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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SAM BAHADUR

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HEAVY FIGHTING ACROSS GAZA HALTS AID DELIVERY

MONEY 10
'AIRLINE INDUSTRY TO RECORD \$25.7 BILLION NET PROFIT IN 2024'

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Amit Shah dares Pakistan on PoK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah thundered categorically in Parliament on Wednesday, declaring, "PoK is ours." His statement was met with a huge round of applause from the members in the Lok Sabha. While justifying the reservation of seats from the PoK region in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, the Home Minister blamed India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for two major blunders — declaring a ceasefire without winning the entire Kashmir and taking the issue to the United Nations. These, he argued, have resulted in the sufferings of the people of Jammu and Kashmir over seven decades. Replying to a debate in the Lok Sabha on the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, Shah said if Nehru had taken the right steps, a large chunk of territory would not have been ceded and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir would have been part of India. "I support the word that was used here — Nehruvian blunder. Because of the blunder that was committed during the time of Nehru, Kashmir had to suffer. With responsibility, I want to say the two big blunders that

happened during the tenure of Jawaharlal Nehru, happened due to his decisions, because of which Kashmir had to suffer for years," Shah said. "Kashmir had to suffer due to Nehruvian blunders. One was that when our Army was winning and as soon as Punjab area was reached, ceasefire was declared and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was born. If the ceasefire would have been (declared) three days later, PoK would have been part of India," the Home Minister said. The ceasefire made without winning the entire Kashmir was one "blunder" and the other was taking the issue to the UN. There was an uproar by the Opposition benches over the remarks on Nehru and they staged a walkout but returned later. After their walkout, BJP leader Bhartruhari Mahtab said the Home Minister should also talk about the "Himalayan blunder", a reference to Nehru's actions leading up to the war with China in 1962. Shah quipped that his talking about two blunders had upset the Opposition benches and if he had used the phrase "Himalayan blunder", they would have resigned. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said the remarks made were not an insult to anyone and

Says Kashmir is ours



Parliamentarians in the Lok Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Wednesday

PTI

were only made to put things in context. In his remarks, Shah also alleged that the Kashmir matter was taken to the UN in

a hurry. "If at all it had to be taken to the UN, it should have been sent under Article 51 rather than Article 35 of the UN Charter," he said,

asserting that he of course believes that the issue should not have been taken to the UN in the first place. Shah also quoted Nehru as

saying later that the ceasefire was a "mistake". Shah said it was not Nehru's mistake but a blunder. "So much land of this country was lost, it was a

historic blunder," the home minister added. "Those holidaying in England will not notice any change in Jammu and Kashmir," he said, in sarcastic way, hitting former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, who was raising questions frequently. Shah said when terrorism started in Kashmir, people were targeted and they had to flee. "I have seen many leaders who shed crocodile tears and consoled well with words. But Modi is the only leader who has worked to wipe out their tears," he said. He said about 46,631 families and 1,57,967 people were displaced in their own country and were displaced in such a way that they were uprooted from their own homeland and this Bill is going to give them rights and representation. He said after the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir, there will be 43 Assembly seats in Jammu region — up from present 37 — and in Kashmir Valley it will be 47 from 46. Under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, two members from the Kashmiri migrant community and one representing the displaced persons from the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) will be nominated to the legislative assembly. As many as 24 seats will be

kept for the residents of PoK. Talking about the abrogation of Article 370, Shah said it had nothing to do with going back on promise as it was a temporary article and had to go. "You did not have the courage, PM Narendra Modi showed courage and did away with it," he said, referring to the Opposition benches. Shah pointed out that the two Bills on Jammu and Kashmir seek to nominate two Kashmiri Migrant community members, including a woman, to the assembly. One seat in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly will be set aside for people displaced from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the Home Minister said. More than 45,000 people have lost their lives due to terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir so far, he said. Shah said the Government's focus is on ending the terror ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir. "I believe the Modi Government will return to power in 2024 and by 2026, I hope there will be no terror incident in Jammu and Kashmir," he said. The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill were passed by the Lok Sabha after Shah's reply.

BRIEFS

KHALISTANI THREATENS TO ATTACK PARLIAMENT

New Delhi: The Delhi Police are on alert after the US-based Khalistani supporter Gurbat Singh Pannu released a video message threatening to "shake the very foundation of Parliament" on December 13 — the anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attack on Parliament. The threat came in the backdrop of American prosecutors last month linking an Indian official to a man charged with conspiring to assassinate Pannu. Last week, the US federal prosecutors charged Nikhil Gupta, 52, of working with an Indian government employee in the conspiracy to kill Pannu. P2

PORTALS BLOCKED FOR OFFERING FAKE JOBS

New Delhi: The Union Home Ministry on Wednesday said more than 100 websites that were being operated from overseas and involved in organised illegal investments and part-time job frauds have been blocked. These frauds typically involve targeted digital advertisements using keywords like "ghar baithe job" (Do jobs sitting at home) and "ghar baithe kamai kaise karen" (how to earn while sitting at home) in multiple languages. P2

PAKISTAN WOMAN ARRIVES IN INDIA TO MARRY

Chandigarh: Karachi resident Javeria Khanum crossed over into the Indian side from Attari in Amritsar district where she was welcomed by her fiancé Sameer Khan and some members of his family to the beats of 'dhol'. Khanum has been granted a 45-day visa after two previous visa rejections and the Covid pandemic stalled their plans for around five years. The couple, in a brief interaction with reporters at Attari, said the marriage will be solemnised in January. P5

Victorious BJP MPs head back home to their States

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst the parley at the highest level of the party regarding the naming of Chief Ministers for Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, Union Ministers Narendra Singh Tomar and Prahlad Singh Patel resigned from the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The BJP has decided that all 12 of its MPs recently elected to State Assemblies will resign from Parliament to join the new Governments in the Hindi heartland. Three BJP MPs contested in the Telangana Assembly, where the Congress catapulted to power; thus, they continue to hold their Lok Sabha membership. With this the BJP's tally in the Lok Sabha has come down to 292 and in the Rajya Sabha one down with 93 members. Sources in the Government said all three Union Ministers will also be quitting the Modi Government as a procedural formality. The move has given rise to the view that the party leadership may bring in new faces at the helm in all the three States. With the Lok Sabha elections less than five months away, the party is likely to send a larger message about its social agenda with its chief ministerial choices.



Sources also did not rule out the possibility of having Deputy Chief Ministers in the States to balance social equations and enhance administrative effectiveness. The BJP swept to power in the three Hindi-speaking States, dismissing the challenge from the Congress in all of them as it raced to a two-thirds majority in Madhya Pradesh and comfortable majority the Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in the polls where Narendra Modi and his guarantees powered its campaign. BJP president JP Nadda

accompanied 10 of them as they tendered their resignations from Parliament. Two others, Union Minister Renuka Singh and Mahant Balaknath, will also be quitting, party leaders said. Other MPs who quit are Rakesh Singh, Uday Pratap Singh and Riti Pathak from Madhya Pradesh; Kirodi Lal Meena, Diya Kumari and Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore from Rajasthan and Gomati Sai and Arun Sao from Chhattisgarh. All except Meena are Lok Sabha members. Meena is a Rajya Sabha member. Patel said the 10 MPs took Modi's blessings before tendering their resignations. The BJP Parliamentary Party will hold its first meeting during Parliament's Winter Session on Thursday and is likely to felicitate Modi for leading the party to massive wins in three Assembly polls. The BJP Parliamentary Party, which includes all its Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members, generally meets every week during the session. In the meetings, its leaders, including Modi, speak on different issues germane to the agenda in Parliament and also to its organisational and political campaigns. Continued on Page 2

Distasteful remarks by DMK MP in the House

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A huge political row has erupted following the 'Gaumutra Remarks' by DMK Lok Sabha MP DNV Senthil Kumar's followed by some Opposition leaders on the North-South divide remarks with the Centre taking exception to the comments by accusing the Congress of hatching a conspiracy to insult Indian culture and identity, instead of analysing the reasons for its defeat in the elections. The BJP asked if DMK Chief and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has asked party leaders, who had spoken against Sanatan Dharma, to also apologise after MP DNV Senthil Kumar expressed regret in Lok Sabha for referring to Hindi heartland States in a derogatory manner in the House. Others political parties from the Opposition were yet to react on the statement though the Congress has distanced itself and said they do not buy

such irresponsible comments by their southern India alliance partner. "The Congress believes in Sanatan Dharma and Gau Mata, we don't agree with DMK's statements," said Congress general secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Rajiv Shukla. Union Minister Anurag Thakur questioned the silence of former Congress presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi on the issue and wondered whether the remarks on the North-South divide, reference to North India as "gaumutra States" and criticism of Sanatan Dharma had their sanction. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi is spreading the message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' but the Opposition has started using foul language and blaming the EVMs and regionalism for their loss in the Assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh," the Union Minister said at a Press conference. Continued on Page 2



Jaipur burns

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Markets were closed in Jaipur and some other Rajasthan districts and protesters blocked roads and stopped trains on Wednesday after a bandh call by the Rashtriya Rajput Karni Sena over the killing of its chief Sukhdev Singh Gogamedi. Governor Kalraj Mishra spoke to Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the phone and summoned the State Chief Secretary, Home Secretary, police chief and Jaipur Police Commissioner to review the law and order situation in the State. The police set up a special investigation team (SIT) to probe into the killing of the Rajput leader who was shot dead by two men at his house here on Tuesday. They also killed an "accomplice" who had accompanied them to the house. On Facebook, gangster Rohit Godara — said to be linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang — has claimed responsibility and said Gogamedi was killed for "backing" his enemies. The police have identified the two alleged killers as Rohit Rathore from Jaipur and Nitin Fauji from Haryana's Mahendragarh, and announced a cash reward of ₹ 5 lakh for information leading to their arrest. Markets remained closed in Jaipur, Kota, Bundi, Ajmer, Sawai Madhopur, Chittorgarh, Jhalawar, Baran and some other districts while a mass rally was taken out in Udaipur and a demonstration was held at the collectorate circle amid heavy deployment of police.

