thalasseri-Mysuru Railway Line. Vijayan discussed the old project of Tellicherry-Mysuru rail line route and he was told that it was not possible to give permission as the proposed rail route will traverse through Bandipur-Nagarhole National Parks and

it will cause great damage to flora and fauna, Bommai said. The Kerala CM proposed the construction of an underground rail route and even it was rejected flatly as it would damage the environment during the construction activities.

Vijayan was informed that presently, two buses are operated during night through Bandipur National Highway, but he sought permission to allow four buses and that proposal was also rejected, Bommai pointed out. He said Vijayan also told him that the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has proposed a new alignment touch-

ing the NH-73. He also apprised the Karnataka chief minister that this new alignment will not pass through the eco-sensitive zones. "We don't know what proposal the

NHAI officials are coming up with. Let the NHAI give us a proposal. However, we will not allow any project in eco-sensitive zone, be it Nagarhole or Bandipur National Park," Bommai clarified.

However, a statement issued by the Kerala Chief Minister's Office said that both the states will jointly request the NHAI to imple-

ment the alignments from Tholpetti to Purakkattiri and Sultan Batheri to Malappuram of the Mysore Malappuram Economic Corridor project as an alternative to the NH 766, passing through the tiger reserve, where night time travel restrictions are in place. The Pinarayi Vijayan government also stated that Bommai has agreed to examine the proposed Kanhangad-Panathur-Kaniyoor railway line project, which will connect north Kerala and south Karnataka, and also seriously consider providing the necessary financial assistance for it.

Rise in smuggling activities in Mizoram due to Myanmar crisis, say officials

PTI ■ AIZAWL

The Myanmar political crisis has led to "an increase in smuggling activities" in Mizoram with a rise in seizure of contrabands and exotic animal species in the northeastern state, officials said on Sunday.

According to the State Government's data accessed by PTI, the volume of heroin recovered by the excise department and the state police increased from 20.36 kilogram in 2020 to 34.52 kg last year.

During the January-May period of the current year, 19.81 kg of heroin has been seized and 374 people have been arrested for allegedly possessing the contraband.

The volume of drugs and other smuggled goods, such as exotic wild animals, dried areca nuts and Burmese cigarettes, recovered by law enforcement agencies has "increased sub-



stantially since the military seized power in the neighbouring country in February last year," the excise and narcotics department official said on condition of anonymity.

"There is no doubt that the Myanmar political crisis has led to the significant increase in trafficking of drugs, especially heroin, from Myanmar to India via Mizoram," he said.

Some of the arrested Myanmar nationals were found to get involved in the smuggling activities recently, the official said, adding that efforts from various state agencies are

on to apprehend the kingpins of smuggling rackets.

"Many Myanmar people are rendered jobless and have no stable source of income due to the current political crisis there. Many of them were lured into smuggling activities," the official said.

With the increase in heroin supply, the price of the drug has plummeted as "one hawng of the narcotics substance (hawng is a local measurement equal to around 13-14 grams) is now available at Rs 15,000-18,000, while it was earlier sold at Rs 35,000 in the local market", he said.

Mizoram Inspector General of Police (Headquarters) John Neihlaia also said the increase in the number of seizures and dip in heroin prices are linked to the Myanmar crisis. The number of Myanmar nationals held with drugs by the state police

has increased from 12 in 2021 to 35 in 2022 (till August), he said.

"Of the 35 people arrested this year, three were refugees, who were staying at relief camps in the state," Neihlaia said.

Altogether 30,401 people from Myanmar have crossed the international border and taken refuge in the northeastern state after the neighbouring country's military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi there in February last year, state Home Minister Lalchamliana informed the assembly earlier this month.

According to Neihlaia, the state police only had in 2021 seized many contrabands, including 15.79 kg of heroin and 153.77 kg of Methamphetamine tablets, altogether worth Rs 51.83 crore.

4 held for blast on school roof in Bengal, BJP demands NIA probe

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Four persons were arrested in connection with a bomb blast in a school in Titagarh area in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, a senior police officer said Sunday. The accused, aged between 18-19 years, were picked up from Kamarhati and Titagarh areas around midnight, the officer of Barrackpore Police Commissionerate said.

"We are trying to explore all possible aspects by interrogating them. One of the arrested hailed from Kamarhati while the rest are from Titagarh," he said. The crude bomb exploded on the roof of the school building on Saturday when classes were in progress.

There was no casualty in the incident, as students and teachers were in rooms located on the first two floors of the three-storeyed building, police had said.

The officer said preliminary investigation revealed that the accused had changed their initial plan to hurl a pow-



erful crude bomb at the school gate, as the spot was crowded.

They climbed onto the roof of an adjacent building to carry out the act, he said.

The officer said three of those arrested were former students of the school.

Personal enmity between the accused and some other students of the school was believed to be the primary motive behind the incident.

He added that 10 crude bombs were found during a search operation at the residence of one of the accused.

Meanwhile, the BJP demanded a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe into the bomb explosion.

"I will put forth the demand (for NIA

probe) to the Union Home Ministry on Monday," Leader of Opposition in Bengal assembly Suwendu Adhikari told reporters.

BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar, who also emphasised the need for a similar investigation, added: "Bengal seems to be the only state in the country where school children are targets for a bomb attack."

Reacting to the comments, veteran Trinamool Congress MP Sougata Roy said the BJP has a habit of demanding NIA probes for every incident.

Earlier in the day, BJP national vice-president Dilip Ghosh said Saturday's development points to the fact that "even school students cannot feel safe in Bengal".

"The education sector has begun its final journey in the state under the Trinamool Congress rule... Youths are roaming around with pistols and bombs... as there are no jobs in West Bengal," Ghosh claimed. Countering him, TMC's Roy said the police are doing its job, and investigation is underway.

Concentrate on organisation building, WB BJP leaders told

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Enthusied by the response in the recently held Nabanna march in Kolkata but aware of a plaguing infighting in the State party hierarchy the central BJP leadership has asked the Bengal brass to desist from factionalism and concentrate on organisation building for the next year's panchayat polls and 2024 general elections.

According to sources the central BJP leaders have told the State leaders to desist from giving media statements on internal issues and also discharge their respective responsibilities, sources privy to an ongoing organisational meeting said.

"The leaders have been asked to refrain from making public statements about their displeasure ... they have also been asked to discharge their respective duties assigned by



the leadership," a State committee leader said adding "despite the huge public response that we got during the Nabanna march we are still weak organisationally ... even the Left has better organisation than us in district and local levels ... so the leaders have been asked to concentrate on organisational building instead of infighting."

The State leaders were depending more on the ED and CBI than on organisation he quoted the central leaders as saying. "Instead of relying too much on the central agencies the party functionaries should go for developing peo-

ple-to-people contact the leaders have said."

The Bengal BJP has of late seen differences of opinion between former State president Dilip Ghosh, his successor Sukanta Majumdar and Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari.

Despite the party won 18 out of 42 seats in 2019 general elections its performance nosedived subsequently and it ended up winning 77 seats in 2021 Assembly polls.

Its performance further dwindled in the subsequent by-elections and civic polls where the party was relegated to the third position behind the Left Front.

The central leadership has held a weak organisational network and infighting responsible for the BJP's decreasing performance, the insider said.

Meanwhile, in what could give BJP a good reason to

smile the saffron party on Sunday routed the TMC at a village level cooperative society election in Nandigram. Out of 12 seats the BJP won 11 leaving one for the TMC.

Though cooperative society elections cover a limited area the sheer margin of win tends to give an impression of what is going to come, a senior party leader from East Midnapore the home district of Suwendu Adhikari said.

Ever since the arrest of former Education Minister Partha Chatterjee and Trinamool strongman Anubrata Mondal and the recovery of Rs 50 crore from the apartments of Arpita Mukherjee a close aide of Chatterjee the TMC has lost at least three cooperative society elections out of which two have been won by the Left Front in Hooghly district and one was won by the BJP in East Midnapore on Sunday.

Kerala becomes surcharged as Guv, Govt fight escalates

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

With Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan challenging each other over the propriety in some of the appointments made by the Government in Kannur University, politics in the State has become surcharged. Speaking to reporters at Kochi on Saturday, Governor said he would release on Monday a letter sent to him by the Chief Minister assuring him of non-interference of any kind in the functioning of the Universities in the State.

"It is in violation of the letter that the University appointed relatives of the chief minister's personal staff despite them not having the mandatory qualifications or professional experience. There is no law that prevents me from speaking to the media," said the Governor. He said the Government has been belittling the stature of the Raj Bhavan and this was highly unbecoming of the chief minister. The political landscape got further

vitiated by the outburst of M V Govindan, the Kerala secretary of the CPI(M). Taking a dig at the Governor, Govindan, a former drill master, alleged that the former was working as an agent of the BJP. "This will not be allowed in Kerala. He is functioning as a handmaiden of the BJP instead of discharging his duties as a Constitutional authority," said Govindan.

The bone of contention is the Governor's refusal to sign on the legislations amending the University Laws meant to clip the wings of the Chancellor (read Governor) in the appointment of faculty members and vice chancellors in the Universities in the State. Governor made it known on Saturday that he would not sign any Bills that eroded the autonomy of the Universities.

"Though many times I tried to speak with the chief minister, he was not willing and he even refused to attend my phone calls," said the Governor.

According to Govindan, the Governor cannot refuse to sign the leg-

islations enacted by the legislature. "I have strong doubts about the behaviour of Governor. His attitude is not in consonance with the Constitution. What he is doing is spreading falsehoods about the chief minister, Kerala as well as the Communist parties. Our leader Marx has mentioned about the situation in India much before the formation of the Indian National Congress. Governor is making false propaganda against historian Irfan Habib, whom he alleges of plotting to murder him," said Govindan.

Meanwhile K Sudhakaran MP and president of KPCC, came down heavily on both the Governor and the Chief Minister for the war of words. "Kerala has never seen such a scenario in its history. We do not want the Governor to sign on anti-people legislations enacted by the Legislature. The Governor should not be a tool of any political party. The stand off is a blot on democracy," said Sudhakaran who described the present stand off as a drama being enacted by the CPI(M) and the BJP.

Madani, Nomani ask madrasa operators to cooperate with Govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a U-turn over madrasa politics, Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind president Maulana Arshad Madani has directed the madrasa operators to cooperate with the State authorities conducting the survey of all private unrecognised madrasas across the state.

Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani of Darul Uloom Deoband also endorsed the call by the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind during the day-long conference of over 250 madrasas at Deoband in Saharanpur district on Sunday. Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind had earlier opposed the survey ordered by the UP government.

This decision of a big Islamic organisation in Deoband has dealt a big blow to the madrasa politics of Hyderabad MP and All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi, who had described the survey as a "mini NRC" (National Register of Citizens).

In a meeting held with more than 250 madrasa operators in Darul Uloom Deoband, instructions have been given to cooperate in the survey of all madrasas. It was



also said that the madrasa survey of the UP government should be welcomed.

Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, an organisation of Islamic clerics, made its stand clear regarding the survey orders of the Uttar Pradesh government in the conference of madrasa owners/operators convened on Sunday at Darul Uloom Deoband, in Saharanpur.

Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani and Maulana Arshad Madani asked all the madrasa operators to keep all the accounts of madrasas transparent.

Nomani of Darul Uloom threw light on the history and importance of madrasas. On the survey, he said that information had been received from some places that in the name of investigation, money was being demanded from the madrasa operators.

Vedanta-Foxconn semiconductor plant site in Gujarat likely to be finalised in 2 weeks: Official

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Vedanta and Foxconn have hired experts who are evaluating possible locations for their upcoming semiconductor plant in Gujarat and a site may be finalised in the next couple of weeks, Gujarat Science and Technology Department Secretary Vijay Nehra said.

So far, the joint venture company has not finalised the location as they are evaluating various sites in Gujarat based on technical aspects, commercial viability and connectivity to set up the semiconductor and a display fabrication unit in the state, Nehra told PTI.

In the biggest ever corporate investment in the history of independent India, a joint venture of the Vedanta and Foxconn had on September 14 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Gujarat government to invest Rs 1,54,000 crore to set up the plant in the state.

Nehra had signed the MoU on behalf of the state government. "Vedanta and Foxconn have hired sector experts who are evaluating possible sites for the upcoming plant in Gujarat. Earlier they were evaluating multiple sites across different



countries. In December 2021, when the Centre had announced the 'India Semiconductor Mission', they started looking for sites across different states in India (and then selected Gujarat)," Nehra said. The promoters are now evaluating sites in Gujarat on different technical aspects, commercial viability, connectivity and utility point of view, Nehra said, adding that the site may be finalised in the next couple of weeks.

"There are many minute things which need to be kept in mind while selecting the site. For example, the production process can get affected due to the vibrations of passing trains. There must not be any vibrations near the plant. Power outage of even one second in a year can result in a loss of crores of rupees," he said.

The project is likely to get huge subsidies and incentives, like zero stamp duty on land purchase and subsidised water and electricity, under the 'Gujarat Semiconductor Policy 2022-27' announced by the state

government in July this year. Gujarat became the first state in the country to have such a dedicated policy for the semiconductor and display fabrication sector, a government official earlier said.

While announcing the policy, the Gujarat government had announced that it will set up 'Dholera Semicon City' in the Dholera Special Investment Region near Ahmedabad to attract investors.

Under this policy, eligible projects will be given 75 per cent subsidy on purchase of the first 200 acres of land for setting up manufacturing units.

The eligible projects will be provided good quality water at the rate of Rs 12 per cubic metre for the first five years.

If the investor decides to build its own desalination plant for captive use in the initial five years, the government will provide capital subsidy of 50 per cent of project cost, according to the policy document.

The eligible manufacturing units would also get power tariff subsidy of Rs 2 per unit for the first 10 years of going into production, it said, adding that such projects can also claim exemption from paying any electricity duty.