Gujarat's Garba finds a global audience

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Garba, an all encompassing iconic dance of Gujarat performed for nine days during the Navratri festival, has now earned a place on the global cultural map. It has been included in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The inclusion has been made under the provisions of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage during the 18th meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for

the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage which began in Kasane, Botswana on Tuesday. In August 2022, India had nominated garba for inclusion in the UN cultural agency's list. Soon after the announcement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to the social media X expressing his happiness. "Garba is a celebration of life, unity and our deep-rooted traditions. Its inscription on the Intangible Heritage List showcases to the world the beauty of Indian culture. This honour inspires us to preserve and promote our heritage for future generations.



Congrats for this global acknowledgment," he posted. Incidentally, the inclusion of the iconic garba of Gujarat in the prestigious list comes a few days after the Prime Minister released a music video titled 'garbo', based on a garba song penned by him. "The 190-second song was penned years ago," Modi wrote on his X timeline

about the video. "Garba of Gujarat is the 15th ICH element from India to join this list. This inscription underscores garba's pivotal role as a unifying force that fosters social and gender inclusivity. "Garba as a dance form is entrenched deeply in ritualistic and devotional roots, involving people from all walks of life and it

continues to thrive as a vibrant living tradition bringing communities together," an official release from the Gujarat Government said. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel called it as a 'proud moment'. Patel wrote on social media X, "Garba's inclusion in the Unesco Intangible Cultural Heritage list is truly a proud moment for Gujarat and India. It is an honour given by the world to the ancient culture of India." Union Minister of Culture G Kishan

Reddy also shared a post on the same, saying the listing is a testimony to the "tireless efforts of this government under the leadership of Modi to showcase our rich culture, traditions and heritage to the world". Meenakshi Lekhi, Minister of External Affairs, too took to the social media to express her happiness calling it a proud moment for Bharat as Gujarat's vibrant Garba is now inscribed as the 15th recognised element in UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity. Continued on Page 2



Winter action plan for homeless begins

110 tents set up across Capital, says DUSIB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Homeless people in the National Capital are being shifted to temporary tents set up by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board as part of the city government's winter action plan, officials said on Wednesday.

A meeting of the joint apex advisory committee was held in the first week of November to rescue homeless people and provide shelter to them. The committee comprises nodal officials of the Delhi Jal Board, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, and Delhi Police, a DUSIB official told PTI.

"Delhi government's winter action plan for the homeless has started and rescue teams have also been deployed to shift them to the temporary tents," the official said.

He said 110 tents have been set up in the city for the homeless and 15 rescue teams have been deployed on the ground who are spreading awareness about the arrangements.

"Around 30 to 40 more tents will be set up soon. We conduct surveys and accordingly chalk out the locations where tents need to be set up," the official said.

The teams identify the clusters and inform the control room that sends volunteers to shift the homeless to the temporary tents. Teams of doctors are also



visiting the temporary shelters twice a week.

"The homeless are being provided food and tea and this is something that we do all year long. We also keep track of the work that is happening," the DUSIB official said.

According to the Delhi government, there are 195 DUSIB shelter homes, which are functional in Delhi at present with a total capacity of 7,092 people. The new tents will accommodate about 2,000 more people on potential sites of high concentration to meet the increased demand for shelters during winter.

Additional tents will further be installed, if required, based on the requirement of shelters.

Teams have started to rescue the homeless people lying on the roadside or open spaces/parks from 10 pm to 4 am every day and each rescue team is equipped with one vehicle, driver and two attendants.

After receiving the information from DUSIB control room or from other sources, rescue team responds to pick up the homeless person from the identified location and take them to nearby shelter or hospital as per requirement.

"The main function of the Joint Apex Advisory Committee (JAAC) is to ensure better inter-departmental coordination among all the departments to ensure necessary civic

amenities for homeless people in the shelter homes for the successful implementation of the winter action plan. Divisional Executive Engineers regularly check the upkeep and day-to-day maintenance of the shelter homes," a notice from the Delhi government said.

A centralised control room with dedicated staff is functional at Punarwas Bhawan, I.P. Estate, New Delhi to monitor and assist the rescue teams. The control room receives complaints/information 24x7 through a dedicated helpline, mobile app, and from other sources.

The control room toll free number is 14461, 011-

23378789 and 011-23370560 (landline) and +919871013284 (WhatsApp).

Mobile App 'Rain Basera' to track and rescue the homeless person has been made operational, which can be downloaded from Google Play store, the notice read.

"Any person who comes across a homeless person lying/residing along the roadside can simply click a photograph in his/her smart phone and submit it to central control room. The central control room automatically locates the sender/homeless person through GPS and informs the rescue teams to rescue the homeless person," the notice read.

The notice further said that the DUSIB has started coordination with health department, DJB, Municipal Corporation of Delhi and other civic agencies regularly check the availability of basic amenities to the homeless people residing in the night shelters.

Facilities available at the shelter home includes television, drinking water, toilet facility, lockers for belongings (wherever available), complaint box, first aid box and nothing is charged for availing said facilities.

One caretaker has been allotted for each shelter home who remains available for eight hours a day, along with a female security guard.

'Finish work on under-construction flyover in Anand Vihar by April'



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi PWD Minister Atishi on Wednesday inspected an under-construction flyover in Anand Vihar and directed the officials to complete the work by April 2024, a statement said.

The six-lane flyover will decrease the traffic load on the stretch from Apsara Border to Anand Vihar. She said the flyover is a crucial project to make east Delhi traffic jam-free. Therefore, any delay in its construction will not be tolerated.

She directed the officials to expedite the remaining work by doubling the number of people and machines involved in the construction. She also

weekly progress reports.

During the inspection, Atishi said, "Kejriwal government will not tolerate any delay in important projects like this. The construction of the flyover is lagging behind the scheduled time, causing daily traffic jams affecting thousands of vehicles, leading to inconvenience for the commuters." The Public Works Department minister said if the construction is not completed by April, action will be taken against the officials.

"PWD officials must work towards making their planning, monitoring and evaluation system more efficient to avoid delays in any other projects," she said.

Under this project, a six-lane, 1,440 metre-long flyover is

being constructed on Road Number 56 between Anand Vihar and Apsara Border. Once it is complete, commuters will not face traffic snarls in Ramprastha Colony, Vivek Vihar, and Shreshth Vihar, officials said.

Around 1.48 lakh vehicles are expected to use the flyover daily, providing them with significant convenience in commuting.

With each trip, the commuters will save more than 11 minutes, leading to a daily savings of 42,700 hours, they said. The emission of carbon dioxide will be reduced by 1.50 lakh tonnes along with an annual saving of 16.57 lakh litres of fuel, resulting in a yearly cost savings of Rs 144.78 crore for the people, they said.

Six people held with 48 kgs of marijuana

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested six people and recovered 48 kilograms of fine-quality marijuana from their possession, officials said on Wednesday.

The accused allegedly used to sell marijuana to students of universities based in Delhi, Gurugram and Noida, they said.

According to police, the arrested accused have been identified as Nongmaitham Jashobanta Singh (36), Thiyam Rabikanta Singh (32), Rudransh Gupta (33), Lakshay Bhatiya, Girik Aggarwal, a final year BBA student, and Khalid Zafar.

"We received inputs that drug traffickers are very active in colleges and universities and they are supplying drugs to college students. The matter was investigated by the crime branch and teams were formed to unearth the drug trafficking gang," said Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ravindra Singh Yadav. A team received specific



inputs about an international gang involved in trafficking of marijuana, smuggled in from Manipur and Thailand, in the National Capital Region (NCR), he said.

"We arrested three people, who were identified as Nongmaitham Jashobanta Singh, Thiyam Rabikanta Singh and Rudransh Gupta. Our team recovered 48 kilograms of marijuana from them and 100 grams of organic marijuana brought from Thailand."

The arrested accused told police that they brought the drugs from Manipur and Shillong by rail and the organic drug from Thailand by air. They told

police that they sell the drugs to various clients in Delhi, Gurugram and Noida through courier services," Yadav said. During further interrogation, the accused revealed three more names and these people were also arrested. More marijuana was recovered from these accused, the officer said.