Auto driver-cum-chef on cloud nine as he wins ₹25 cr Onam bumper lottery

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An auto-rickshaw driver, who was planning to go to Malaysia to work as a chef, on Sunday won the Rs 25 crore Onam bumper lottery in Kerala, just a day after his application for a loan of Rs 3 lakh was approved.

Even more interesting is that Anoop, hailing from Sreevaraham here, bought the winning ticket -- TJ 750605 -- on Saturday.

But it was not his first choice, he told media persons, who were present at the agency where he had bought the ticket.

He did not like the first ticket he chose, so he opted for a different one which turned out to be a winner, he said.

Regarding the loan and his Malaysia trip, an ecstatic Anoop said, "The bank called today regarding the loan and I said I don't need it anymore. I will not be going to Malaysia either."

He has been buying lottery tickets for the last 22 years and has won amounts ranging from a few hundreds to a maximum of Rs 5,000 in the past, Anoop said.

"I was not expecting to win and therefore, I was not watch-

ing the lottery results on TV. However, when I checked my phone, I saw that I had won. I could not believe it and showed it to my wife. She confirmed that it was the winning number," he said.

"But I was still tensed, so I called a lady I know who sells lottery tickets and sent her a picture of my ticket. She confirmed that it was the winning number," Anoop said.

After taxes are deducted, Anoop would probably take home around Rs 15 crore.

On being asked what he intends to do with the windfall, he said his first priority is to build a house for his family and clear the accumulated debts he owes.

Besides that, Anoop said he would help out his relatives, do some charity work and start something in the hotel field in Kerala.

His wife, who was also present along with him at the agency, told reporters that he has been buying tickets for years.

"We have been receiving a lot of calls ever since everyone got to know about the win," she further said.

"I will again buy lottery tickets," Anoop said as reporters jostled each other to get a few words from him.

Lokayukta registers case against BSY, kin on graft charges

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Lokayukta police in Karnataka have registered a case against former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and several members of his family in connection with a corruption case.

The case was registered on Friday following a special court direction to the Lokayukta police to book the senior BJP leader and his kin, including his son B Y Vijayendra, who is the BJP state vice president, his grandson and the then BDA commissioner.

The FIR was registered under various provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Indian Penal on a complaint by a social activist T J Abraham, alleging that the accused obtained bribes in return for granting BDA (Bangalore Development Authority) contracts.

The case pertains to awarding tender for the construction of BDA apartments at Konadasapura in Bidarahlalli in the city. It is alleged that the accused took kickbacks from a builder, which were routed through shell companies owned by them, when Yediyurappa was the Chief Minister from 2019 to 2021.

Distracted

By responding to everything that BJP says and does, Congress plays on the pitch prepared by its arch-rival

In a bid to slam Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has resurrected a 2009 letter about Project Cheetah. At that time, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance was in power and Ramesh was minister of state (independent charge) for environment and forests. He had written the letter to the Wildlife Trust of India in 2009, clearing Project Cheetah. Ramesh had urged Dr MK Ranjitsinh of the Wildlife Trust of India to prepare a “detailed roadmap for the reintroduction of the cheetah which should include a detailed analysis of different potential sites.” Ramesh may have thought that telling the world about the old letter would help the grand old party in its fight against the Modi Government and the Bharatiya Janata Party. He is mistaken, for the government as well as the BJP would relish such a fight; they would relish anything that distracts people’s attention from the ruling dispensation’s major failures—unemployment, inflation, and the abysmal state of human rights and civil liberties. This is the reason that the saffron party regularly tries to focus on issues which are either peripheral in importance, like cashless economy and formalisation, or divisive in nature, like the Gyanvapi Mosque. BJP leaders love to discuss history, especially medieval history, and the atrocities the Hindus were subjected to in that period. They are also keen on removing the relics and vestiges of the British Raj. In a nutshell, they don’t mind discussing anything that keeps the attention away from the real issues of joblessness and high prices.



Instead of highlighting such real issues, the GOP gets distracted by the events organised by the government and the BJP. Also, Congress leaders have the propensity to respond to every statement made by BJP spokespersons. What happens in the process is that the agenda gets determined by the BJP, with the Congress reduced to responding to it. It means playing on a pitch prepared by the saffron party. Unfortunately for GOP supporters, this has been happening for a very long time. The Rajiv Gandhi government, in order to assuage the feelings of the Hindus in the wake of its disastrous Shah Bano decision, allowed the opening of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya in 1986. While the Shah Bano decision had offended the Hindus, the opening angered the Muslims and cost the Congress dear—a cost that the GOP is still paying. In the run-up to the last general elections, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tried to flaunt his Hinduness; he was presented as a janeudhari Brahmin. Both gambits failed, indeed boomeranged. The reason was simple: the Congress was playing a game it knew little about. Besides, if the Hindus have to vote on account of their faith, they would vote for a party which is unabashedly Hindu, which is the BJP. Apparently, the Congress has not learnt many lessons from its mistakes; it still furthers the BJP agenda by responding to it.



Participants row their boats during the Gothruth Boat Race Festival, in Ernakulam

Fighting drug menace

The drugs are freely flowing in Kerala, the Govt has woken up rather late. Can it contain it now?

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has announced a massive program to counter the drug menace in Kerala which has gone out of control. The State has become a narcotics hub according to the information revealed by the chief minister. Till September 15, the police and excise authorities have made 16, 986 seizures of narcotics and including 1,364 kg ganja for street sales, 7.7 kg potent MDMA (a synthetic drug), and 23.73 kg hashish oil. The shocking part of drug seizures is the involvement of educated and impressionable youth, including girls who work as drug pushers, couriers, and traffickers. The Pioneer has been writing regularly about the narcotics war on Kerala for quite some time. Chief Minister Vijayan has said that the drugs that reach the State originate from across the borders of the country. The Kerala Government has planned an action program to counter drug abuse.



The chief minister said that schools and colleges are being targeted by the drug syndicate and this has resulted in many students ending up as addicts. But the action program announced by the chief minister is too less and too late. A collective of students, teachers, social activists, NGOs, and law enforcement agencies to launch a propaganda war against drug abuse is a fine proposal but this is an antidote that should have been administered much earlier. The situation in Kerala is alarming. The need of the hour is the deployment of well-trained anti-drug cops and round-the-clock infrastructure facilities. The agencies entrusted with the prevention of drug trafficking suffer from shortages of personnel, laboratory facilities, and vehicles. Drug traffickers have a fleet of high-speed cars and boats and they use advanced technology to conceal the consignment. The USA, which is facing a “cocaine war” from its neighboring countries has deployed specially trained commandoes and aircraft to nip in the bud attempts by drug lords to smuggle in the stuff from across the borders. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have been empowered with special laws to take on drug traffickers. While awareness programs and campaigns look encouraging, the efforts by the Kerala Government to ensure the safety of women by holding renaissance rallies and human chains ended up in failure. The time for grandstanding ended long ago. It is time for action. Are you reading this, Mr Chief Minister?

Can India realise its economic potential?

The Indian economy is operating much below its potential. We need reforms in governance, judiciary & economy to catapult India to the top



ATUL SEHGAL

The Indian nation is at a crossroads. While the world is going through a phase of undeclared economic recession, worsened and complicated by Covid-19 and now by the protracted war between Russia and Ukraine, India’s economy is stable and growing the fastest. But our economic progress is far below our true potential.

India is a gifted nation from the point of view of natural resources, but the inherent potential for the explosive growth of the economy is even today dismally low. Our vertical hierarchy bureaucracy is by far the worst for the administration. It is exploitative and attaches to the senior members more authority and less accountability. This type of bureaucratic structure was devised by the British to continuously plunder India and, alas, this structure is being followed by the extant governments even seven decades after independence.

We are certainly not seeing the best from our PSUs whose share in our economy is 15 percent but who drive the growth of small and medium enterprises significantly. The government has also been unable to increase the operational efficiency of these undertakings—thanks to a rather callous and apathetic attitude towards them, which led to plans for disinvestment of some of them. This happened in the wake of the frequent cliché heard during the ongoing tenure of the Modi government—that government has no business to be in business.

The fallouts of the wrong structure of governments are not confined to PSUs. They percolated deep down into private sector business houses controlled by them and the whole set of SMEs governed by them.

Despite what the ruling NDA might say, the government is also in the business—of governance. And the business of governance calls for the management of men, materials, and money—just like any other profit-oriented business. Yes, the business of governance is not profit-cent-



tered. But it needs essentially the same techniques and methodologies that are employed in the commercial world of profit. It needs perseverance, honesty, transparency, and accountability to serve its purposes well. It needs professionally sound, foolproof systems that will establish discipline and efficiency. It needs economic and fiscal discipline. It cannot serve its purpose well with grandiose public welfare schemes and doles. There is no free lunch, even in the business of governance.

Changes and reforms, however well-intentioned, will deliver beneficial results only if the implementing laws and machinery are appropriate. These are the very reasons for the failure of the government to attract FDI and Indian private sector investment for Make in India. Regrettably, the Swadeshi bandwagon of RSS was given a go by and foreign companies like Amazon continued to devour the domestic retail sector thus closing the shutters on retail outlets in huge numbers.

While talking of the archaic laws and systems of administration in India, it would be necessary to mention that

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these are the reasons also for the slow growth of the infrastructure, marked by poor investment therein by the private sector. The obsolete Land Acquisition Act, Indian Police Act, Civil Services Act, Indian Penal Code, etc. were never designed to serve the interests of a sovereign India and need to be recast sooner than later.

Hence, we must create permanent systems and procedures that will establish discipline, enhance efficiency and deliver results for our noble intended changes. Such systems and procedures can only be built on the foundation of proper laws of the land that are, in turn, based on sound economic principles with disregard for populism and political expediency. Structural and administrative changes as suggested above will give a quantum boost to indigenous manufacturing which is the engine of economic growth. They will speedily enhance India’s share of manufacturing in GDP which is tottering at 15 percent over the last 10 years.

While dealing with China as an economic competitor, it should be clearly understood that today, the average cost of goods and labor in China has

soared to 6 times that of India. Actions by the Chinese government has created a big ballooning debt crisis which is a huge growth dampener. India is in an advantageous position regarding its manufacturing cost competitiveness vis-à-vis China today. This provides India an opportunity. There was never a better time for this.

Many strategic steps can be suggested to give a boost to India’s economy in various sectors. Investment in value-added food and agro items, in our traditional healthcare system of Ayurveda, and tourism will pay us rich dividends considering their potential in the current global scenario. But the bottom line is that we must reform our systems of administration and judiciary in line with the radical constitutional reforms cited above. With such changes, we shall see a new India emerge fast which would be the leading economic superpower and not for the first time in global history.

(The author is a Management Consultant and a freelance writer on subjects of economics, development, and governance. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JUSTICE FOR WRONGED WOMEN

Sir — This has reference to your editorial on ‘Lakhimpur outrage’ (Sept 16). Lakhimpur has hit the headlines twice recently for the wrong reasons. This time, two Dalit sisters were raped and murdered there. It is a heinous crime against humanity, an insult to our nation in general and women in particular. The crime against the weaker section is growing unabated daily. Not a day passes without the news of a rape in some corner of the country. Data indicates that every five minutes, a rape takes place somewhere in the nation.

Police, law enforcement authorities, law or the justice delivery system are also unable to correct these lapses. Our laws should be tightened and sexual offences should be made non-bailable. If the charges are proved, capital punishment should be given to the convicts. Two, our justice delivery system is very slow. It takes decades for the victims to get justice. So trials in anti-women crime cases should be made time-bound, say within six months. Three, punishments should be instant, stringent and hard. Last but not the least, our girls should be trained well in martial arts from their school days. No civilized society can be so called if its women are not safe. We have to ensure women safety at all costs.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

BREAKFAST FOR SCHOOL KIDS IN TN

Sir — MGR is possibly the most iconic leader in Tamil Nadu’s history. His fame was helped in a great part thanks to his introduction of the Midday Nutritious Meal Scheme in the early 1980s. Already, over 66 lakh children are benefiting from the mid-day meal scheme of the Tamil Nadu Government. However, the introduction of the new breakfast scheme will make the students more choosy about their eating habits rather than studying. Breakfast is a step in the right direction

Need to cut medicine prices



There is no denial that the cost of medicines comprises a major proportion of the expenditure incurred in the treatment of any disease. This is because the market prices of drugs are often kept much higher than the cost. As a result, a large section of patients finds it difficult to get treatment at an affordable cost. This also puts an additional burden on the Government. Though steps are frequently taken from time to time to provide inexpensive medicines to all the needy, the situation turns the

same again after a small interval. The recent inclusion of 34 new additional drugs in the National List of Essential Medicines can be seen in the same context.

The new initiative will reduce treatment cost in the case of many serious diseases. This time, certain anti-cancer drugs and vaccines have also been added to the list of affordable medicines, which will now be available at lower prices than before. This is certainly good news for the general public. If the Government’s recent announcement to reduce the prices of medicines is implemented properly, the price of many antibiotics, vaccines, anti-cancer and some other important medicines will surely be reduced and several more lives saved. At this stage, the Government should plan a distribution channel before announcing any new scheme of providing cheap medicines

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

but overeating within the school premises makes children more inclined to eating all the time.

Encouraging children to study well is always a good idea, however, where is the money for this additional breakfast scheme and that will be its burden on the exchequer? It is not like the kids were not going to school because of the lack of a breakfast. This action is like a parent with a lot of debt, borrowing more money to buy ‘extra’ food for the children instead of paying for tuition classes to make them perform better. It is better to teach a man how to fish rather than to keep giving him fish to eat.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

A LEGEND HANGS HIS RACQUET

Sir — This refers to ‘End of an Era’ (Sept 16). One can already experience the end of an era after the retirement of Serena Williams and now Roger Federer (41). Federer, a Swiss professional tennis player and philanthropist, announced his retirement on Thursday. He has

undergone three knee surgeries and cited his late-career injury problems as the reason for his retirement. He was ranked world No. 1 by the Association of Tennis Professionals for 310 weeks, including a record 237 consecutive weeks. The player has proved his dominance on the court with 20 Grand Slam titles and 103 career ATP titles.

His achievements are legendary. He will not be playing beyond the Laver Cup next week. He created a golden era in men’s tennis with arch-rivals Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic. His smooth, effortless technique, a toolbox of shots as vast as any in the world and his willingness to constantly explore the net made him a champions’ champion. His historic career is filled with lovely memories that will live on and on in the hearts of his fans.

Tashi Baheti | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

If the (BJP’s sting operation) video is true and not yet another lie, then I am ready to be arrested.



Delhi Deputy CM —Manish Sisodia



Ukrainians have once again managed to do what many considered impossible.

Ukraine President —Volodymyr Zelenskyy

We’re very excited to get married but (we are) just worried about Covid and want to be responsible.



Actor —Richa Chadha



The last 24 years on the Tour have been an incredible adventure. I feel grateful!

Swiss tennis legend —Roger Federer

Mamata Banerjee is singularly responsible for the BJP’s rise in Bengal. The Left is singularly responsible...in Kerala.



Congress gen secy —Jairam Ramesh

FIRST COLUMN

HEALTHCARE IN TIER II & III CITIES

After Covid, relatively smaller cities have better healthcare and awareness about well-being



PROBAL GHOSAL

India is a diverse country and so are the opportunities for it to become the emerging hub for the healthcare industry. With economic growth and industrialization in the major cities, a number of tier II and III cities have revolutionized the healthcare industry. Especially, at this time the Indian healthcare system is evolving like never before, these cities have made major changes to their healthcare services after the Covid-19 pandemic. From telemedicine to video consultation during the lockdown, their contributions have been greatly appreciated to connect the remote areas. Tier II and III cities are the connecting links between developed cities and remote locations.

Healthcare startups are also filling up the demand-supply gaps. During the coronavirus pandemic, many startups emerged in the healthcare sector to contribute to the global emergency. Since then these startups have been doing a commendable job by introducing the latest technologies and advanced solutions to eradicate the obstacles that hinder the growth of medical science in the country. These startups aim to transform healthcare services, especially in remote regions across India and other parts of Asia. There is a need for portable devices in tier II and III cities.




Professionals leading small and medium healthcare businesses target this and push the cities to be the hub for any healthcare solution. Along with startups, many hospital chains are expanding and exploring routes in these cities as over a few years, people in small towns and cities are engrossed in quality healthcare. Companies are increasing availability in tier II and III cities not only in terms of basic facilities and medical practitioners but also for quality cardiologists, surgeons, oncologists, and diagnostic techniques.

Governments with initiatives for enhancing medical services in tier II and tier III cities are also contributing to the growing solutions in these cities and are determined to change the demand-supply gaps. Investments have drastically increased over the years for the overall growth of the healthcare infrastructure in tier II and tier III cities. There have been a total of six AIIMS facilities in Rishikesh, Bhubaneswar and Bhopal. Moreover, there are proposed AIIMS setups in J& K (Awantipora), Haryana (Rewari), Bihar (Darbhanga), and (Madurai) Tamil Nadu. While digital healthcare and telemedicine have come a long way, there are a lot of areas where we lack awareness. The government in association with the private sector runs campaigns and advertisements to spread awareness about these, especially in underserved areas. Initiatives like Ayushman Bharat, Ayush Mission and Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojna are turning the table for tier II and tier III cities.

The country has been the number one choice for investors by virtue of the diverse geography, mixed cultures and immense potential due to a huge population creating immense supply and demand. The government is making constant efforts to provide affordable healthcare to every nook and corner of the country and increasing awareness about concepts like telemedicine and online consultation. Tier II and tier III cities are adapting the facilities and services just like tier I and further taking it ahead to the remote locations of the country. Advanced technology and digitalization have opened doors for healthcare workers to grasp information about the latest inventions every day and this is another plus point for such cities to emerge as a major healthcare hub in the country.

(The author is Executive Chairman, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals)

De-notified tribes still face existential crisis



AFZAL SOFI

Even after repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, the conditions of nomadic and de-notified tribes are far from satisfactory

In colonial India, through the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, around 200 tribal communities across India were notified by the colonial government as “criminal” tribes, “addicted to the systematic conduct of non-bailable offences.” Under this Act, the State visited a range of discrimination, stigmatization, and oppression on these communities. The designation of “Criminal Tribes” exacerbated their social and economic marginalisation at a time when their way of life and traditional occupations had come under threat with the spread of modern technology and commercialisation of social relationships.

Five years after British colonial rule in India ended, the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed (on August 31, 1952), and these communities were “de-notified”. Since then, these communities have observed August 31 as ‘Liberation Day’ or ‘Vimukti Diwas’.

However, it is essential to note that repealing the Criminal Tribes Act has not been enough to stop the oppression and stigma faced by the Nomadic Tribes and De-Notified Tribes (NTDNTs). The year the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed by independent India saw the enactment of the Habitual Offenders Act by the Union Government, followed by versions of the same Act in various states. Authorities have routinely used these laws against NTDNTs.

As a result, even after 75 years of India’s Independence and 70 years after their “liberation”, the NTDNT communities are still subjected to discrimination and are associated with criminality. As a result, the NTDNT communities cannot enjoy the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. There have been innumerable cases in which the right to equality before the law (Article 14), the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15), and the right to life and liberty (Article 21) of people belonging to the NTDNT communities have been disregarded.

The socio-economic conditions of NTDNT communities also continue to be poor. They cannot access education, healthcare, livelihoods, housing, social security, participation in political processes and governance. In addition, members of these communities, including women, are subjected to harassment and violence. While several state Governments have established some welfare schemes, their limited purview, weak mandate and inconsistent implementation render them ineffective in easing the plight of NTDNTs.

“There was no rehabilitation plan for us with the Government of India after we were freed from the settlements. The Government should have given us land for cultivation and to build our houses. We were allowed to live in forests without basic amenities,” said Sunita Bhosle,



THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THESE COMMUNITIES CONTINUE TO BE POOR. THEY CANNOT ACCESS EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, LIVELIHOOD, HOUSING, SOCIAL SECURITY, PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESSES AND GOVERNANCE. MEMBERS OF THESE COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING WOMEN, ARE SUBJECTED TO HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

(The author works in the communications unit of ActionAid Association; views expressed here are personal and do not necessarily reflect the organisation’s)



a member of the pardhi community and an activist based in Pune, Maharashtra, engaged with the cause for the last 25 years. She further stated that the socio-economic circumstances of 200 such communities across the country are still deplorable. “They cannot access jobs, housing, social security, healthcare, education, or political involvement. Additionally, women from these communities experience assault and harassment. We still have to fight for our basic rights through protests and rallies even after 75 years of our country’s Independence,” she added.

“We all identify with our country’s Independence Day on August 15, but we also celebrate August 31 as a liberation day for our communities. Apart from celebration functions, we hold awareness programmes and rallies to highlight our problems, give voice to concerns and press the Government to frame policies and allocate budgets for our rehabilitation, resettlement and livelihood restoration,” Sunita added.

Arun Jadhav, a member of Grameen Vikas Kendra, says that the motive of celebrating August 31 as “liberation day” is to organise communities. Grameen Vikas Kendra works with banjara, pardhi, nandiwale and dabri gosawi communities in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra.

Arun explained, “They discuss the identity issues they face daily in the absence of identity

cards. They lack access to food security and other social security benefits because they do not own land. Their livelihoods, including their traditional occupations, are constantly under threat. Raj Kumar Bahot, an activist from Panipat, Haryana, said that most NTDNT residents in his district are from the sapera and bawariya communities, who primarily relied on the forest for their subsistence.

“To make a living, the sapera community mostly gathered snakes, trained them to dance, and staged performances in different villages. However, they lost their jobs when the Government forbade such actions in the country,” said Raj Kumar.

The bawariya community, which used to rear cattle in the forests, lost their livelihoods after the forests were heavily cut down, said Raj Kumar, adding that mostly they have turned into ragpickers now.

“Both of these communities have become homeless. They are not permitted to settle anywhere. If they establish temporary settlements, they frequently receive notices from courts after cases are filed by powerful villagers,” he said.

“The network of organisations are needed to unify our voices to fight for the rights and re-emphasise demands related to basic social security services, entitlements, land rights, rehabilitation and resettlement related

issues, education of children, employment and livelihood restoration-related demands,” said Bajrang, who also heads Lokhita Samajik Vikas Sanstha in Maharashtra.

He said that while much has been achieved for rights and access to entitlements in various parts of the country, more needs to be done to uplift all the NTDNT communities.

“Against any criminal activity in any part of the country, we become easy targets of the police. We are often booked in fake cases, harassed, and tortured. The angrez (English colonizers) have gone from our country, but the police in our country are our angrez now. In 2021-22 alone, I have documented six cases of custodial deaths in my district,” said Sunita Bhosle, who has also written a book titled “Vinchavacha Tel (The Oil of the Scorpion)”, highlighting the police harassment of members of the NTDNT communities in Maharashtra.

Arun Jadhav said that the police in training centres still have training about dealing with NTDNT communities using the Habitual Offenders Act.

“I have documented several cases of murder, rape, fake encounters and other abuses and harassment and submitted those before National Human Rights Commission. Therefore, we need to put up a hard struggle to safeguard our rights and ensure protection,” said Arun.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE MURDER OF TWO MINOR DALIT SISTERS IN LAKHIMPUR IS VERY DISTURBING. WOMEN’S SAFETY CAN’T BE EXPECTED (FROM BJP).
—CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



THE GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE SUCH AN ACTION THAT WILL MAKE THE SOULS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS SHIVER.
—UTTAR PRADESH DEPUTY CM BRAJESH PATHAK

Gender stereotypes in villages promote prejudice

Such stereotypes are perceived differently in more archaic forms in the rural areas, while women there lack popular voice

Gender discrimination manifests in stereotypes that is intertwined in the society in such a way that not acting accordingly may lead to an individual’s isolation within the community. This risk and fear of ostracisation, however, exists more in the disadvantaged rural communities. In addition, cut-off from the fast-paced and constantly evolving world of urban areas, villages are almost always stuck in a time warp. These stereotypes are perceived differently in more archaic forms in the rural areas.

This factor becomes especially influential when it comes to shaping the perspectives of the native communities. In Garur and Kapkot blocks of Bageshwar



ANANYA VASISHTHA

(The author is studying at Public Policy at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. Charkha Features)

district in Uttarakhand, opinions of adolescent girls on gender stereotypes associated with different professions, differed from the ones seen in the urban areas. This difference varied in degree, but interestingly the degree kept on increasing with the remoteness of villages.

In Charson village of Garur block, which was closer to the main Bageshwar market, girls had access to tools to look at common practices in their society with a critical lens. Anjali Arya, one of the girls from this village, voiced how unfair it was that while boys can wear all kinds of ‘modern’ and ‘western’ clothes such as jeans and t-shirts, the girls were questioned and looked down upon by the society for wanting to do the same.

Further, Jyoti, who had been a state-level athlete, highlighted how inaccessibility to cities and as a result, sports stadiums and sports coaching centres robbed girls of dreams to play for the country.

Girls in Baghar, a remote but scenic village in Kapkot block of Bageshwar, have been living a slightly different reality. There was an adolescent girl quietly sitting in a barren, empty space near one of the houses. She had a stick with which she was shoeing away any child from coming near her as she combed her hair, with a bunch of utensils lying beside her. It was pointed out by a local that this girl was menstruating and that is why she had been isolated



from the entire community space.

For seven days, she would be made to stay inside a stable meant for cows and buffaloes. She would be served food separately and asked to take bath separately, maybe even in the river. As an article in feminism in India says, a “culture of invisibility” is imposed on women ever since their birth. They are

made to live a life where they don’t even realise that they are being subjected to injustices every day. But once they realise, their life becomes a constant struggle to make themselves visible, audible and noticeable. The ways of resistance vary as per the region, culture and the patriarchal traditions.

In some cultures, women use the medium of ‘folk songs’ to speak of their lives, culture and society. They do not have the eloquence of typing out concise tweets, or riveting Instagram captions; they do not have the privilege and accessibility to take out candle marches or sit in a protest at Jantar Mantar.

The marginalization of such women and girls is therefore deepened by their

socio-economic status and even geographical constraints in some cases and we, in the urban areas, fail to hear their stories, represent their concerns and conveniently forget to pass the mic over to them.

Now, the question arises – even if the understanding and perception of ideas of empowerment are different in different places, why is that of consequence to us? It is important to understand that policies get drafted for the ‘civil society’, but especially that part of the civil society, which is able to mobilise itself into a pressure group for the government. However, more often than not, these pressure groups represent those people who had already been vocal about their self-interest, not those marginal-

ized groups who have been silent or silenced through centuries of patriarchal traditions – like the girls of Bageshwar.

Again, it is not like these girls or women have not been trying to break out of the ‘invisibility spell’ on their own, but the bridges that we have built for us in the urban areas to tread on are out of reach for many of these girls. So first, they need to start building roads to traverse the hurdles erected by their socio-cultural challenges and for that, we need to provide these girls with the necessary raw-materials, because if they do not find their interests represented in our movements, then we need to make space for them to establish their own narrative.

Ukraine alleges torture at village near Russian border

AP ■ KOZACHA LOPAN

In a dank basement behind the local supermarket, metal bars cordoned off a corner of the room to form a large cell. Dirty sleeping bags and duvets show three sleeping spots on top of sheets of Styrofoam for insulation from the damp earth floor. In the corner, two black buckets served as toilets.

A few meters (yards) outside the barred cell, three dilapidated chairs stand around a table, cigarette butts and empty husks of pumpkin seeds littering the floor around them.

Ukrainian authorities say this was a makeshift prison where Russian forces abused detainees before Ukrainian troops swept through the village of Kozacha Lopan in a major counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region this month.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said more than 10 such "torture chambers" have been discovered in the region since the hasty withdrawal of Russian troops last week. The claims of what occurred in the room could not be independently confirmed.