Lakshay Bhatiya and Khalid Zafar told police that they met each other at a Noida university and later started supplying drugs to college students, Yadav said. Bhatiya used to procure drugs from Zafar through Girik Aggarwal and then sold them through social media platforms, he said.

Winter vacation in schools to begin from January 1



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Winter vacation in Delhi schools has been reduced from 15 to six days and will begin from January 1, 2024, a circular from the Directorate of Education said on Wednesday.

Winter vacation for the academic session 2023-24 was scheduled to take place from January 1 to January 15. "However, in order to ensure that our students are not adversely affected due to the

poor air quality in Delhi, a portion of winter Vacation was observed from November 9 to November 18," the circular read.

The remaining portion of the winter vacation for academic session 2023-24 is scheduled to be observed from January 1 to January 6, 2024. "All the Heads of Schools of Delhi are hereby directed to disseminate this information among all the stakeholders including the teaching/non-teaching staff, students and parents," the DoE said.

Pensioners to protest, demand hike in pension



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Pensioners body EPS-95 National Agitation Committee on Wednesday said their members will stage a protest at Ramlila maidan on December 7 to press their demand for a minimum monthly pension of Rs 7,500.

Addressing a press conference here, President of National Agitation Committee Ashok Raut alleged that senior citizens who rely on pensions, have been suffering due to lack of food, medicines and other essentials.

"Under the employee's pen-

sion scheme, the pensioners demand a hike in pension from Rs 1,171 to Rs 7,500 along with medical facilities. Senior citizens who rely on pensions like us are dying day by day due to the lack of food, medicines and other essentials," Raut told reporters.

The members of the committee claimed that despite holding protests and reaching out to several union ministers and the prime minister, there has been no hike in pensions. "This is our last call. We will sit on an infinite hunger strike if our demands are not fulfilled. We will die in the field but we will not step back," he claimed.

NGT seeks compliance reports on rainwater harvesting

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought a compliance report from authorities including the Delhi Jal Board, Delhi Development Authority, Public Works Department of the city government and four others on the functioning of rainwater harvesting systems in the national capital. The NGT had directed the authorities concerned in September 2019 to take measures like not installing rainwater harvesting systems (RWHS) near stormwater drains, closing deficient RWHS, installing instruments for monitoring the quality of recharged water and separating pollutants.

A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted the submission of the petitioner's counsel that the directions were not complied with. The bench, also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel, said it was issuing notice to the authorities concerned.

DELHI EXCISE SCAM

AAP leader Sanjay urges court to grant him bail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP MP Sanjay Singh, arrested in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise scam, on Wednesday urged a court here to grant him bail, claiming he was not a flight risk, had deep roots in society and there was no allegation against him of influencing the witnesses.

Singh's counsel made the submission before Special Judge M K Nagpal during the hearing of his bail application.

The court, meanwhile, allowed an application filed by Singh seeking its permission to put his signature on certain documents authorising his lawyer to represent him in a defamation case in Guwahati.

During the hearing on the bail application, senior advocate Mohit Mathur, appearing for Singh, said, "I am not a flight risk, have roots in society, and for 15 months there was no allegation of my interfering or influencing in the probe by either ED or the CBI."

The counsel said since the supplementary complaint (ED's equivalent of a charge sheet) against Singh has already been filed, there was some kind of finality regarding the collection of evidence which should be the basis for granting him bail.

The counsel said Singh was neither an accused, was never arrested, or charge-sheeted in the predicate offence (the alleged corruption in the excise scam) being probed by the CBI.

"I am not even summoned by the CBI in the corruption case," the counsel said. The counsel said in all the supplementary charge sheets filed by the ED before Singh's arrest, his name did not appear anywhere.



"In all the supplementary charge sheets filed by the agency before my arrest, there was not even a whisper against me, which means there was no evidence with the ED which prompted my arrest. Now they are saying I received kickbacks, but ED did not say a single word about this money before this court or superior courts in matters pertaining to co-accused Manish Sisodia, when they produced flow-chart of money allegedly being laundered," the Rajya Sabha MP's counsel said.

The court will now hear the matter on December 9, when the ED is likely to advance its arguments on the application.

The application, filed by Singh on November 24, says he is no longer required for custodial interrogation and that no purpose will be served by keeping him in custody.

It claimed the investigation against Singh was complete and there was no chance of tampering with evidence or influencing witnesses. Singh, who is currently in judicial custody, also said in the application he was ready to abide by any condition imposed by the court while granting him bail.

Kejriwal directs audit of Delhi Jal Board by CAG

Amid allegations of financial bungling

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said an audit of the Delhi Jal Board's records by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has been ordered to ascertain whether there has been any irregularity.

Interacting with reporters, he warned that there could be a water and sewage crisis in Delhi in the coming days owing to the non-release of funds. A couple of weeks ago, Delhi Water Minister Atishi had claimed the national capital was staring at a 'man-made water crisis' due to the stoppage of funds to the Delhi Jal Board by the finance department and demanded Lt Governor V K Saxena's immediate intervention in the matter.

Kejriwal, on Wednesday, said, "We have ordered a CAG audit of the last 15 years of records of the Delhi Jal Board. CAG is a third party and the biggest agency in the country. Things will become clearer now."

"If someone has committed



irregularities, they should be punished. If no irregularities have been committed, then those who level baseless allegations will get to know," he added.

Asked about the fund crisis in Delhi Jal Board and its possible impact on the ongoing works, the chief minister said, "If bureaucracy will not be answerable to the government, it will be impossible to run the government. There could be a water crisis and sewer crisis due to non-release of funds."

Delhi Jal Board vice-chairman Somnath Bharti welcomed the government's decision to order an audit.

"There cannot be a better thing than this. This reflects the transparency of the Delhi

government that the chief minister himself opted to order a CAG audit. This proves the honesty of the AAP government and our leader Arvind Kejriwal.

"This also kills the attempt to politicise the Delhi Jal Board. In DJB, we have been all working hard to serve the people of Delhi but BJP has been trying to bring issues that have no merit. So now, the CAG audit will make everything clear," he told PTI.

The BJP and AAP have been sparring over alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board since last month.

The BJP has accused the DJB of running a "scam" of awarding bogus tenders for the upgradation of its sewerage treatment plants.

Only AAP can give free education guarantee: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said other parties have stolen AAP's agenda and are talking about providing free electricity and giving guarantees but free education is still not on their list.

Kejriwal was speaking at an event at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) office here to pay tributes to Baba Saheb Ambedkar on his death anniversary. The chief minister said Ambedkar went to study at Columbia University in the US in 1913 and always laid

emphasis on education. "Had he been alive for 10-15 years more, he would have improved all government schools in the country. No party has paid any attention to education," Kejriwal said. "These parties stole our entire agenda. They are now giving all the guarantees and giving free electricity but they are not guaranteeing free education. Only AAP can give a guarantee of education," he asserted. AAP has done a lot in the field of education, he said and asserted that people in the country have been deliberately kept uneducated in the last 75 years.

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'No proposal to raise OBC quota as per population in local body polls'

Centre informs Rajya Sabha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that there was no proposal to increase reservation for Other Backward Castes (OBC) as per population in the local body elections.

Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj Kapil Moheshwar Patil, during the Question Hour in Rajya Sabha, said OBCs are provided one-third reservation under Article 243D of the Constitution.

"However, 21 state governments have increased the reservation up to 50 per cent. The member has sought increasing the reservation for OBCs as per the population in the local body elections. There is no such proposal before us," he said.

In local bodies, there is a 50 per cent reservation for women. Under this quota, there is a provision to accommodate OBCs, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Patil added.

However, the state governments have the right to provide reservations for OBCs. "On this subject, the states should take a call at their level," the Union minister said while replying to another supplementary question.

He said local body elections could not be held in Maharashtra due to the OBC

quota issue. The Supreme Court has said that the reservation cannot be increased beyond 50 per cent without empirical data. About women's reservation in local bodies, Patil said the Centre has made several efforts to empower elected women panchayat leaders, including providing them six months of training. There has been a rise in the participation of women in the governance process, he said.

The minister was responding to queries raised by YSRCP MP Ryaga Krishnaiyya, the DMK's



P Wilson and NCP leader Vandana Chavan. Responding to another question, Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda said the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) with a budget outlay of Rs 24,000 crore was being implemented from this year to undertake tribal welfare initiatives.

"It is one of the largest Central schemes targeting the tribal community's development and aims to uplift the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG)," he said.

In the previous five-year plans, PVTG groups with less than 500 members were not covered which led to backwardness of many tribal communities. However the PM-JANMAN scheme targets to empower PVTG groups with 100 members, he said.

Modi to launch global investors summit in Dehradun

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 'Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023' in Dehradun on December 8 as the hill state looks to boost investment in the coming years, his office said in a statement on Wednesday.

Modi will also address the gathering on the occasion, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in its statement. The 'Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023' is a step towards establishing Uttarakhand as a new investment destination and the theme of the two-day event is 'Peace to Prosperity'.