Kozacha Lopan, whose edge lies less than two kilometers (just over a mile) from the Russian border, was retaken by Ukrainian forces September 11.

In a statement posted Saturday on its Telegram channel, the prosecutor's office of the Kharkiv region, in whose jurisdiction Kozacha Lopan lies, said the room seen by AP journalists was used as a torture cell during the occupation of the area. It said Russian forces had set up a local police force that ran the prison, adding that documents confirming the functioning of the police department and implements of torture had been seized. The statement said an investigation was being conducted.

Images the prosecutors released showed a Russian military TA-57 telephone with additional wires and alligator clips attached to it. Ukrainian officials have accused Russian forces of using the Soviet-era radio telephones as a power source to electrocute prisoners during interrogation.

In his nightly address to the nation Saturday, Zelenskyy mentioned another location, at the railway station in Kozacha Lopan, where he said "a room for torture and tools for electric torture was found." AP journalists did not see that location.

Zelenskyy compared the Russians to the Nazis during World War II.

"And they will answer in the same way — both on the battlefields



and in the courtrooms," he said.

Burial sites have been found in some areas where Russian forces were pushed out, most notably in the city of Izium, where Ukrainian officials say more than 440 graves have been found near the city's cemetery. Zelenskyy has said they contain the bodies of civilian adults and children, as well as soldiers,

showing signs of violent deaths, some possibly from torture.

Vitalii, a commander in the National Guard, said his team is hunting for graves of possible victims of abuse at the detention center in Kozacha Lopan. He asked to be identified by his first name only for security reasons.

The team is also recovering

bodies on the battlefield, which are lying where they fell on farm fields or inside burned-out tanks. The Russian army was pushed all the way back across the border into Russia after holding the area for months. But artillery shells still whistle through the air, fired from inside Russia and landing with resonating thumps and billows of

black smoke on Ukrainian territory.

Despite the shelling, a small group of soldiers winds its way along a rutted mud track to where a dead Ukrainian combatant lies, spotted by a drone used to search for bodies and shallow graves.

"It's a risk. We are always risking our lives and at any moment there might be some shell flying in from the territory of Russia," Vitalii said.

The dead Ukrainian is lying on his back in body armour and helmet, a cap beneath it to block out the sun. The body has been there for a long time.

They document the scene and lift the remains into a body bag before heading farther along the track to a charred Russian tank. It takes only one of the team to carry away the body bag holding the remains of the Russian found inside.

Autopsies will follow, and the details of the sites recorded and passed on to investigators looking into potential war crimes, Vitalii said.

Throughout this border area, where fierce battles raged, villages bear the devastating scars of war: houses bombed and burned, roads pitted with craters from exploding mortar shells, smashed cars lying by

the roadside.

In the days after the Russians were chased out, local people have been returning to see what is left of their homes.

"Three days before we decided to leave, it was like hell in here" from all the shooting, said Larisa Letiucha, 56, in the nearby village of Prudyanka. "It was flying from all over the place. It was whistling and exploding. We hid in the basement and... our door was blasted off."

She left with her family in April, and returned to check on her property a few days after Ukrainian soldiers retook the village.

"I saw a horror. I still cannot pull myself together," she said in recounting her first sight of what remained of her house. "We were living here our whole lives. We were building it, making renovations. Our whole life was invested here."

The windows are blasted in and the ceiling leaks from where a patch is missing from an explosion. In the small house her parents built on the same plot, the entire back part is missing. Shrapnel and debris litter the house.

"Our houses are comfortable even though we live in the village," Letiucha said. "It's a horror. I don't even know when we will renovate and rebuild all of this."

UK: Russia likely to step up Ukraine civilian target attacks

AP ■ KYIV

Prosecutors in an area of Ukraine where Russian forces recently retreated in the face of a Ukrainian counteroffensive are accusing Russia of torturing civilians in one village that was recently freed.

In an online statement, prosecutors in the Kharkiv region said they found a basement where Russian forces allegedly tortured prisoners in the village of Kozacha Lopan, near the border with Russia.

In images they released, they showed a Russian military TA-57 telephone with additional wires and alligator clips attached to it.

Ukrainian officials have accused Russian forces of using the Soviet-era radio telephones as a power source to electrocute prisoners during interrogation.

Russian shelling hit cities and towns across a wide stretch of Ukraine during the night, officials said on Sunday, while the British defence ministry warned that Russia is likely to increase its attacks on civilian targets as it suffers battlefield defeats.

"In the last seven days, Russia



has increased its targeting of civilian infrastructure even where it probably perceives no immediate military effect," the ministry said in an online briefing.

"As it faces setbacks on the

front lines, Russia has likely extended the locations it is prepared to strike in an attempt to directly undermine the morale of the Ukrainian people and government."

Russian fire killed four medics

attempting to evacuate a psychiatric hospital in the Kharkiv region on Saturday, said governor Oleh Syniehubov.

Two patients were wounded in the attack in the village of Strelecha, he said.

Overnight shelling also hit a hospital in the city of Mykolaiv, a significant Black Sea port, regional governor Vitaliy Kim said. He said there was also shelling in other parts of the region, and two people were wounded.

Three people were wounded in nighttime shelling of the city of Nikopol, which is across the river from Europe's largest nuclear power station, said regional governor Valentyn Reznichenko.

The six-reactor Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant was captured by Russian forces in March, but is operated by Ukrainian engineers.

Its last reactor was switched off a week ago after repeated power failures because shelling put crucial safety systems at risk.

Near the city of Zaporizhzhia, Vatican Almoner Cardinal Konrad Krajewski and his convoy came under fire on Saturday, the Vatican

news service reported, forcing them to seek cover while unloading supplies.

"For the first time in my life, I didn't know where to run. Because it is not enough to run, you have to know where to go," said the Polish-born cardinal, whose position makes charitable contributions in the name of the pope.

Five people have died over the past day in Russian attacks in the Donetsk region, one of two Ukrainian regions that Russia recognises as sovereign states, governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

The separatist forces that control much of Donetsk on Sunday claimed that Ukrainian shelling of a prisoner-of-war colony in Olenivka killed one prisoner and injured four.

More than 50 POWs were reported killed in a July attack on the Olenivka prison that Russian and Ukrainian authorities blame on each other.

A Washington-based think tank, the Institute for the Study of War, said Russian forces in Donetsk continue to conduct "meaningless operations" on villages as opposed to reinforcing the front line.

27 killed, 20 injured in bus accident in China



PTI ■ BEIJING

A bus overturned on a highway in southwest China's Guizhou province on Sunday, killing 27 people and injuring 20 others, local police said.

The bus carrying 47 people was travelling on the highway section in Sandu Shui Autonomous County when the accident took place, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported, quoting the county's public security bureau.

The injured are being treated and emergency responders have been dispatched to the scene, police said, without providing any more details.

Road accidents are common in China, where traffic regulations are often flouted or go unenforced. A majority of accidents occur due to violations of traffic laws.

China's frequently overcrowded long-distance buses are particularly prone to fatalities.

Vatican envoy comes under fire as he delivers aid in Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Top Vatican envoy and his entourage came under fire as they were distributing humanitarian supplies in Ukraine, the Vatican news service said on Sunday, but reported no injuries.

The incident took place near the city of Zaporizhzhia on Saturday and forced Vatican Almoner Cardinal Konrad Krajewski and others to take cover.

"For the first time in my life, I didn't know where to run. Because it is not enough to run, you have to know where to go," said the Polish-born cardinal, whose position makes charitable contributions in the name of the pope.

Russian shelling hit cities

and towns across a wide stretch of Ukraine during the night, officials said Sunday, while the British defense ministry warned that Russia is likely to increase its attacks on civilian targets as it suffers battlefield defeats.

"In the last seven days, Russia has increased its targeting of civilian infrastructure even where it probably perceives no immediate military effect," the ministry said in an online briefing.

"As it faces setbacks on the front lines, Russia has likely extended the locations it is prepared to strike in an attempt to directly undermine the morale of the Ukrainian people and government."

Prosecutors in Kharkiv are accusing Russia of torturing civilians in one village that was



recently freed.

In an online statement, they said they found a basement where Russian forces allegedly tortured prisoners in the village of Kozacha Lopan, near the border with Russia.

In images they released, they showed a Russian military TA-57 telephone with additional wires and alligator clips attached to it.

Ukrainian officials have accused Russian forces of using the Soviet-era radio telephones as

a power source to shock prisoners during interrogation. It was not immediately possible to verify the Ukrainians' claims.

Russian fire killed four medics attempting to evacuate a psychiatric hospital in the Kharkiv region on Saturday, said governor Oleh Syniehubov. Two patients were wounded in the attack in the village of Strelecha, he said. Overnight shelling also hit a hospital in the city of Mykolaiv, a significant Black Sea port, regional governor Vitaliy Kim said. He said there was also shelling in other parts of the region, and two people were wounded.

Three people were wounded in nighttime shelling of the city of Nikopol, which is across the river from Europe's largest

nuclear power station, said regional governor Valentyn Reznichenko. The six-reactor Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant was captured by Russian forces in March, but is operated by Ukrainian engineers.

Its last reactor was switched off a week ago after repeated power failures because shelling put crucial safety systems at risk.

Five people have died over the past day in Russian attacks in the Donetsk region, one of two Ukrainian regions that Russia recognises as sovereign states, governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

The separatist forces that control much of Donetsk on Sunday claimed that Ukrainian shelling of a prisoner-of-war colony in Olenivka killed one prisoner and injured four.

PM Shehbaz's graft cases among 50 sent back by accountability courts to NAB



PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The accountability courts in Pakistan have returned to the National Accountability Bureau 50 major corruption cases against suspects, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in a big relief to the premier who is facing a slew of graft charges.

The cases against Shehbaz, his son and former chief minister of Punjab Hamza Shahbaz, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf, and former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gillani have also been returned to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) by the accountability courts.

The relief has been provided in line with the amendments to the NAB laws, Geo News reported on Saturday, adding that the Ramzan Sugar Mill reference against Shehbaz and his son Hamza is also among the cases sent back.

In February 2019, NAB filed this corruption case against Shehbaz and his son Hamza. The top anti-graft body alleged that during his tenure as Punjab's chief minister, Shehbaz misused his authority and got a 10-km sludge carrier constructed in Chiniot district to facilitate Ramzan Sugar Mills owned by his sons.

It alleged that the two suspects "fraudulently and dishonestly" inflicted a loss of PKR 21.3 crore (USD 948,565 approx) to the national exchequer.

Similarly, an accountability court returned six rental power plant (RPP) cases against the National Assembly speaker back to NAB. The bureau had alleged that Ashraf misused his powers in rental power projects while being the minister for Water and Power during the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government, the report said.

The Universal Services Fund (USF) case against PPP Senator Yousuf Raza Gillani, in which he was accused of misusing authority in an illegal publicity campaign, was also returned.

Following the amendments to NAB rules, the cases in Modaraba scams and company frauds have also been withdrawn from the accountability courts, it said.

In August, the National Assembly passed the National Accountability (Second Amendment) Bill, 2022, which sought to exclude private transactions from the scope of NAB.

13 injured as radical Islamist group attacks Shia procession in Pakistan

PTI ■ LAHORE

Activists of a radical Islamist group attacked a Shia procession in Pakistan's Punjab province, leaving at least 13 people injured, police said on Sunday.

According to an FIR, the Shia procession was going to Imambargah (congregation hall) in Sialkot, about 130kms from Lahore, in connection with the Chehlum of Imam Hussain on Saturday when a group of people armed with pistols, clubs and stones attacked the mourners.

The Chehlum is a Shia religious observance that commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, who was martyred on the 10th day of the month of Muharram.

"Over a dozen mourners were injured and were shifted to hospital for treatment," according to the FIR.

A senior police officer told PTI on Sunday that tensions had been simmering over the past few days in the area between the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and Shia activists over the route of the procession.

"The TLP local leaders wanted that the Shia procession should not pass in front of their mosque cum seminary. The local Shias were determined to go to Imambargah by the same route they take every year," the officer said on condition of anonymity.



"Police officers had held talks with both sects and apparently the TLP leaders agreed that they would not object to the procession route," the officer said. However, a group of TLP activists came out of their seminary on the Alam Chowk of Shahabpura (Sialkot) and attacked the Shia mourners.

"Thirteen people, all of them belonging to the Shia community suffered injuries. The condition of a couple of them is stated to be critical as they had head injuries," the officer said. Sialkot Police chief Faisal Kamran said the police force reached the spot after learning about the incident. However, the attackers managed to flee.

The police chief said 30 suspects have been booked under the terrorism charges with no arrest so far.

China values UN relationship despite human rights criticism

AP ■ BEIJING

As world leaders gather in New York at the annual UN General Assembly, rising superpower China is also focusing on another United Nations body that is meeting across the Atlantic Ocean in Geneva.

Chinese diplomats are speaking out and lobbying others at an ongoing session of the Human Rights Council to thwart a possible call for further scrutiny of what it calls its anti-extremism campaign in Xinjiang, following a UN report on abuses against Uyghurs and other largely Muslim ethnic groups in the western China border region.

The concurrent meetings, on opposite sides of the Atlantic, illustrate China's divided approach to the United Nations and its growing global influence.

Beijing looks to the UN, where it can count on support from countries it has befriended and in many cases assisted financially, as a counterweight to U.S.-led blocs such as the Group of Seven, which have grown increasingly hostile toward China.



"China sees the UN as an important forum that it can use to further its strategic interests and goals, and to reform the global order," said Helena Legarda from the Mercator Institute for China Studies in Berlin.

While holding up the United Nations as a model of multilateralism, China rejects criticism or decisions that the ruling Communist Party sees as counter to its interests. Its diplomats struck back at the report published last month by the U.N. Human rights office raising concerns about possible "crimes against humanity" in

Xinjiang — vowing to suspend cooperation with the office and blasting what it described as a Western plot to undermine China's rise.