The summit will be attended by thousands of investors and



delegates from across the world. It will witness participation of Union ministers and ambassadors of various countries along with leading industrialists, among others, the statement said.

Karnataka facing draught, has sought ₹18,000 crore relief from Centre: Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Karnataka is reeling under the impact of severe drought and the state government has sought Rs 18,171 crores as relief from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said on Wednesday.

Raising the matter in the Upper House during the Zero Hour, the Congress president said Karnataka is grappling with the most severe drought in 123 years and the damage to crops is estimated at over Rs 35,162 crore.

According to him, the damage to crops ranges from 40-90 per cent.

Kharge said the state govern-

ment has sought Rs 18,171 crore from the NDRF to help the affected people.

"This financial support is crucial for providing input subsidies, gratuitous relief and implementing other immediate growth measures due to low rainfall (in Karnataka)," the senior Congress leader said.

He further highlighted that water levels in various reservoirs have reached an alarmingly low mark and there may also be a shortage of drinking water in the coming days.

Kharge also spoke about the flood situations in certain parts of Tamil Nadu, including Chennai. He also accused the BJP of not paying heed to the problems being faced by people as they have "won elections".

Has Stalin also asked DMK leaders to apologise for insulting Sanatan Dharma: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday asked if DMK chief M K Stalin has asked party leaders, who had spoken against Sanatan Dharma, to also apologise after MP DNV Senthilkumar expressed regret in Lok Sabha for referring to Hindi heartland states in a derogatory manner in the House.

Addressing a press conference at BJP headquarters, Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar also slammed the "silence" of Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on the "repeated objectionable remarks about Sanatan".

"I heard Mr TR Baalu say today that Chief Minister Stalin has told MP Senthilkumar to not make such statements. But there is

a question that has to be asked to Mr Baalu and (M K) Stalin.

"What about Udayanidhi Stalin's statement? Has he (M K Stalin) advised Udayanidhi Stalin to apologise? What about A Raja? Has he (DMK chief) advised A Raja to apologise?" the BJP leader said.

"Why can't Stalin apologise?" he said.

He alleged that the opposition



INDIA bloc parties have started a "new chapter of divisive politics" with north-south divide remarks as their efforts to drive a wedge on religious lines for votes did not work in the just-concluded assembly polls.

The BJP will "firmly oppose" such politics played by the Congress and other members of the "INDI Alliance", Chandrasekhar said.

"People of the country will

also totally oppose such politics and expose them," he said at a press conference at the BJP headquarters.

Senthilkumar had on Tuesday used a pejorative to describe Hindi heartland states while attacking the ruling BJP. The comments led to a ruckus and adjournment in the House and were expunged by Speaker Om Birla.

BJP leaders had decried his remarks as "hate speech" and

said the voters will "wipe out" the INDIA bloc from southern India as well in the next elections. Facing flak, the DMK MP had later apologised.

"Commenting on the results of the five recent state assembly elections, I have used a word in an inappropriate way. Not using that term with any intent, I apologise for sending the wrong meaning across," Senthilkumar said in a post on X.

Public Notice: Loss of Identity Card:

Public Notice

This is to bring to the notice of general public that an ID card of **Shri Vijender Raj Yadav** issued by ICICI Bank Limited. ID card No. **2338022** found missing and/or lost on **04-08-2023**. Anyone who finds the said ID card is requested to return the said ID card to the Manager Loan Services & Management Group, ICICI Bank Limited.

Therefore, all customers of ICICI Bank Limited are hereby informed not to make any payment to any unauthorized person holding the said ID card number **2338022**.

Please further note that any person making payment to any person holding the said ID Card shall do so at his own cost, risk and exposure and ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any payment.

Date: **07/12/2023**
Place: **S.D. Tower Rohini Sector- 8 New Delhi 110085**

For **ICICI Bank Limited**

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that my client Mr. Vinod Kumar Goyal & his wife Mrs. Rani Devi Goyal both R/o WZ-68, Phase-1, Om Vihar, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 has dissolved / relinquished all ties with their son Sh. Deepak Goyal & his wife Mrs. Uma Goyal from all their properties, both movable & immovable, due to personal reasons / differences and irregular behavior and has no relation with him and his wife with immediate effect.

In case any one deals with him or his wife, they shall do so at their own risk and my clients shall not be made liable for or responsible for any such dealings, deals or misdeals of Mr. Deepak Goyal & Mrs. Uma Goyal with or against any person in any manner.

Vishva Vadhwa
Advocate-D1049/2007
Wadhwa and Company
Z-197, FF, Loha Mandi, Naraina, Delhi-26

SUNIL HEALTHCARE LIMITED

Regd. Office: 38E/252-A, Vijay Tower, Shahpurjat, New Delhi-110049
CIN-L24302DL1973PLC189662/Email ID: info@sunilhealthcare.com/
Web: www.sunilhealthcare.com
Tel: +91-11-49435555/00, Fax: +91-11-43850087

NOTICE OF POSTAL BALLOT

Members of the Company are hereby informed that pursuant to Section 110 and other applicable provisions, if any, of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rules made thereunder, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 and Secretarial Standards on General Meeting issued by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India including any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force read with applicable Circulars issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs ("MCA") and by the Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI Circulars") and other applicable laws, rules and regulations, if any, the Company is seeking approval of its Members for the Special Businesses by passing Special resolution(s) as set out in the Notice of the Postal Ballot dated December 05, 2023 ("Notice") and accordingly has completed dispatch of said Notice through electronic mode on December 06, 2023 to the members of the Company, whose name appears in the Register of Members/List of Beneficial Owners as received from NSDL and CDSL as on Friday, December 01, 2023 and who has registered their email with our RTA/Company, for the approval of members by way of Special Resolution(s) through Postal Ballot only through remote e-voting. A person, who is not a Member as on Friday, December 01, 2023 should treat postal ballot notice for information purpose only.

The Company is providing remote e-Voting facility to all its members to cast their votes electronically. For this purpose, the Company has engaged the services of M/s. Link Intime India Private Ltd., (LIPL) as the agency to provide e-Voting facility. The Postal Ballot Notice is also available at website of the Company at <https://www.sunilhealthcare.com/postal-ballot> on the website of Link Intime India Private Ltd., the Company's Agency for conducting Remote e-Voting at <https://instavote.linkintime.co.in>, and on the websites of BSE Limited (www.bseindia.com).

The Members holding shares in dematerialized mode are requested to update their KYC details including email address with the relevant Depository Participants. Members holding share in Physical mode are requested to update/register their KYC details including email address by submitting duly filled and signed form ISR-1, by providing Folio No., Name of shareholder, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), PAN (self-attested scanned copy), AADHAR (self-attested scanned copy) at cs@sunilhealthcare.com/info@sunilhealthcare.com or to M/s Alankit Assignment Limited at "4E/2, Alankit House, Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi 110055", Contact no. 91-11-4254 1234 email id: rtat@alankit.com, lalitap@alankit.com.

The members may note that:

- The remote e-voting period shall commence on Friday, December 08, 2023 from 09:00 A.M. (IST) onwards and shall end on Saturday, January 06, 2024 at 5:00 P.M. (IST) (both days inclusive). During this period, Members of the Company holding equity shares either in physical or dematerialized form as on the Cut-off date, i.e. Friday, December 01, 2023 (including those Members who may not have received this Notice due to non-registration of their e-mail address with the Company or the Depositories / Depository Participants or RTA), may cast their vote electronically, in respect of the resolutions as set out in this Notice only through remote e-voting. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by LIPL thereafter. Once the vote on resolution(s) is cast by a Member, no changes shall be allowed subsequently.
- The Board of Directors of the Company has appointed Mr. Tara Chand Sharma, Proprietor of Jain Sharma & Associates, Company Secretaries (ICSI Membership No.: F-5749, C.P No. 4078), Company Secretary in Practice as Scrutinizer for conducting the Postal Ballot through remote e-voting process in a fair and transparent manner.
- The results of the Postal Ballot will be announced by the Chairman or any other person authorized by the Chairman in writing for this purpose on or before Tuesday, January 09, 2024 at the Registered Office of Company. The said result along with Scrutinizer's report would also be displayed at the Registered and Corporate Office of the Company. Additionally, the Results will also be uploaded on the Company's website of the Company www.sunilhealthcare.com as well as on LIPL website <https://instavote.linkintime.co.in>.
- Helpdesk for Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode:**
In case shareholders/ members holding securities in demat mode have any technical issues related to login through Depository i.e. NSDL/ CDSL, they may contact the respective helpdesk given below:

Login type	Helpdesk details
Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode with NSDL	Members facing any technical issue in login can contact NSDL helpdesk by sending a request at evoting@nsdl.co.in or call at toll free no.: 1800 1020 990 and 1800 22 44 30
Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode with CDSL	Members facing any technical issue in login can contact CDSL helpdesk by sending a request at helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com or contact at 022- 23058738 or 22-23058542-43

v) Helpdesk for Individual Shareholders holding securities in physical mode/ Institutional shareholders & evoting service Provider is LINKINTIME.
In case shareholders/ members holding securities in physical mode/ Institutional shareholders have any queries regarding remote e-voting, they may refer the Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQs") and InstaVote e-Voting manual available at <https://instavote.linkintime.co.in>, under Help section or send an email to enotices@linkintime.co.in or Contact Mr. Rajiv Ranjan of LIPL, C-101, 247 Park, L.B.S. Marg, Vikhroli (West), Mumbai 400 083, Maharashtra, India or call at: - Tel: 022 -4918 6000.

vi) For details instruction of Remote e-voting, the members are requested to go through the notice of the Postal Ballot (as mentioned below note no. 13).

By order of the Board of Directors
For SUNIL HEALTHCARE LIMITED

Reg. Office:
38E/252A, Vijay Tower, Shahpurjat, New Delhi-110049
CIN No: L24302DL1973PLC189662
Phone No: +91-11-49435555/00 Fax no 011-43850087
Email ID: info@sunilhealthcare.com
Web: www.sunilhealthcare.com

SATYENDU PATTAIAK
COMPANY SECRETARY & COMPLIANCE OFFICER
FCS-7736
Place - New Delhi
Dated- December 06, 2023
Email: cs@sunilhealthcare.com
Contact No. 011-49435541

Girls who start menstruating as they turn 13 years at risk of developing type 2 diabetes in midlife: Research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

AUS research published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Nutrition Prevention & Health has found that girls turning 13 years old who start to menstruate risk developing type 2 diabetes in mid-life.

The researchers from Tulane University and Brigham and Women's Hospital in the US also found that having periods early in life, especially before 10 years of age, is also associated with an increased risk of getting a stroke before the age of 65 in those having diabetes, researchers found after analysing data of more than 17,000 women aged between 20 and 65.

However, they said that being an observational study, they couldn't establish the causes behind these associations.

"Earlier age at [first menstru-



al cycle] may be one of early life indicators of the cardiometabolic disease trajectory in women," they suggested in their study.

The women included in the study came from the national representative cross-sectional National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 1999-2018. The women had specified the age at which they had had their first menstrual cycle.

Of the women studied, about

10 per cent, or 1773, reported a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes. Further, 11.5 per cent of these, or 203, reported some type of cardiovascular disease, the researchers found.

They quantified the increased risk of type 2 diabetes due to beginning to menstruate early in life as 32 per cent (periods at age 10 or before) through 14 per cent (age 11) to 29 per cent (age 12).

They also found that menstru-

ating before turning 10 was linked with a more than doubling in stroke risk among women below the age of 65 with diabetes. Specifically, they calculated the risk to be 81 per cent among those having their first period at the age of 11, 32 per cent at 12, and 15 per cent at 14.

"One potential pathway explanation may be that [such] women are exposed to oestrogen for longer periods of time, and early [menstruation] has been associated with higher oestrogen levels," the researchers explained.

They also said weight could be another important factor influencing the results, as when they adjusted the data for weight, the observed associations between age at first menstrual cycle and stroke complications weakened slightly, albeit remaining significant.

The researchers said that these

findings supported the possibility that age of getting the first period may be incorporated into early-life strategies for preventing diabetes and progression of diabetes complications.

"These findings add another dimension to the potentially less well understood determinants of cardiometabolic risk, particularly in women who have been relatively underrepresented in this area of research," said Sumantra Ray, Executive Director of the NNEdPro Global Centre for Nutrition & Health, which co-owns BMJ Nutrition Prevention & Health.

"And they provide a clear steer on the need to design interventional studies looking at the prevention of cardiometabolic disease in ethnically diverse groups of women who start menstruating at a young age," he said.

Saudia taking measures for more fulfilling journey for Hajj

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Saudi Arabia has rolled out a series of "transformative" measures like improving visa processing, accessibility and logistical support to ensure a more enriching experience for Indian pilgrims undertaking the journey to Mecca, Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah said on Wednesday.

In an interview to PTI, Al-Rabiah said the initiatives are specifically designed to provide Indian pilgrims with enhanced flexibility throughout their journey, particularly benefiting women embarking on independent Umrah trips.

The new steps like extension of the Umrah visa to 90 days and introduction of a four-day transit visa are tailored to accommodate the growing influx of Indian pilgrims.

"By promoting gender equality and cultivating a safer, more embracing environment, these changes collectively aim to ensure a more fulfilling and secure pilgrimage experience for all travellers," he said.

Al-Rabiah, currently on a visit to India, held talks with Union Ministry Affairs Minister Smriti Irani and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday.

The influential minister said the aim of the new initiatives was to ensure "warmth and convenience" to the overall experience of the pilgrims.

1st nationwide CPR awareness event held



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time in the country, a nationwide cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) awareness programme was launched in the country with over 20 lakh participants including students, professionals and paramedical staff being given training in a single sitting online.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya after launching the much-needed programme stressed the need for raising awareness among people and about the importance of training to provide immediate help in case of cardiac arrest and save lives. The move follows shocking reports from across the country of healthy young people succumbing to cardiac arrests during routine daily activities when they had almost no prior health issues, much less cardiac problems.

The programme was prepared by the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences on CPR training along with Ministers of State for Health Bharati Pravin

2 days 16th MCSG meeting held: Ministry



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The 16th edition of the India-Germany Military Cooperation Sub Group (MCSG) meeting was conducted for two days starting Tuesday here, defence ministry said here on Wednesday.

The meeting was co-chaired from the Indian side by Brigadier Vivek Narang, Deputy Assistant Chief of Integrated Staff IDC (A), HQ IDS, and Col (GS) Christian Schmidt, Director, Department International Cooperation Armed Forces Office from the German side.

The meeting was conducted in a friendly, warm, and cordial atmosphere. Discussions focused on new initiatives under the ambit of existing bilateral defence cooperation mechanisms and further strengthening ongoing defence engagements.

India-Germany Military Cooperation Sub Group (MCSG) is a forum established to boost defence cooperation between both nations through regular talks at the strategic and operational levels between the Headquarters, Integrated Defence Staff, and the Department of International Cooperation Armed Forces.

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CDS Chauhan presides over 1st session of combined leadership conclave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan presided over the first session of Combined Leadership Conclave and interacted with the senior leadership of the Armed Forces here on Wednesday. The CDS provided an insight into modern warfare and national security.

The three-day conclave is focussing on geo-strategic issues, national security and defence, contemporary and emerging security challenges and integration and jointness for capability enhancement as well as 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence.

Eminent personalities with renowned experience in respective fields will also interact with participants enlightening them about issues of national importance, defence ministry said.

The conclave aims to serve as a development programme for senior officers of the three services, focused on regional and national security issues with a view to enhance synergy, both at operational and strategic levels within the Armed Forces.

Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC) Lt Gen JP Mathew and other senior officers of HQ, Integrated Defence Staff were also present during the event.

Parts of Chennai suffer from inundation

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Residents grappled with stagnant water and power disruption in parts of the city and its suburbs on Wednesday, two days after Cyclone Michaung wreaked havoc in the metropolis and neighbouring districts, even as civic agency personnel stepped up relief and rehabilitation efforts.

The government said power was kept suspended in some areas as a "preventive measure" since the power cables were under water, while asserting all efforts were being taken to restore normalcy.

Another day's holiday was declared for schools and colleges in Chennai on December 7.

The cyclone-triggered heavy rainfall had led to inundation in localities including Velachery and Tambaram. On Wednesday too, people were seen leaving their homes in the areas surrounded with water to safer zones, carrying their children and wading through the stag-

nant water. They called for help, including pressing more boats to ferry people to higher ground. Chief Minister M K Stalin visited some of the affected areas and distributed food and essential commodities to people put up at a relief centre in the city. He inspected activities undertaken by the city civic body to drain water.

He also wrote to the Centre seeking an interim flood relief of Rs 5,060 crore to tide over the situation.

Many users on social media site 'X' shared videos of residential localities still being surrounded by stagnant water, claiming many residents were stuck inside. The hashtag #Velachery was trending on the microblogging site.

A user lamented that her relatives were stuck in their home for the last three days without power, drinking water and milk. There were complaints of delay in supply of milk in many affected parts including Velachery and Tambaram and residents alleged it was being sold for extra price.

CYCLONE MICHAUNG



A drone visual shows an area that is flooded after the landfall of Cyclone Michaung, in Chennai, on Wednesday PTI

Power supply had not resumed in parts of the city including Kilpauk and Kattupakkam. The state government said relief activities were on in full swing

and that people in many of the affected areas were being rescued through inflatable boats even during midnight. Senior officials of the Greater

Chennai Corporation were overseeing the rescue and relief activities, the civic agency said. The Greater Chennai Police also announced helpline num-

bers for citizens to contact them for rescue and relief activities. An update from the city police on Wednesday said six rain-related deaths were reported while many persons in need were rescued by the cops in different parts of the city. Among the rescued were aged persons and a number of pregnant women, and a woman and her newborn, an official release said.

Further, 11 subways in the metro remained closed for vehicular movement due to water-logging. There were no disruptions in operations at the airport while the Southern Railway announced cancelling a number of services and diversion of many others.