China had pushed hard to block the report on Xinjiang, delaying its release for more than a year. In the end, the information did come out — but just minutes before embattled U.N. Human rights chief Michelle Bachelet left office.

Like the United States, China feels a certain freedom to ignore U.N. Institutions when it wants: The Trump administration pulled the U.S. Out of the Human Rights Council in 2018, accusing it of anti-Israel bias. The Biden administration jumped back in this year, and has made a priority of defending Israel in the 47-member-state body.

Also like the United States, China leverages its influence to get its way — effectively stymieing an investigation by the U.N.'s World Health Organization into whether China was the birthplace of the coronavirus pandemic.

President Murmu in UK to attend State funeral of Queen Elizabeth II

PTI ■ LONDON

President Droupadi Murmu, who is in London on a three-day visit to attend the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II scheduled at Westminster Abbey on Monday, signed a condolence book on behalf of the Indian government on Sunday.

President Murmu was joined by Acting High Commissioner Sujit Ghosh at Lancaster House in London, where visiting world leaders are stopping by to sign a book of condolence in memory of Queen Elizabeth II who died aged 96 in Scotland on September 8. Murmu also paid her respects on Sunday at Westminster Hall, where Britain's longest-serving monarch is lying-in-State until the morning of the state funeral on Monday.

The Indian head of state, who arrived on Saturday evening, will join around 500 world leaders and worldwide royals in a congregation of around 2,000 expected at the Abbey for a sombre ceremony starting at 11am local time and concluding with a two-minute



silence around an hour later.

Ahead of Monday's funeral service, the president is invited to a reception hosted by King Charles and Queen Consort Camilla at Buckingham Palace. All visiting heads of state, government and official overseas guests are expected at what has been described as an "official state event".

Zaki Cooper, who worked in the Queen's Royal

Household between 2009 and 2012 and has written widely about the monarchy, believes the Queen enjoyed an "affectionate relationship with India" and was instrumental in the transition from empire to Commonwealth. "By recognising the desire for many countries to self-determination, she embraced the Commonwealth," said Cooper.

"The Commonwealth often featured in her messages

and speech. She was the organisation's head and also its inspiration. Her legacy of developing friendly relations between nations is one that will continue to inspire the Commonwealth, as it embarks on a new chapter with King Charles III as its head," he said.

Representatives of the Realms and the Commonwealth will be among those in the congregation at Monday's funeral service.

Hours before the ceremony, the Queen's Lying-in-State will close to members of public queuing for the past few days, with waits of around 24 hours expected over the weekend as the queue stretches to around 10 km long.

The gates to Abbey will open at 8 am local time on Monday for the visiting dignitaries and guests invited to the funeral, which will include hundreds of people who were recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours earlier this year, many honoured by the late monarch for their extraordinary contributions to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and volunteering in their local communities.

Under the plans in place for the day, all heads of state and overseas government representatives, including foreign royal families, are expected to gather at a central venue and travel under "collective arrangements" to the Abbey.

The state funeral service will be conducted by the Dean of Westminster, with Prime Minister Liz Truss and Commonwealth Secretary General Baroness Patricia Scotland reading "lessons".

The Archbishop of York, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Free Churches Moderator will say prayers and the sermon will be given by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who will also give the Commendation.

The conclusion of the first state funeral in the UK in 57 years, last held at the Abbey for Britain's war-time Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1965, will be followed by a service and a private burial ceremony at St. George's Chapel in Windsor. The late monarch will be laid to rest in the chapel at Windsor Castle.



London prepares for 1M visitors for funeral

AP ■ LONDON

London's transport authority says it is preparing for around 1 million people to visit the British capital Monday for Queen Elizabeth II's state funeral.

Transport for London chief Andy Byford said Sunday the capital has seen "huge numbers of additional passengers" since

the queen died on Sept. 8. But he said demand will "reach a climax" on Monday.

Across the country some 250 extra train services will run, including some overnight trains. Peter Hendy, chairman of Network Rail, said Monday will see the "biggest public transport operation since the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games."

More than 100 Heathrow Airport flights will be canceled to prevent aircraft noise disturbing the funeral at Westminster Abbey Monday morning and the queen's committal service at Windsor Castle afterward.

The west London airport said 15 per cent of its 1,200 flights due to take off or land on Monday will be disrupted.

Pelosi, other US lawmakers visit Armenia as ceasefire holds

AP ■ YEREVAN

A US congressional delegation headed by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi arrived Saturday in Armenia, where a cease-fire has held for three days after an outburst of fighting with neighbouring Azerbaijan that killed more than 200 troops from both sides. The US Embassy said the visit will include a meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

On Friday, Pelosi told reporters in Berlin that the trip "is all about human rights and the respecting the dignity and worth of every person." Other members of the U.S. Delegation include Rep. Frank Pallone, chairman of the House Energy



and Commerce Committee, and congresswomen Jackie Speier and Anna Eshoo.

A cease-fire took effect on Wednesday evening following two days of heavy fighting that marked the largest outbreak of hostilities in nearly two years.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

traded blame for the shelling, with Armenian authorities accusing Baku of unprovoked aggression and Azerbaijani officials saying their country was responding to Armenian attacks. Pashinyan said at least 135 Armenian troops were killed in the fighting.

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry said Friday it had lost 77.

The two ex-Soviet countries have been locked in a decades-old conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is part of Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994.

During a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan reclaimed broad swaths of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories held by Armenian forces. More than 6,700 people died in the fighting, which ended with a Russia-brokered peace agreement. Moscow deployed about 2,000 troops to the region to serve as peacekeepers.

Once McCain's party, Arizona GOP returns to far-Right roots

AP ■ PHOENIX

Simmering discontent among a segment of Arizona Republicans over John McCain's famous penchant for bucking his party boiled over in the winter of 2014 with the censure of the longtime U.S. senator.

McCain's allies responded with an all-out push to reassert control over the Arizona Republican Party. Censure proponents were ousted or diminished, and McCain went on to defeat his far-right challenger in a blowout during the 2016 primary.

Less than a decade later, the right wing forces that McCain marginalized within the Arizona GOP are now in full control, with profound implications for one of the nation's most closely matched battlegrounds. Arizona Republicans have traded McCain for Donald Trump.

"We drove a stake in the heart of the McCain machine," Kari Lake, making a dramatic stabbing gesture, said in a speech



days after she won the Republican primary for governor in early August.

Lake, a well-known former television news anchor, has delighted segments of the state's GOP base that have long been at odds with their party's establishment and want their leaders to confront Democrats, not compromise with them.

She draws large, enthusiastic crowds

that are unusually energized for a midterm election. Her fans erupt in rapturous applause when she takes a shot at the media or pledges to repel the "invasion" at the southern border.

"She's for border control. She's a MAGA person. She is fighting the establishment. And that, to me, is enough," said Bob Hunt, a Republican in Tucson who attended a Lake rally this summer.

McCain, who died in 2018, never lost a race in his home state. But his maverick brand of Republicanism is in retreat after election-denying allies of the former president swept GOP primaries this month from governor and U.S. Senate down to the state Legislature.

Kelli Ward, the primary challenger McCain trounced in his last re-election campaign, was elected state GOP chair in 2019. She broke with precedent for party leaders and campaigned openly for Trump's slate of candidates ahead of the primary this year.

EU proposes to suspend billions in funds to Hungary

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union's executive branch recommended Sunday that the bloc suspend around 7.5 billion euros (dollars) in funding to Hungary over concerns about democratic backsliding and the possible mismanagement of EU money.

The European Commission, which proposes the bloc's laws and ensures that they are respected, said it was acting "to ensure the protection of the EU budget and the financial interests of the EU against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary."

EU Budget Commissioner Johannes Hahn said that despite measures Hungary has proposed to address the deficiencies, the commission is recommending the suspension of funds "amounting to an estimated amount of 7.5 billion euros."

The money would come from "cohesion funds" granted to Hungary. This envelope of money, one of the biggest slices



of the bloc's budget, helps countries to bring their economies and infrastructure up to EU standards.

EU countries pay around 1% of their gross national income into the budget. Hungary is slated to receive at least 50 billion euros in all from the 2021-27 budget, according to commission estimates.

Any action to suspend the funds must be approved by the EU member countries, and this requires a "qualified majority," which amounts to 55% of the 27 members representing at least 65% of the total EU population. They have one month

to decide whether to freeze Hungary's funds, but can in exceptional circumstances extend that period to two months. The commission is recommending that the member countries take until Nov. 19 to allow Hungary more time to address the concerns.

The commission has for nearly a decade accused Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban of dismantling democratic institutions, taking control of the media and infringing on minority rights. Orban, who has been in office since 2010, denies the accusations.

New model to enlist regular Americans to resettle refugees

AP ■ SAN DIEGO

When nearly 80,000 Afghans arrived in the United States, refugee resettlement agencies quickly became overwhelmed, still scrambling to rehire staff and reopen offices after being gutted as the Trump administration dropped refugee admissions to a record low.

So the U.S. State Department, working with humanitarian organizations, turned to ordinary Americans to fill the gap. Neighbors, coworkers, faith groups and friends banded together in "sponsor circles" to help Afghans get settled in their communities.

They raised money and found the newcomers homes to rent, enrolled their children in schools, taught them how to open bank accounts and located the nearest mosques and stores selling halal meat.

Since the U.S. military's withdrawal from Kabul last



year, the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans has helped over 600 Afghans restart their lives. When Russia invaded Ukraine, a similar effort was undertaken for Ukrainians.

Now the Biden administration is preparing to turn the experiment into a private sponsorship program for refugees admitted through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and is asking organizations to team up with it to launch a pilot program by the

end of 2022.

The move comes amid increasing pressure on President Joe Biden, who vowed in a 2021 executive order to increase opportunities for Americans to resettle refugees and restore the U.S. as the world's safe haven. The Trump administration decimated the refugee program, which traditionally tasks nine resettlement agencies with placing refugees in communities.

Experts say the private

UN: Exclusion of Afghan girls from high schools 'shameful'

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The United Nations on Sunday called for Afghanistan's Taliban rulers to reopen schools to girls in grades 7-12, calling the anniversary of their exclusion from high school "shameful." The UN said it is increasingly concerned that the policy, together with other restrictions on basic freedoms, will contribute to a deepening of the country's economic crisis in the form of greater insecurity, poverty and isolation. "This is a tragic, shameful, and entirely avoidable anniversary," said Markus Potzel, acting head of the UN mission in Afghanistan. A year after the Taliban took power, hard-liners appear to hold sway in the Taliban-led Govt. Teenage girls are still barred from school and women are required to cover themselves from head to toe in public, with only their eyes showing. The religious group has failed to deliver on various promises to enable girls' return to the classroom.

Strong quake kills 1, knocks house, derails train in Taiwan

AP ■ TAIPEI

A strong earthquake shook much of Taiwan on Sunday, toppling a three-story building and temporarily trapping four people inside, stranding about 400 tourists on a mountainside, and knocking part of a passenger train off its tracks.

One person died and nine people had minor injuries, Taiwan's Emergency Operations Center said.

The magnitude 6.8 quake was the largest among dozens that have rattled the island's

southeastern coast since Saturday evening, when a 6.4 quake struck the same area.

Most of the damage appeared to be north of the epicenter, which Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau said was in the town of Chishang at the relatively shallow depth of 7 kilometers (4 miles). In nearby Yuli town, a cement factory worker died and the three-story building, which had a 7-11 convenience store on the ground floor and residences above it, collapsed, the island's Central News Agency said.

The 70-year-old owner of



the building and his wife were rescued first, but it took longer to get to a 39-year-old woman and her 5-year-old daughter.

A photo released by the Hualien city government showed the girl lying on a blan-

ket and being handed down a metal ladder from the top of the debris by helmeted rescue workers in orange uniforms.

The top two stories of the building were left sprawled across a small street and onto the other side, with electricity wires pulled down by the fallen structure.

More than 7,000 households were reported without power in Yuli, and water pipes were also damaged. Shelves and musical instruments fell over at the Mount Carmel Presbyterian Church and a long crack ran down its floor.

Powerful typhoon pounds southern Japan

AP ■ TOKYO

A powerful typhoon slammed ashore in southern Japan on Sunday as it pounded the region with strong winds and heavy rain, causing blackouts, paralyzing ground and air transportation and prompting the evacuation of thousands of people.

The Japan Meteorological Agency said Typhoon Nanmadol was heading north after making landfall in Kagoshima city on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu. It was packing maximum winds of 162 kilometers (101 miles) per hour, and is forecast to reach Tokyo on Tuesday.

The weather agency predicted as much as 50 centimeters (20 inches) of rainfall by Monday evening and warned of flooding and landslides. It also alerted residents in the affected areas of "unprecedented" levels of powerful winds and waves, urging them to evacuate early.

Storm and high wave warnings were



in effect in Kagoshima, where residents were told to stay inside stable buildings on second floor or higher, if it's deemed a safer option than going to evacuation centres.

More than 12,000 people took shelter at evacuation centres. In neighbouring Miyazaki prefecture, about 8,000 people left their homes.

Local officials said several people had been injured. In Kushima city in Miyazaki,

a woman was slightly hurt by shards of glass when winds broke windows at a gymnasium. NHK national television said 15 people had been injured, citing its own tally.

Power outages were expanded across the Kyushu region as the typhoon damaged more power lines and facilities while moving north. By Sunday night, 216,450 homes were without electricity, according to Kyushu Electric Power Co.

Footage on NHK television showed a pachinko pinball parlor with part of its glass wall shattered by the gust in Kanoya city in Kagoshima. Elsewhere in the prefecture, an elderly woman in suffered a minor injury after falling, NHK said.

Hundreds of domestic flights have been canceled and more are planned to be grounded in western Japan through Tuesday as the typhoon headed northeast, according to Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways.

Fall in Kharif output may keep rice prices at elevated levels

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 6-7 million tonnes shortfall in rice production due to a fall in paddy sowing area is likely to keep rice prices at elevated levels, adding to the inflationary pressure that the slowing economy is already grappling with.