However, it announced resumption of the suburban services on the Chennai Egmore-Chengalpet and Chennai Beach-Arakkonam routes with frequency of 30 and 45 minutes, respectively. Services on the Tiruvottiyur-Sullurpeta line will be operated in an hourly frequency, it said in an update.

Cyclone damages infrastructure in Andhra

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

The severe cyclonic storm Michaung, which crossed the Andhra Pradesh coast close to Bapatla on Tuesday and subsequently weakened into a cyclonic storm, left a trail of destruction in its wake. Michaung is expected to subside into a deep depression over the next six hours, said an official.

The storm damaged 770-kilometre roads, uprooted 35 trees and killed three livestock, among others.

According to data shared by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), nearly 40 lakh people from 194 villages and two towns were affected by Michaung's impact, including the inundation of 25 villages. Though there was no loss of

human life on Tuesday, Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority Director BR Ambedkar told PTI that a four-year-old boy died after a hut wall collapsed on him in Tirupati district on Monday. While another person died in Bapatla district, Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal told PTI that the cause of death was not related to the cyclone.

"The lone deceased person was found in a drunken state on a road by his motorcycle, which was not submerged under water, in the Inkollu village," Jindal said. Across the state, 204 relief camps are accommodating 15,173 evacuees. As part of relief efforts, 18,073 food packets and more than 1 lakh water packets were distributed. Eighty health camps were also organised.



INDIA Bloc must act swiftly to finalise future strategies, says Nitish

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday sought to downplay BJP's victory in three states in the Hindi heartland, stating that there is "no need to discuss much" on such wins of the saffron party, and said the opposition INDIA alliance must act swiftly to finalise its future strategies.

Kumar said he is now focusing on the next meeting of the INDIA coalition, which is scheduled in the third week of December.

"The Congress has performed well in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. These things happen in electoral politics. Earlier, there were Congress governments in these states... Now BJP has won. There is no need to discuss much on such issues. The Congress has won Telangana this time," the JD(U) leader told reporters here while responding to queries about the BJP's win in three states.

The meeting of the INDIA coalition, which was scheduled to be held on December 6, has been deferred as some senior leaders were unable to attend the same due to their preoccupations, Kumar said.

"I want the INDIA coalition to act swiftly to finalise its future strategies, including the seat-sharing issue, in the next meeting, which is scheduled to be held in the third week of December," he said.

RJD president Lalu Prasad had on Tuesday claimed that top leaders of the INDIA bloc would meet on December 17 in Delhi to chalk out the strategy for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

"I am also not in a position to attend today's meeting as I am not well. But, I will attend the next meeting of the INDIA coalition," said Kumar, who played an instrumental role in bringing together different parties opposed to the BJP.

He said the opposition leaders will discuss issues related to seat sharing and also finalise several other strategies.

"My only wish is to unite the maximum number of parties before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Everything should be finalised at the earliest. I have no desire for myself," Kumar said.

The 26-party opposition alliance, which has been formed to jointly take on the ruling BJP at the Centre in next year's elections, have already held meetings in Patna, Bengaluru and Mumbai.

Asked about Union Home Minister Amit Shah's proposed visit to Bihar, Kumar said, "Yes, he is coming to chair the Eastern Zonal Council (EZC) meeting in Patna on December 10. We all will be there."

The meeting is expected to be joined by the CMs of other member states Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.

He claimed that the grand alliance government in Bihar is working for the overall development of the state.

"This is the reason that we raised the quota for deprived castes in state government jobs and educational institutions, based on our caste survey report. We want that the Centre should also conduct caste-based census in the country and accord special status to Bihar for its growth," Kumar added.

Female foeticide ring busted in Karnataka

PTI ■ MANDYA (K'TAKA)

Health officials on Wednesday launched a crackdown on medical scanning centres after a large-scale female foeticide ring was exposed carrying out medical termination of female foetuses at a makeshift surgical facility set up at a jaggery factory in a remote village of Mandya district.

The raids were carried out by the Mandya District Family Welfare Officer Venkataswamy and Pandavapura Sub-division Assistant Commissioner Nandish. They sealed scanning centres that did not comply with government guidelines and keep their records up to date.

The police recently arrested 10 people including doctors, nurses and agents, who had allegedly carried out over 900 female foeticides.

The gang used to contact pregnant women and persuade them to get a sex determination test done, for which they charged between Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000, according to police. They used to conduct the tests in the jaggery factory where all the required equipment was



kept, police said "If the tests showed a female child, they would ask those women whether they wanted to abort it.

Once the women agreed, the team would charge about Rs 50,000 to do the work. At least 900 female foeticides were carried out by the gang," a senior police official said. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah noted that a CID probe has been ordered into the female foeticide case. Based on the report, stringent action will be taken against the culprits, he told reporters in the district headquarters town of Belagavi.

CHHATTISGARH 72 newly elected MLAs crorepatis

PTI ■ RAIPUR

As many as 72 out of 90 MLAs in the newly-elected Chhattisgarh legislative assembly are crorepatis, four more compared to the previous Vidhan Sabha. The BJP, which won a landslide victory in the recently-held elections, tops this list with 43 crorepati MLAs, followed by Congress. Out of 90 seats, the BJP has won 54 and Congress 35.

A total of 72 newly-elected MLAs (80 per cent of the House strength) are crorepatis. The BJP tops the list with 43 (80%) of 54 MLAs each having declared assets valued at more than Rs 1 crore.

At 29, 83% of 35 MLAs of Congress are crorepatis, as per the analysis done by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and the Chhattisgarh Election Watch.

The average of assets per winning candidate in the state assembly elections held this time is Rs 5.25 crore compared to Rs 11.63 crore in the 2018 assembly polls.

With assets worth Rs 33.86 crore, BJP's first-time MLA Bhawan Bohra (Pandariya seat) tops the crorepati club, followed by the outgoing chief minister and Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel (Patan constituency) with assets worth Rs 33.38 crore. BJP's Amar Agrawal (Bilaspur seat) stands at a third position with assets valued over Rs 27 crore.

Congress MLA from Chandrapur, Ramkumar Yadav, and his BJP counterparts Ramkumar Toppo and Gomati Sai, the



incumbent MP who contested the assembly elections, are at the bottom of the list of MLAs with the lowest assets. Yadav has declared assets worth Rs 10 lakh, the lowest among all MLAs, Toppo Rs 13.12 lakh, and Sai Rs 15.47 lakh, as per the analysis.

The report also states that 33 out of 90 MLAs (37 per cent) have declared their educational qualification as having passed class 5 to class 12. At 54, a maximum of 60 per cent of the total MLAs hold graduate

degrees or higher qualifications. Two others hold diplomas while an MLA has declared himself as just "literate". A total of 44 winning candidates (49 per cent) have declared their age between 25 and 50 years while 46 others (51 per cent) are between 51 and 80 years.

BJP's Domanlal Korsewada (75), elected from the Ahiwara (SC) seat is the oldest MLA in the newly-elected assembly while Congress' Bilaigarh (SC) legislator Kavita Pran Lahrey (30) is the youngest of all.

Will meet Shah, Jaishankar over refugees issue: Lalduhoma

PTI ■ AIZAWL

Lalduhoma, chief minister-designate of Mizoram, on Wednesday said he will soon meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to discuss the issue of refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh, and internally displaced people from Manipur.

Around 44,000 people from the two neighbouring countries and state have taken shelter in Mizoram due to several problems including ethnic strife.

Lalduhoma, the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) leader, called on Governor Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati at Raj Bhavan and staked claim to form the new government following his party's victory in the assembly polls. His government is likely to take oath on Friday.

"I have telephonic conversations with the Home Minister

and External Affairs Minister on Tuesday. I will soon meet them in Delhi to discuss how the Centre and the state government can work together to look after the refugees and displaced people," Lalduhoma told reporters after meeting the governor.

The 73-year ZPM leader said his government will continue to provide shelter to the refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh and displaced people from Manipur on humanitarian grounds.

He said that his government will also see if it can provide better relief to them compared to that by the outgoing MNF government.

The ZPM dethroned Zoramthanga-led Mizo National Front (MNF) on Monday, bagging 27 of the total 40 assembly seats.

Lalduhoma, an ex-IPS officer who had served as the security in charge of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, said



that he would discuss the country's policy towards refugees from Myanmar with Jaishankar, who is his civil service batchmate. He expressed hope that the Centre will extend help to the state government to look after the Myanmar refugees as it is a humanitarian issue.

More than 31,300 Myanmar nationals and over 1,100 Bangladeshi nationals are currently in Mizoram, according to the state home department. These Myanmar nationals

belonging to the Chin community, who share ethnic ties with Mizos, have taken shelter since February 2021 following a military coup in the neighbouring country. The Bawm or Mizo community from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, who fled gunfights between the Bangladesh army and an ethnic insurgent group, fled to the northeastern state from November last year.

Besides, nearly 12,000 internally displaced people from Manipur have taken refuge in different parts of Mizoram since May this year due to ethnic clashes.

The outgoing MNF government had in May urged the Centre to provide financial assistance to the tune of Rs 10 crore for the internally displaced people from Manipur. In September, the Centre told the state government that it would assist it in kind.



Pakistan woman arrives in India to marry Kolkata man

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Pakistan woman arrives in India to marry Kolkata resident Karachi resident Javeria Khanum crossed over into the Indian side from Attari in Amritsar district where she was welcomed by her fiancé Sameer Khan and some members of his family to the beats of 'dhol'.

Khanum has been granted a 45-day visa after two previous visa rejections and the Covid pandemic stalled their plans for around five years.

The couple, in a brief interaction with reporters at Attari, said the marriage will be solemnised in January next year.

"I have been granted a 45-day visa. I am very happy to be here. Just on arrival, I am already getting so much love here. In the first week of January the marriage will be solemnised," she said.

She had tried to get a visa on two occasions, but got lucky the third time. "It is a happy ending and a happy beginning," she said, expressing her happiness at being able to travel to India

to get married. "Everyone back home was very happy. I can't believe I have got the visa after five years," she added.

Sharing how the couple got in touch, Khan said he expressed interest in marrying Khanum after seeing her photo on his mother's phone.

"This started in May 2018. I had come home from Germany where I was studying. I saw her photo on my mother's phone and expressed my interest. I told my mother that I want to get married to Javeria," he said.

Earlier, the visa was rejected twice and in between there was the Covid pandemic, Khan said, adding that he was thankful to the Indian Government for the visa.

"My mother is very happy now that we will be getting married in January next year," he said. Khan said his friends from his time in Germany - from Africa, Spain, the United States and other countries - are likely to attend his wedding. The couple then left to catch a flight from Amritsar to Kolkata.

'Illegal Bangladeshi immigrants changing demography in Jharkhand, Bihar, WB'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey Wednesday claimed the demography in many parts of Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal was changing because of a rise in infiltrations by illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and demanded the Centre implement National Register of Citizens (NRC) in these states. During the Zero Hour in Lok Sabha, the MP from Jharkhand's Godda said, "I am raising this issue for the 100th time in 15 years as MP."

"We talk about Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes. My state Jharkhand was separated from



Bihar as a tribal majority state. In 1951, the population of tribals was 36 per cent in Jharkhand. Today it is only 24 per cent.

He claimed that in Jharkhand the tribal population has gone down.

"The result is such that there is delimitation in the whole country but Jharkhand is a state where delimitation could not be done in 2008 because it will reduce one tribal seat in Lok Sabha and three tribal seats in the assembly," Dubey said.

"Today the situation is that Bangladeshi infiltrators come and marry tribals. The Muslim population, especially in districts like Godda, Pakur, Sahibganj, Deoghar, and Jamtara, is increasing. This is not a Hindu-Muslim issue," he said.

The BJP MP claimed that a sim-

ilar situation was being witnessed in neighbouring Bihar and West Bengal.

"When Mamata Banerjee was MP she had said the demography of Bengal was changing because of Bangladeshis. Since she became chief minister, Malda, Murshidabad and Kaliachak, is full of Bangladeshi infiltrators. Same is the situation in Katihar, Kishanganj, Araria, Purnia, and Bhagalpur (of Bihar). Demography is changing because of Bangladeshis," he said.

"The Government of India should bring the NRC and send away all Bangladesh infiltrators," the MP said.

Vasundhara Raje heads to Delhi amid Rajasthan CM suspense

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Amid a suspense over the BJP's chief ministerial pick for Rajasthan, senior party leader and former CM Vasundhara Raje was headed to New Delhi Wednesday night.

She was scheduled to take a flight to Delhi. Sources in the Raje camp said she would be meeting the party high command on Thursday. The development came after nearly 60 of the newly elected BJP MLAs met her at her Civil Lines residence on Monday and Tuesday.

The party sources said the name of the chief minister will be decided by the party's parliamentary board and before that,

a BJP legislature party meeting will be called.

However, the party has not yet made any announcement regarding the legislature party meeting.

Raje, a two-time chief minister, is among the frontrunners for the post of chief minister.

In the assembly election results declared on Sunday, the BJP got 115 seats while the Congress secured 69 seats. Elections on 199 out of 200 seats in the state were held on November 25.

Polling in Karanpur, where the election was adjourned due to the demise of the Congress candidate, will be held on January 5 and results will be declared on January 8.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

INDIA hits roadblock

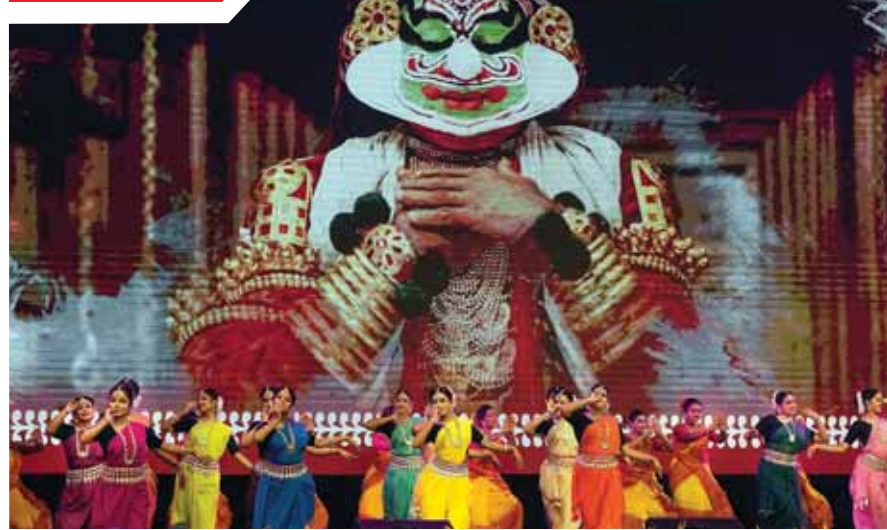
With certain satraps demanding their pound of flesh, Congress forced to be on the defensive

The Congress seems to be spiralling down the goodwill and credibility meter. After the drubbing it received in three recent Assembly elections, its partners in the INDIA bloc are also not extending it the courtesy it has grown accustomed to. After burning most bridges with its co-parties on account of its preoccupation with the State elections, where it miserably failed to score a point, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had convened a meeting of the INDIA bloc on December 6, but key alliance partners cocked a snook at the abrupt invite and expressed unavailability to attend, forcing Congress to reschedule the gathering. The absence of prominent figures, including TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar, SP's Akhilesh Yadav and DMK's MK Stalin underlined the growing discontent within the alliance. Mamata cited commitments, Nitish is reportedly down with viral fever, and Stalin is engaged in relief efforts after cyclone Michaung. The unexpected nature of these absences left the Congress in an awkward position. The lack of communication and coordination reflected poorly on the Congress's ability to manage the alliance. To address the discontent, the Congress scaled down the meeting to include only floor leaders, rescheduling the heads of parties' meeting to the third week of December. This move aims to accommodate the busy schedules of alliance leaders and foster better participation, which should have been the priority right from the start. However, the rescheduling indicates the need for Congress to reassess its approach to alliance management and communication.



These are difficult times for the Congress. The decimation of the party must have had a demoralising effect on the INDIA alliance as well, which was keenly watching the elections and hoping for a turnaround in the northern region. The development also indicates that though Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra created good impact, it failed to translate into votes. The fissures in the alliance were actually visible even before the elections. Several bloc parties, including the TMC, AAP, SP and JD(U), expressed frustration with the Congress for stalling alliance activities, such as seat-sharing talks, citing Assembly polls. The delay raises concerns about the cohesion and effectiveness of the alliance, with some members believing that the political momentum gained after previous meetings has been lost. The Congress must address the issues of perceived dissension, EVM tampering controversy in Assembly elections and work towards restoring the alliance's stability, effectiveness and cohesion for the political battle ahead. The rescheduled meeting presents an opportunity for the Congress to regroup, re-establish communication with alliance partners and chart a course that strengthens the unity and purpose of the coalition. It will also be the litmus test of the INDIA bloc's ability to survive together.

PICTALK



Eminent dancer Dona Ganguly's troupe performs on 29th Kolkata International Film Festival, in Kolkata

The significance of Sam Bahadur

The biopic on Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw depicts him as a fearless man of honour and integrity but skips the scruffy treatment he got in his twilight years



DEEPAK SINHA

Undoubtedly, many parents will be writing about Sam Bahadur, the biopic on Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. It not only shines a light on the life and times of a genuine military hero but also on what it means to be an officer and a gentleman. Whatever one's views about the movie or its shortcomings, of which there are a few, it is undeniable that the director, Meghna Gulzar, has brilliantly caught the very essence of the Field Marshal, both as a human being and a military leader nonpareil. For that, she and the cast certainly deserve ample praise and accolades.