Elevated food prices, including that of cereals, had led to retail inflation reversing a three-month declining trend, to touch 7 per cent in August.

Similarly, the wholesale price inflation, which declined to 11-month low, also showed price pressures from cereals resulting from wheat output being impacted by severe heat waves in some parts of the country. In addition to this, expectation of a lower paddy output - conservative by government estimates and higher if outside experts are to be believed - will keep inflationary expectations higher, experts and analysts believe.

Erratic June-September rainfall and delayed withdrawal of South-West monsoon rains have added to concerns over paddy crop.

India's rice production during the 2021-22 crop year, ended June, stood at record 130.29 million tonnes (MT) as against 124.37 MT in the previous year. Food ministry has projected a fall of 6-7 MT in rice production during this year's Kharif season, which accounts for 85 per cent of the country's total rice output.

However, some believe



there is no cause of panic yet and that the buffer stock India maintains is enough to meet demand for the public distribution system (PDS).

Also, the government intervention in the form of banning export of broken rice and slapping a 20 per cent duty on export of non-basmati and non-par boiled rice will help contain the situation.

These restrictions were imposed due to price rise in rice and animal feed in the last one year.

As per the data maintained by the Consumer Affairs ministry, the wholesale prices have risen by 10.7 per cent to Rs 3,357.2 per quintal as on September 14, from Rs 3,047.32 per quintal a year ago. The retail prices rose 9.47 per cent to Rs 38.15 per kg from Rs 34.85 per kg.

An article published in

RBI's latest bulletin said that there is "a resurgence of food price pressures, mainly stemming from cereals even as fuel and core components provided a modest measure of respite."

Uneven spatial distribution of rain in September has set-off an upsurge in prices of key vegetables, in particular, tomatoes, it added.

"On the food front, furthermore, we need to brace for the impact of the predicted delayed withdrawal of the monsoon," the RBI article said. A monthly Economic Review released by the Finance Ministry on Saturday noted that inflationary pressures in India appear to be on a decline with a pre-emptive set of administrative measures by the government, agile monetary policy, and easing of international commodity

prices and supply-chain bottlenecks.

However, it cautioned, there is no "room for complacency on the inflation front as lower crop-sowing for the Kharif season calls for deft management of stocks of agricultural commodities and market prices without unduly jeopardising farm exports."

The government officials feel there is no cause of panic as the measures in recent times were adequate to tide over the situation.

"I do not see any immediate big threat to domestic inflation in rice. Some increase in price is actually there because of increase in MSP and other input costs like fertilisers and fuel. Some increase will be there when prices of all commodities are rising," Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand said.

Mcap of six of top-10 most valued companies tumbles by ₹2 L Crore



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Six of the top-10 most valued firms suffered a combined erosion of Rs 2,00,280.75 crore from market valuation last week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys taking the biggest hit, amid weak trend in equities.

Last week, the Sensex fell 952.35 points or 1.59 per cent.

While Reliance Industries, TCS, HDFC Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys and HDFC suffered erosion from their valuation, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Adani Transmission and Bajaj Finance were the gainers.

The market valuation of TCS tanked Rs 76,346.11 crore to Rs 11,00,880.49 crore. Infosys lost Rs 55,831.53 crore from its valuation which remained at Rs 5,80,312.32 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries declined by Rs 46,852.27 crore to Rs 16,90,865.41 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever fell by Rs 14,015.31 crore to Rs 5,94,058.91 crore.

HDFC's valuation dipped Rs 4,620.81 crore to Rs 4,36,880.78 crore and that of HDFC Bank went lower by Rs 2,614.72 crore to Rs 8,31,239.46 crore.

From the gainers pack,

Adani Transmission added Rs 17,719.6 crore taking its valuation to Rs 4,56,292.28 crore.

State Bank of India's mcap jumped Rs 7,273.55 crore to Rs 5,01,206.19 crore.

The valuation of Bajaj Finance climbed Rs 6,435.71 crore to Rs 4,41,348.83 crore and that of ICICI Bank advanced Rs 5,286.92 crore to Rs 6,33,110.48 crore.

In the ranking of most valued firms, Reliance Industries was leading the pack, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys, State Bank of India, Adani Transmission, Bajaj Finance and HDFC.

ONGC wants Govt to scrap windfall tax, USD 10 gas price

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's top oil and gas producer ONGC wants the government to scrap windfall profit tax levied on domestically produced crude oil and instead use the dividend route to tap into bumper earnings resulting from surge in global energy prices.

The firm also favours a floor price for natural gas at USD 10 per million British thermal unit — the current government-dictated rate — to help bring deposits in challenging areas to production, two sources aware of the matter said.

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) management during discussions with government officials stated that levying windfall profit tax on domestic oil producers, while at the same time reaping rich savings from buying discounted oil from Russia was unfair.

Buying discounted Russian crude oil, which was shunned by the West since the Ukraine conflict, has helped save Rs 35,000 crore and this savings should be ploughed back by boosting domestic output, they said.

ONGC management has told the government the savings from Russian oil buy should be allowed to be passed on to the company which will invest the same in identified projects.

Ex-RBI Guv bats for hawkish stance on rates



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Former RBI Governor C Rangarajan advocated maintaining the ongoing hawkish stance by the Reserve Bank of India to tame inflation and expected that the rupee will strengthen with resumption of capital inflow.

He also said the country has to clock an 8-9 per cent year-on-year growth for the next five years to achieve the target of a USD 5-trillion economy.

Speaking at the Samar Kanti Paul Memorial Lecture at the Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture on Saturday evening, the former RBI governor said he would be happy if the country's economic growth reaches seven per cent in the current fiscal.

"The current policy stance should continue. Developed countries are also taking steep rate hikes. I expect more rate hikes," Rangarajan said without elaborating on the quantum.

RBI has been maintaining a hawkish stance with rate hikes to tame inflation.

Speaking on the rupee trend, the 90-year-old economist said, there was a sharp

fall in rupee value against the US Dollar to Rs 79-80 with the outflow of capital.

"Now, with the inflow of capital, the value of rupee is expected to strengthen but will not reach the pre-COVID levels," he said.

There was a positive inflow of Rs 22,000 crore from foreign portfolio investors in August 2022, after months of relentless selling.

Rangarajan stressed on the need to increase the investment rate to 33 per cent, which has slipped to 27-28 per cent, to achieve a higher growth rate.

The share of private investment must also increase, he said.

Asserting that reforms must continue in various sectors like power and agriculture marketing, Rangarajan said that the reform measures undertaken in the 1990s were "well-coordinated and had a composite character".

He also called for harmony in the Centre-state relationship.

"A consensus building is an integral part as the state and Centre are joint partners in the growth process," he said.

Honda expects India biz to get back on track as it looks to re-enter SUV segment next year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese auto major Honda expects its India business to get back on growth path as it gears up to re-enter the high-selling sports utility vehicle segment next year, according to its India CEO.

The company, which is present through a wholly-owned subsidiary in the country, currently does not have presence in the sports utility vehicle (SUV) space, which has now become the largest segment in the over 30 lakh per annum domestic passenger vehicle industry.

The automaker in recent years has discontinued models like CR-V, BR-V and Mobilio in the market and now relies on its sedan portfolio -- City, City eHEV (hybrid) and compact sedan Amaze to bring in the volumes.

In an interaction with PTI, Honda Cars India President and CEO Takuya Tsumura said the company has taken sever-

al steps in the last few years to make its business constitution "healthy" once again.

He admitted that the company went through a tough time in the last three years, as globally Honda decided to move towards electric mobility and the process led to restructuring of facilities and operations to conform to the new era. Tsumura noted that the restructuring process led to various actions including closure of few manufacturing sites across the globe, including one plant in India as well.

"We did some restructuring in the last few years and it was a bit of a tough time, but I can now say it is done, the company now has a healthy constitution," he said.

Terming India as one of the most important markets, Tsumura said the Japanese company has now initiated various initiatives like product introduction in the high selling SUV segment to scale up its volumes in the country.



"I can say that we have bottomed out this year and from now on we are only going to go up," he noted.

Honda has seen its market share in the domestic passenger vehicle segment drop from 5.44 per cent in FY19, to 2.79 per cent in FY 22.

Acknowledging that lack of products in the high-selling

SUV segment led to drop in volumes and market share, Tsumura said the company is now gearing up to drive in a SUV model next year to revv up its sales.

"The SUV market has grown robustly and now accounts for around 50 per cent of the overall passenger vehicle segment. We are not partici-

pating in that segment. We are confident that with the launch of the SUV next year, we will enhance volumes," he said.

When asked how the company plans to position the upcoming model in a highly competitive segment, Tsumura said: "We are confident about that model... Well it would be hard to become number one player but still there will be some demand there so we want to attack that area."

He did not disclose details about the size and engine specifications of the upcoming SUV. When asked about sales aspirations from the new model and by how much it could help the company regain its overall market share, he said the first focus is to enhance production capacity utilisation at its Rajasthan-based plant which is currently hovering around 60 per cent.

The development phase of the model is almost done, and the company is now in the process of doing some final

adjustments before the start of the mass-production, Tsumura said.

Brushing aside apprehensions of exiting the market, he noted that the automaker is here to stay in the Indian market.

"We are staying. Why do we leave a market which is now the fourth largest market globally? We have been here for more than 20 years, so there is no reason to leave," Tsumura said. India is one of the biggest markets globally and Honda top management understands its importance, he added.

On new product launches, Tsumura said the company is looking at various segments with electrification strategy in mind.

The company, which is currently relying on hybrid technology, could bring in battery electric products in the future when the adequate charging infrastructure is in place across the country, he added.

Discoms outstanding late payment surcharge dues dips to ₹713 cr from ₹5,058 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Outstanding dues of power distribution companies towards gencos declined sharply to Rs 713.29 crore on Friday from Rs 5,085.30 crore as of August 17 following a strict action against defaulter utilities.

The defaulter utilities were barred from trading at power exchanges under the Electricity (Late Payment Surcharge and related matters), Rules 2022 notified by the power ministry in June 2022.

'National Logistics Policy sets roadmap for developing more interconnected framework'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The National Logistics Policy sets the roadmap for developing a more interconnected and tech-driven framework for building cost and operational efficiency in the sector, industry experts said.

The policy, unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, reflects the government's positive intent to address all the core challenges of the logistics and supply chain industry, Anshuman Singh, the Chairman and Managing Director of Stellar Value Chain Solutions said.

It will not only inspire all logistics players to come together and collaborate to build logistics competitiveness globally but also increase the confidence of investors who are keen to invest in the logistics sector, Singh added.

According to him, by realigning the operational dynamics and formulating the pathway to reduce the logistics cost to a single-digit, the policy puts the industry on the cusp of the next phase of growth.

Rizwan Soomar, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, DP World Subcontinent said that "the multi-pronged approach by the government adopted in the policy to suggest regulato-



ry and procedural reforms across infrastructure, services and human capital provides a comprehensive strategic direction to the sector and will be a key catalyst in attracting investments.

The focal push for digitisation through platforms like ULIP and E-LogS is crucial to support the designed services improvement framework in improving regulatory interoperability, standardisation of logistic processes and in bringing the entire multimodal network onto a single digital dashboard, enhancing visibility and transparency for all stakeholders.

According to Vineet Agarwal, MD at Transport Corporation of India, the push

towards seamless multimodal transportation and modern connectivity will be a game changer as it will shift the transportation stress from just road to other modes as well.

The Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) tenant of the NLP will enhance visibility for customers and enable logistics companies like TCI to adopt digitisation at a much larger scale, Agarwal stated.

The new logistics policy will help make the sector an integrated, cost-efficient, resilient, and sustainable logistics ecosystem in the country as it covers all bases of the sector along with streamlining rules and addressing supply-side constraints, said Pranav Goel, Co-founder-CEO, Porter.

The Digital Integration System for logistics ecosystems will lead to seamless and faster work-flow, making logistics significantly efficient, he said.

The e-handbook launched for the standardisation of the warehousing sector, will enable the small and large third party logistics and warehousing players in standardising their processes and automating their systems and processes thus reducing cost and leading to higher profitability, said Lancy Barboza, MD, Flomic Global Logistics Ltd.

E-vehicle sales see sharp uptick in Rajasthan

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The popularity of electric vehicles is gaining momentum in Rajasthan, where the number of such vehicles has jumped six times in three years, as people are increasingly adapting to the emerging mobility model.

Looking at the comfort and easy mobility in city life, the sale of two-wheelers is the highest, while the sale of four-wheelers is the lowest, as consumers are still apprehensive about the charging infrastructure, particularly on the highways and in the outskirts.

According to Rajasthan's Transport Department data, the sale of electric vehicles in the state has increased approximately six times till the first week of September since 2019.

"There is continuous increase in the sale of electric vehicles in the state, as more and more people are shifting towards better and advanced technology. The rising trend is also due to the policy of the state government, which is providing grants on purchase of e-vehicles," Transport Department Commissioner K L Swami told PTI.

A total of 6,627 electric vehicles in three segments -- two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers -- were purchased in the state in 2019.

After a slight slump in e-vehicle sales in the year 2020



(5,599 vehicle sales) due to the pandemic, the sale shot up to 23,451 in the year 2021.

As per the data, till September first week this year, a total of over 42,900 electric vehicles have been sold in the state, which includes about 28,000 motorcycle/scooters, 13,400 three-wheelers, 1,500 light motor vehicles.

From August 25, till September 7, which includes Ganesh Chaturthi festival, approximately 3,200 electric vehicles were sold in Rajasthan.

Easy handling and lower runner costs are among the key reasons consumers choose EV over fuel-run vehicles.

The Business of EV vehicles is also blooming with people shifting towards new technologies.

Nishchal Chaudhary, founder and director of electric scooter company- Batt'RE, said that the sales reflect that people are rapidly shifting towards electric vehicles and the presence of EVs on roads is going to be dominant.

'Inox Green Energy plans to launch ₹740-cr IPO in next 30-45 days'

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Inox Green Energy Services, a subsidiary of Inox Wind, is planning to come out with its Initial Public Offering (IPO) by October this year to raise Rs 740 crore to fund its expansion plans.

The company will focus on the Indian market initially and plans to tap the overseas market after establishing itself in this country, Inox Wind Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Kailash Lal Tarachandani told PTI.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to its plant in Rajnol, Gujarat, Tarachandani said the company is planning to launch its IPO "in the next 30 to 45 days".

This is Inox Green Energy Services' second attempt to go public. In February, the company had filed the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) for its proposed IPO with the markets regulator Sebi.

However, the draft offer documents for the IPO were

withdrawn in late April without disclosing any reason.

According to the latest DRHP filed on June 17, the Rs 740-crore IPO will comprise of fresh issuance of equity shares worth Rs 370 crore and an offer-for-sale of equity stocks aggregating to Rs 370 crore by promoter Inox Wind.

Elaborating on the company's business plans, Tarachandani said: "There is already enough opportunity. India has been consistent in the last few years."

GUNNERS REGAIN TOP SPOT

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal moved back to the top of the Premier League as goals from William Saliba, Gabriel Jesus and Fabio Vieira put the gloss on a dominant performance to beat Brentford 3-0.

Injuries to captain Martin Odegaard and Oleksandr Zinchenko had stretched Mikel Arteta's squad to the extent that 15-year-old Ethan Nwaneri came off the bench late to become the youngest player in Premier League history.

However, the Gunners showed no sign of weakness at a ground where they were beaten 2-0 last season to move back one point above Manchester City and Tottenham at the top of the table.

The match had been moved forward two hours to help ease police pressures around Queen Elizabeth II's funeral and Britain's longest serving monarch was remembered in a minute's silence before kick-off.

Once the action did get underway, it was one way traffic for 45 minutes as Arsenal bounced back in style from

their sole defeat of the season away to Manchester United two weeks ago.

Gabriel Martinelli should have opened the scoring within two minutes as he fluffed his shot from Granit Xhaka's cut-back.

It took just 15 minutes more for Arsenal to make the breakthrough when Saliba flicked Bukayo Saka's corner in off the far post.

Jesus also used his head to score his fourth goal in seven Premier League games since joining from Manchester City as he powered home another enticing delivery from Xhaka.

Saka was then wasteful with a glorious chance from Fabio Vieira's through ball.

The absence of Odegaard also handed Vieira his first Premier League start and the Portuguese midfielder made his mark with a sumptuous strike from outside the box to kill off any doubt over the outcome four minutes into the second half.

Brentford striker Ivan Toney had been handed his first England call-up in mid-week but was kept well in check by the towering presence of Saliba.



The Bees will be hoping this was just an off day after an impressive start to the season and that Thomas Frank will

still be in charge after the international break with the Dane linked as a potential successor to Brendan Rodgers at

Leicester.

But an easy day for Arsenal was rounded off a minute from time when Arteta was able to

hand Nwaneri his debut as just 15 years and 181 days, breaking Harvey Elliott's record as the youngest player in Premier

League history when he appeared for Fulham as a 16-year-old.

YOUNGEST PLAYER AT 15
Ethan Nwaneri made Premier League history on Sunday as the Arsenal midfielder became the youngest ever player in the English top flight at 15 years and 181 days.

Nwaneri came off the bench late on as the Gunners returned to the top of the table with a 3-0 win at Brentford.

He broke the record previously held by Liverpool's Harvey Elliott when he appeared for Fulham aged 16 years and 30 days. Nwaneri also set a new landmark for the youngest Arsenal player in any competition that was held by Cesc Fabregas.

Nwaneri had been expected to spend the season with Arsenal Under-18s but he was quickly promoted to the Under-21s following his impressive performances.

Injuries to captain Martin Odegaard and Oleksandr Zinchenko had left Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta short of midfield options.

"We are pretty short and opportunities come when issues

arise," said Arteta. "We have the opportunities to bring young players on."

Northern Irish schoolboy Christopher Atherton became the youngest senior footballer ever in the United Kingdom earlier this week when he appeared for Glenavon aged 13 years and 329 days.

EVERTON WIN

At the other end of the table, West Ham will spend the upcoming international break in the bottom three after Neal Maupay's first Everton goal gave the Toffees a much-needed win.

Frank Lampard's men are now unbeaten in five league games but had just four points on the board before kick-off from four consecutive draws.

An injury to Dominic Calvert-Lewin forced Everton to seek more firepower in the final weeks of the transfer window and Maupay delivered on just his second appearance since a move from Brighton.

The Frenchman spun onto Alex Iwobi's pass and fired in from the edge of the area to lift Everton up to 13th in the table.

West Ham slip to 18th with just one win from their opening seven league games.

Lewa shines in Barcelona's win

AP ■ BARCA

Relentless striker Robert Lewandowski rounced twice as Barcelona hammered 10-man Elche 3-0 to move a point clear at the top of La Liga on Saturday.

The Polish forward continued his sensational form since joining from Bayern Munich this summer, taking him to 11 goals in eight appearances across all competitions.

Real Madrid boast a 100 percent record after five games but face city rivals Atletico Madrid away in Sunday's derby.

So this was a chance for Barcelona to provisionally depose the champions and they seized it.

"We'll sleep as leaders for the first time in two years," said Barca coach Xavi Hernandez. "We've done our homework and got the three points. We're on the right path."

Xavi rotated in midfield after the Champions League defeat by Bayern Munich on Tuesday, with Frenkie de Jong and Franck Kessie stepping in, while Memphis Depay was handed a rare start in attack.

Elche, bottom of the table, made the job significantly easier for the hosts when Gonzalo Verdu hauled down Lewandowski as he burst through on goal after 14 minutes and was swiftly dismissed.

Barcelona racked up the chances and inevitably Lewandowski broke the deadlock after 34 minutes.

Pedri set Alejandro Balde in down the left and the young defender cut a ball across the six-yard box for the veteran striker to simply cushion into the net.

"We knew he would score goals and make the difference, but the personal side of him has surprised me," said Xavi.

"He has a lot of humility, commitment, hunger. He's very hard working."

Memphis doubled the lead with a sharp indi-

vidual turn and powerful strike which flew past Edgar Badia, and Pedri added a third shortly before half-time but it was disallowed for offside.

Barcelona only had to wait three second half minutes for it, with Lewandowski pouncing on a loose ball in the box and finishing clinically to put the game far beyond Elche's reach.

After Cadiz's late win over Real Valladolid on Friday night, Francisco Rodriguez's side were left bottom of La Liga on one point, and never looked like changing it against Xavi's sparkling Barca.

Badia denied Lewandowski his hat-trick with a fine save and the striker fired fractionally over the bar before being replaced by Ferran Torres, to an ovation from home supporters already under his spell.

Long after Lewandowski had been replaced, his name continued to ring around the stadium. In the forward, Barcelona finally have a player to replace Lionel Messi's goal contributions and help them compete for the title again, which they last won in 2019.

Lewandowski's arrival and the club's summer signings spree have given supporters a reason to watch again, as the 85,000 strong crowd testified to, compared to last season's languishing attendances.

"The excitement of the fans is palpable, in the stadium, in the streets, you have to maintain this hope and belief," added Xavi.

"The people are connected, Barcelona's support is more alive than ever."

AP ■ MILAN

Monza won their first ever match in Serie A on Sunday, stunning 10-man Juventus 1-0 to pile more pressure on under-fire Massimiliano Allegri.

Christian Gytjjaer netted a historic goal 15 minutes from the end at the U-Power Stadium to move the club owned by Silvio Berlusconi off the bottom of the table and end Juve's unbeaten start to the season.

Monza took their first three points of the campaign in their first match under Raffaele Palladino, who replaced sacked Giovanni Stroppa on Tuesday.

They are still in the relegation zone but a single point behind 17th-placed Verona, who lost 2-0 at Fiorentina.



"Today was incredible and unexpected," said Palladino. "They showed themselves to be real men... they gave everything, I shouldn't get any

of the credit because it was all down to them."

Troubled Juve, who lost Angel Di Maria to a straight red card five minutes before

Stimac set to continue as head coach till Asian Cup next July

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Croatian Igor Stimac is set to continue as Indian football team head coach with the Technical Committee of All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Sunday recommending the extension of his contract till the end of AFC Asian Cup in July next year.

The technical committee, which met here under the chairmanship of legendary striker IM Vijayan, discussed the performance of the Indian men's team under Stimac and recommended to the AIFF executive committee his continuation at the helm of affairs.

This will be Stimac's third contract extension after he took charge of the national men's team in May 2019 on a two-year tenure. In 2021, he was given a contract extension of a few months till September of that year. He was then given another



tenure extension of one year which was to end this month.

"In the first agenda of the meeting, the Technical Committee recommended the extension of Senior Men's Team Head Coach Igor Stimac's contract till the AFC Asian Cup 2023," the AIFF said in a release.

The 2023 AFC Asian Cup will be held from June 16 to July 16 but the venue is yet to be decided after original hosts China pulled out due to COVID-19 situation in country.

Stimac's continuation was on expected lines after he guided the national team to the 2023 Asian Cup Finals with a dominant show in the qualifiers here in June. It will now be just a matter of formality for the executive committee of the AIFF to stamp its seal of approval in its meeting here on Monday.

The first assignment for Stimac, a part of Croatia's 1998 World Cup third-place finishing team, after contract extension will be the two international friendly matches in Vietnam later this month for which a two-day camp of 24 probables has started here on Sunday.

India play Singapore on September 24 and Vietnam three days later, both matches to be held in Ho Chi Minh City.

Ex-India captain Dilip Tirkey files nomination for HI president's post

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain and Olympian Dilip Tirkey on Sunday filed his nomination for the post of Hockey India (HI) president.

After submitting his nomination papers, Tirkey said that his intention is to take the sport to greater heights.

"Today I have filed my nomination papers for Hockey India president's post. I filed my nomination on behalf of Hockey Association of Odisha of which I am currently the president," Tirkey said.

"Hockey gave me a lot. As a player I have played hockey for the country for a considerable amount of time and after retirement I have been working for the development of the sport in Odisha. So I felt being in the National hockey body I can work more for the game, I

can take the game to greater heights."

Tirkey exuded confidence of coming out with flying colours in the upcoming polls.

"I have been in talks with a lot of states. The entire NorthEast is with me. Bengal, Assam, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura all are backing me. Besides, I have been in talks with other states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and they have given positive response. So I am confident," he said.

Asked about his goals if elected as HI chief, Tirkey said: "I would like to strengthen the grassroot program. I would work towards identifying the reasons behind the decline of hockey in those states where it was popular and produced players and take corrective steps and revive the game there."

Thapa, Lovlina in Indian squad for Asian C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran Shiva Thapa and Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain will spearhead the Indian men's and women's challenge respectively at the Asian Boxing Championship next month.

The selection trials for the continental showpiece slated to take place in Amman, Jordan from October 30 to November 12, were held at NIS Patiala from Thursday to Saturday.

The likes of reigning world champion Nikhat Zareen, three-time Asian Championship medallist Amit Panghal and Birmingham Commonwealth Games medallists Rohit Tokas and Sagar Ahlawat skipped the trials.

While Zareen has given the tournament a miss to get some much-needed rest, Panghal, Tokas and Ahlawat are nursing injuries, a Boxing



Federation of India (BFI) source told PTI.

Thapa is a five-time Asian medallist. His haul includes a

gold, two silver and as many bronze medals.

In the last edition, he secured a fifth successive

medal, a silver, at the prestigious event, becoming the most successful Indian male boxer in the history of the tournament.

The only other male pugilist with five Asian championship medals is Kazakh legend Vassiliy Levit, an Olympic silver medallist and two-time world bronze medal winner.

Two-time Commonwealth bronze medallist Md. Hussamuddin (57kg) is the other prominent name in the men's squad.

Borgohain, will have a point to prove after enduring two underwhelming tournaments -- the World Championships and the Commonwealth Games.

The 24-year old, who returned with a bronze medal in the last edition, will be competing in the 75kg weight class as she begins preparation for the Paris Olympics, which will not feature her welterweight 69kg category.

The women's team also features world championship bronze medallist Parveen Hooda (63kg) and Youth World Boxing champion Alfiya Pathan.

The Indian contingent is likely to leave for Amman mid October for a 15-day training camp ahead of the tournament.

SQUAD

Men: Govind Sahani (48kg), Sparsh Kumar (51kg), Sachin (54kg), Md. Hussamuddin (57kg), Etash Khan (60kg), Shiva Thapa (63.5kg), Amit Kumar (67kg), Sachin (71kg), Sumit (75kg), Lakshya C (80kg), Kapil P (86kg), Naveen K (92kg), Narender (+92kg).
Women: Monika (48kg), Savita (50kg), Minakshi (52kg), Sakshi (54kg), Preeti (57kg), Simranjit (60kg), Parveen (63kg), Ankushita Boro (66kg), Pooja (70kg), Lovlina Borgohain (75kg), Saweety (81kg), Alfiya (+81kg).

Meiraba wins int'l challenge in Nagpur, Arjun-Kapila claim doubles title

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Young Indian shuttler Meiraba Luwang Maisnam claimed the men's singles title after beating compatriot Mithun Manjunath in the final of the India Mahatrasra International Challenge here on Sunday.

The 19-year-old Meiraba, seeded fourth, outwitted second seed Manjunath 21-14, 21-16 in 42 minutes to emerge victorious. The Manipur lad trains at Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy. This is his second title of the season, having won the Iran Fajr International in February this year.

In women's singles, Ruthvika Shivani Gadde finished second best after losing 11-21, 11-21 to Japan's Miho Kayama in the summit clash.

Fast-rising men's doubles pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila prevailed 21-17, 20-22, 21-18 over Thailand's Chaloepon Charoenkitamorn



and Nanthakarn Yordphaisong in the final. The world number 27 Indian pair had reached the quarterfinals of BWF World championships last month.

Mixed doubles combination of K Maneesha and Shaik Gouse lost 18-21, 9-21 to Thai duo of Ruttanapak Oupthong

and Jhenicha Sudjaipraparat to finish runner-up.

The women's doubles final was an all-Japanese affair with Chisato Hoshi and Miyu Takahashi seeing off Miho Kayama and Kaho Osawa 21-18, 19-21, 21-16 in an hour and five minutes.



ROHIT WANTS PLAYERS TO EXIT COMFORT ZONE

PTI ■ MOHALI

With the T20 World Cup squad already picked, India skipper Rohit Sharma wants his players to get out of their comfort zone and explore new things about their game in the six home games against Australia and South Africa ahead of the ICC showpiece next month.

Rohit feels players can now afford to extend their 'limits' without the pressure of selection.

The management will be giving rest to the likes of Hardik Pandya, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Arshdeep Singh over the six games but by and large it will have a full squad at its disposal.

Rohit's comments come in the backdrop of its Asia Cup campaign in which the team management experimented quite a bit and copped criticism for that.

"I wanted to bring security in the team that is why we announced the team for both the series before the World Cup (Australia and South Africa). In Asia Cup also we more or less had the same team," said Rohit ahead of the series opener against Australia.

"In these six games we want to keep trying what we can achieve with different styles. It is all about going out and trying to find ways of exploring ourselves but there is no limit to trying new things. You can extend yourself in so many directions to achieve so many things for the team."

Virat Kohli went out of his comfort zone during the Asia Cup and played a rare sweep shot and Rohit wants even the bowlers to push their limits.

"We will keep encouraging people to be more expressive. For example someone who doesn't play reverse sweep, can he play that and

Umesh replaces Shami in India squad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The seasoned Umesh Yadav was on Sunday drafted into the Indian team as veteran seamer Mohammed Shami's replacement for the three-match T20I series against Australia.

Shami was ruled out of the rubber, starting on Tuesday, late on Saturday night after he had tested positive for COVID-19.

"Fast bowler Mohd. Shami will not be able to take part in the upcoming three-day Mastercard T20I series against Australia after testing positive for COVID-19. The All-India Senior Selection Committee has named Umesh Yadav as his replacement," the BCCI said in a statement.

The Board also said that pacer Navdeep Saini has been ruled out of the upcoming three-match one-day series between India A and New Zealand A after sustaining a right groin injury on the

first day of the ongoing Duleep Trophy semi-final match between North Zone and South Zone.

Rishi Dhawan has been named as Saini's replacement in the India A squad.

"He (Saini) is ruled out of the ongoing tournament and also from the upcoming three-match one-day series between India A and New Zealand A. Saini will now head to the NCA for further management of his injury."

Umesh, who played the last of his seven T20Is in 2019 against Australia, was back in the scheme of things after recovering from a quadriceps injury he suffered during his county stint in England.

The 35-year-old Umesh's comeback is nothing short of a fairytale as his county stint with Middlesex was cut short by the quadriceps injury.

He had a terrific first leg in the 2022 IPL for Kolkata Knight Riders when he swung the ball at great pace.

par scores in every game except the one game against Sri Lanka where we got 173 which was also a good score," Rohit said.

"In Super 4s we had close games against Pakistan and Sri Lanka, it could have gone either way. You need a bit of luck as well. Hopefully we will get that in the World Cup."

Talking more about the batting style, Rohit said: "This approach of ours has given us a lot of trust that we can go out and play like that. It is a great sign."

"We will have another review meeting of the last 10 months after these six games and will see what we need to do in World Cup," said Rohit.

With the Mohammad Shami down with COVID-19, Prasadh Krishna being injured and Mohammad Siraj playing county cricket in England, Umesh Yadav has been brought back into the T20 fold.

Coming in as Shami's replacement, Rohit said Umesh was a simple selection considering his rich experience and ability to swing the ball in the powerplay.

In Jasprit Bumrah's absence, India's bowling lacked bite in Asia Cup. Now with Bumrah back and full strength squad picked, Rohit is happy with the look of the bowling department.

The captain was particularly impressed with Arshdeep Singh's run in Asia Cup.

"The way Arshdeep bowled was very impressive. The way he landed yorkers in extreme pressure in his first year of international cricket, it is not easy."

"He is a very smart guy and keeps things simple. We needed a left arm seamer and he has done well in IPL and then he came here and has done well. We always wanted variety in our attack and we have that now."

Can't wait to see David in action: Cummins



PTI ■ MOHALI

All set for his much-anticipated international debut against India, Singapore-born Australian hard-hitting batter Tim David has made everyone excited, including their pace spearhead Pat Cummins.

"We are here in Mohali, we just had our first training session as a team out there on the oval. Really good session, Great to see the new face, on his first ever Aussie tour -- Tim David around. He hit a lot of long balls. I can't wait to see him in action," Cummins told *cricket.com.au*.

The reigning T20I champions will take on India in a three-match series.

"Great to be back in India for the first time since COVID. Can't wait to see all the fans. They are always crazy over here. Hopefully some packed stadiums here. It's always a lot of fun. You feel like a billion people are watching, so I can't wait for it."

With Marcus Stoinis ruled out because of a side strain, the

26-year-old David looks set for his Australian debut. At the nets, he was seen whacking the balls all around the park.

In a forgettable season where MI finished at the bottom of the table, David showed glimpses of his power-hitting, scoring 186 runs at a strike rate of 216.28.

Terming him the "X factor", the Australian Test skipper further said: "(He) goes about it slightly differently, so look forward to it."

"Great to see David get his chance. He has been right up there with the best in the world, batting in the middle-order of T20 cricket is a really tough spot to bat," Cummins said.

"You see most run-scorers are opening the batting or batting in the top-order. It is hard to be consistent when there are spin bowlers bowling and he has been fantastic. If he gets his chance, hopefully he can continue doing what he has been doing in the domestic T20 league," he added.

Kohli makes his intent clear in India's first practice session

PTI ■ MOHALI

Pull shots off the fast bowlers and stepping out against spinners was the order of the day as Virat Kohli nicely warmed up for the T20s against Australia with an extensive net session here on Sunday.

Kohli, as often is the case, was among the first ones who headed into the nets. The focus was clearly on playing the short ball as he faced a barrage of rising deliveries in his 45-minute session.

Having roared back to form with a much awaited hundred in Asia Cup, the spring in Kohli's stride was palpable.

The star batter had stepped out to even the likes of Rashid Khan in the Asia Cup displaying supreme confidence. He was in a similar mindset in the nets on Sunday, charging down to the spinners for those straight hits down the ground.

He struck that hundred against Afghanistan as an opener, igniting the debate over his batting slot. Whether he bats at the top or his usual number three spot, Kohli realises the need to attack from the get go in the shortest format.

Kohli is ready to get out of his comfort zone to follow the team's new template and a rare sweep shot during the Asia Cup is a testimony to that.

One of his finest T20 innings, 82 not out versus Australia in the 2016 World T20, came here at his very ground and now with his form and confidence back, fans can expect another special knock from him against the same opponents on Tuesday.

PCA TO UNVEIL YUVRAJ AND HARBHAJAN STANDS

The Punjab Cricket Association will be unveiling the



stands named after two of its star cricketers, Yuvraj Singh and Harbhajan Singh, an hour before the match start on Tuesday.

The south pavilion has been named after one of India's greatest spinners Harbhajan and north pavillion after 2011 World Cup hero Yuvraj.

"We have taken initiative to

honour all the star players of Punjab. It happens in other associations and we thought we should also honour two iconic cricketers from Punjab," PCA secretary Dilsher Khanna said.

"What better way than having a stand in their name. The unveiling will take place before the start of game."

will continue to play aggressive and in case it loses early wickets, the back-up plan is in place.

"We will continue to play like that. That is something we spoke quite clearly at the start of my (captaincy tenure) and everyone is comfortable with that. At the same time we know our second line of defence if we are in trouble. We spend a lot of time talking about these things," he said.

"Guys are very clear if we are 10

for three how we need to bat. If we are 50 for no loss, how we need to bat. These have been discussed at length, it is just about executing now."

India had won against Pakistan and Hong Kong in the first two matches but lost to Babar Azam and his men and Sri Lanka in the Super Four stage to crash out of the Asia Cup.

"If you see our Asia Cup performance as well we posted par plus or

Rahul will open at T20 WC: Rohit

MOHALI: Virat Kohli batting at the top alongside him is a "definite option" but India captain Rohit Sharma on Sunday made it clear that KL Rahul will remain his opening partner at the T20 World Cup.

Rohit said the team management has absolute clarity on the role of each player in the squad. "Rahul bhai and I have had a chat that we will have to make Virat open in some of the games because he is our third opener. In the last match we saw what he did (as opener) and we are obviously happy about that," Rohit said.

While calling Kohli as the team's back-up opener, Rohit also clarified that Rahul remains his opening partner.

"KL Rahul will open for us at the T20 World Cup. We are not going to experiment with that position a lot. His performances often go noticed. He is a very important player for India."

"If you look at his performances over last two-three years, it has been very good. I want to make it clear to everyone that we have absolute clarity on this and *kya kichhi pak rahi hain* we know it very well. There is no confusion," said the skipper on a lighter note.

"We are clear what KL brings to the table for us. He is match winner for us as well. We have not picked a back-up opener and Virat can obviously open for us. He has done that well for his IPL franchise over the years," Rohit added. **PTI**



SZ crush North by 645 runs to set final date with West Zone

PTI ■ COIMBATORE

Left-arm orthodox spinner R Sai Kishore's maiden match haul of 10 wickets ensured a staggering 645-run victory for South Zone over North to set up a clash with West Zone in the Duleep Trophy final starting on Wednesday.

The margin of victory was one of the highest in Indian first-class cricket.

West Zone also won their semi-final in commanding fashion beating Central Zone by a comfortable 279-run margin. The final will be played in Coimbatore from September 21, and it will be a five-day affair.

In the South versus North game, the contest was killed by the winning team's batters when they piled up a mammoth 630/8 declared in their first innings, riding on hundreds from opener Rohan Kunnummal, skipper Hanuma Vihari and Ricky Bhui.

Once North were all out for 207 in their first innings, courtesy Sai Kishore's 7/70, the writing was on the cards.

South didn't enforce follow-on and scored 316/4, piling on North's misery by giving them an improbable target of 740 to chase.

On the final day, North were bowled out for 94 in 30.4 overs with Sai Kishore (3/28), off-spinner Krishnappa Gautham (3/50) and another slow left-armer, Tanay Thyagarajan (3/12), sharing the spoils.

It was a match that belonged to Sai Kishore for his stupendous effort (10/98 in 39 overs) as the pitch wasn't difficult to bat on.

Sai Kishore varied his pace and lengths to trouble the North batters with only opener Yash Dhull (59 off 58 balls) showing some counter-attacking instincts.

The innings was terminated at the fall of ninth wicket as Navdeep Saini, who has been declared unfit by the BCCI, didn't come out to bat.

As many as eight North batters failed to reach double figures.

MULANI TAKES FIVE-FOR

Left-arm spinner Shams Mulani, who finished as the highest wicket-taker in Ranji Trophy, continued his rich vein of form by taking 5 for 72, as West made short work of Central in the other semifinal.

Chasing a gigantic target of 501, Central were never in contention to make a match of it and were all out for 221 in little over 57 overs.

Chintan Gaja, the seamer whose mindless bravado of deliberately throwing the ball back on follow through injured Venkatesh Iyer, also got his act together and chipped in with three wickets.

Rinku Singh (65 off 71 balls), and 'couscussion substitute' Ashok Menaria (in place of Venkatesh Iyer) (32 off 71 balls), delayed the inevitable with a 87-run stand for the seventh wicket.

INDIA A CLINCH 'TEST SERIES' WITH 113-RUN WIN

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Left-arm spinner Saurabh Kumar grabbed five wickets to play a big role in India A's series clinching 113-run victory over New Zealand A in the third and final 'Unofficial Test' here on Sunday.

The target of 416 was out of question but New Zealand A at one point did look like trying to play for a draw before they lost the last five wickets for less than 50 runs to be bowled out for 302 in 85.2 overs.

Saurabh, who has been on the fringes of the senior national team, had figures of 5/103 in 27.2 overs and a match-haul of nine wickets, having picked up four in the first innings.

The interesting aspect of Saurabh's scalps were all came through leg-before decision, with at least three being arm balls to the right-handers.

Sarfraz Khan (2/48), who had a dis-



appointing series with the bat, did play a significant hand as his leg-breaks got rid of senior international Mark Chapman (45), who shared 82 runs for the fourth wicket with centurion Joe Carter (111).

More than the number of runs, the pair had batted for 20 overs and taken

the game into the second session with New Zealand A comfortably placed at 197 for three.

Chapman was holed out while trying to attack Sarfraz. The bowler got a second wicket with a googly that trapped Robert O'Donnell (19) plumb in-front. Once New Zealand A were 222/5

with still a couple of hours play left, it became easier for Saurabh to step up the pressure as he started attacking the stumps more, forcing the Black Caps second team to go on the defensive.

Carter, who defied the Indian attack was finally cleaned up by Mukesh Kumar before Saurabh came back to trap

Jacob Duffy leg before.

While the first two 'Tests' were curtailed ones due to rain, India's batting has been satisfactory throughout the series with almost all the specialist batters being among runs.

Skipper Priyank Panchal had two half-centuries and one near 50 (47) score while his opening partner Abhimanyu Easwaran had a hundred in the opening game.

But the man, who looked cut above the rest was Rajat Patidar, who could well pip Sarfraz Khan in the long-run as far as India call-up is concerned.

Patidar, who has gained instant stardom after last IPL, was class apart in his maiden India A series with two hundreds in three games.

While Ruturaj Gaikwad redeemed himself in the final game with a century and 94, Sarfraz is the only one who missed out on scoring runs when it mattered.