For unknown reasons, the biopic has skirted the issue of the horrendous treatment meted out to the Field Marshal in his twilight years by our political establishment and the bureaucracy. That is rather unfortunate. For instance, though appointed Field Marshal in January 1973, he only received the arrears of his pay and allowances in 2007, a full thirty-four years later, and that too because of the personal intervention of President Abdul Kalam. Interestingly, in 1972, when Mrs Gandhi first proposed to promote him to the rank of Field Marshal, she also wanted him appointed Chief of Defence Staff. A proposal vigorously opposed by bureaucrats not unexpectedly, but also by the other two Services as well. Unfortunately, we are still paying a very high price for the shortsightedness of our military hierarchy to this day. On his demise in June 2008, while the Government did honour him with a State Funeral, neither the President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Pratibha Patil, nor Prime Minister Manmohan Singh nor his defence minister AK Antony, could spare time to attend. Instead, the Government was represented at the funeral of India's greatest military icon since Independence, by the Minister of State for Defence, Mr. Pallam Raju. What it says about our politicians needs no elaboration! Indeed, one would not be surprised if the unflattering depiction of politicians and bureaucrats in the movie was deliberate and not



miscasting as many suggest. The unkindest cut of all though, was the absence from the funeral of the Naval and Air Force Chiefs, Admiral Suresh Mehta and Air Chief Marshal Fali Homi Major. As per newspaper reports, this was supposedly because of the short notice and their inability to organise appropriate transportation. In fairness to them, they were represented, but if the reasons for their absence were true, it was certainly a grievous error of judgement on their part and reflected very poorly on them. Coincidentally, the Army Chief, General Deepak Kapoor, was also absent, but on an official visit to Russia, and was represented as per protocol, by the Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Naidu. The significance of their absence was not lost on the serving and veteran community, as it clearly reflected the direction the military was heading, where displaying fealty to political masters overrode the necessity to live up to the traditions and ethos of the military. A trend, that has only taken deeper roots over time, as increasing politicisation within the military has started taking its toll. Today, interference in purely military mat-



MANY AMONGST OUR TOP MILITARY HIERARCHY ARE COMPROMISED AS THEY OWE THEIR PRESENT POSITIONS MORE TO POLITICAL MUNIFICENCE, THAN THEIR OWN PROFESSIONAL ABILITIES

ters by politicians and bureaucrats, who have neither military experience nor domain knowledge, and will never be held accountable is clearly visible. The unviable Agnipath Scheme that is causing grave damage to our military ethos and capability is just one example. That there has been no opposition from within the military to all of this can be attributed to the sad fact that many amongst our top military hierarchy are compromised as they owe their present positions more to the political munificence, than their own professional abilities. Moreover, reputations, standing and self-respect were greatly damaged by the unwillingness of the Service Chiefs to speak up when military veterans and families were illegally and mercilessly beaten up by the Delhi Police as they sat in peaceful protest at the Jantar Mantar against the Government's failure to grant OROP, a promise that incidentally it has yet to honour in full. Indeed, those unwilling to defend their own will never garner any respect. Ironically, the situation our military is in presently has created a fundamental problem for the political leadership,

though it appears they may have failed to comprehend this as yet. One aspect that stands out in the movie is the fact that the Field Marshal endeared himself to Mrs Gandhi not by submitting to her every whim or a flagrant display of personal loyalty, but by giving her straightforward professional advice, regardless of consequences. Thus, despite all her inherent fears regarding the Field Marshal's likely motives or ambitions, she came to place implicit trust in his professional judgement and abilities. The results were there for all to see. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Modi does not have that luxury, which probably explains our weak-kneed response to Chinese provocations. As Napoleon so aptly put it, "If you build an army of 100 lions and their leader is a dog, in any fight, the lions will die like a dog. But if you build an army of 100 dogs and their leader is a lion, all dogs will fight as a lion".

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opposition parties must introspect



It is indeed a pity that opposition parties are still not sensitised on the need to exhibit unity among themselves to bring about the much-

needed change in the political course of the country. People seem to have acted in desperation and kept the non-BJP parties at a distance. Telangana stands apart as the leader of the Congress party in the state and could successfully take all the factions with him. In Rajasthan, at least, Congress has only two major factions whereas in Telangana the party has too many leaders and each leader leads a faction. But they all acted under a single command in exposing the misrule of BRS and emerged successful. But, at least, now the party should act with more sense of responsibility and spirit of nationalism as advised by the Prime Minister, though his utterance was more sarcastic. A bigger task is before them and let us hope better counsel will prevail in their mind.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

sensus was not seen on an agreement that pledged to triple installed renewable energy capacity by 2030. Only 118 out of 200 countries signed it. China, the world's second-largest country in terms of emissions, and India, the third-largest, did not sign. This historic decision was discussed at that time only. India, as G20 chairmanship, had also given its consent to this drafting. No one can understand India's sudden rejection of it. Anyway, all the COP series meetings are also held, and so far, we have seen only a boom in tourism. No concrete achievement from this is visible in any part of the earth. The temperature is increasing exponentially. Forests are being reduced to ashes by wildfires. With the expansion of the sea coast, cities and towns are coming under submergence. The world is becoming plagued by floods, storms and extreme heat. The countries of the world are still looking at every agreement from the perspective of their profit and loss.

COUGH SYRUP IS SWEET POISON

Sir — As per a report more than 40 companies manufacturing cough syrups in the

country have failed quality tests, a Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) report said, citing lab tests conducted in different states in the aftermath of reports potentially linking India-made cough syrups to 141 child fatalities globally. As per the CDSCO report, of the 1,105 samples tested, 59 were declared "not of standard quality". The report was released by CDSCO in November under a list of drugs, medical devices and cosmetics declared as "not of standard quality", "spurious", "adulterated", or "misbranded". The move came after several deaths were reported among children globally after consuming India-made cough syrups. Concerns surrounding these cough syrups were raised after the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that about 70 children in Gambia had died from acute kidney injury potentially linked to cough and cold syrups produced by Indian manufacturer Maiden Pharmaceuticals Ltd. With this, the image and credibility of India have fallen in the world.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Insurtech is the next big thing after FinTech

By merging insurance with technology, this burgeoning sector promises to revitalise the traditional insurance sector



ADITYA DADIA

In the past decade, FinTech's revolutionary impact has been marked by the integration of cutting-edge technologies across various sectors. Thriving on innovation, these FinTech companies have disrupted traditional processes, raising billions in the process. Even with a funding slowdown, the sector managed to secure \$1.3 billion in H1 2023. Building on this momentum, Insurtech emerges as India's new digital frontier. Merging insurance with technology, this burgeoning sector promises to revitalise the traditional insurance. Its innovative solutions aim to enhance customer experiences, streamline operations, and increase insurance accessibility. Currently valued at US\$ 20,667.5 million, Insurtech is projected to surge to an estimated 210,664.3 million by 2033, growing at a CAGR of over 26%. This remarkable growth trajectory positions Insurtech not just as a trend, but as a transformative force in India's digital economy.



Technology refers to the use of technological innovations designed to squeeze out savings and efficiency from the current insurance industry model. It is not just limited to digitising the existing insurance framework; rather, it's a reimagining of insurance operations using cutting-edge technologies like AI, blockchain, and IoT to create more personalised, automated, and customer-centric services. Insurtech in India represents a transformative force within the traditionally manual and paperwork-heavy insurance sector. Leveraging technological innovations, Indian Insurtech start-ups are streamlining policy management, claims processing, and risk assessment. This simplification makes insurance more accessible and user-friendly. There is still a large proportion of the population uninsured, for instance around 40 crore individuals

do not have access to any health insurance. This significant presence of an uninsured population, coupled with growing digital adoption, positions Insurtech for substantial growth. **Success of the Fintech** The success of fintech companies and the rapid adoption of the services offered by these enterprises have laid the groundwork for the emergence and growth of Insurtech. The current trajectory of Insurtech which promises high growth rates and is also characterised by disruptive innovation and swift market penetration, is quite similar to how the Fintech sector has evolved in the past decade. **Investors are for Insurtech** Even though the comparison of numbers with the fintech sector would not be fair, it is critical to mention that Insurtech enterprises have raised more than \$2.6 billion in the past five years. With exciting forecasts, it is rather a surety that VCs and investors would be more than happy to pour more money into a sector that has a forecasted CAGR of more than 25%. Here are some of the

most critical reasons, besides the growth trends, that have enhanced investors' interest in the sector: **Filling gaps in insurance** Traditional insurance models are often hindered by inefficiencies like lengthy claim processes and limited customer interaction. Insurtech addresses these gaps through technological solutions that streamline operations and enhance customer engagement. This ability to solve longstanding problems in insurance makes Insurtech a particularly attractive investment for those looking to fund ventures that combine innovation with practical, market-driven solutions. **Data-Driven Insights** The fundamental appeal of the sector is based on data analytics and AI. These technologies enable more accurate risk assessment, personalised policy offerings, and predictive analytics to anticipate future trends and customer needs. For VCs and investors, the efficiency and customer-centric nature of these data-driven solutions presents a compelling investment case. *(The writer is the founder, of Alwrit; views are personal)*

IMRAN KHAN CRIES OVER HIS DOINGS

Sir — On the face of it, predicaments for cricketer-turned-politician and former Pak Prime Minister Imran Khan are turning from bad to worse with each day passing and seeming far from over given that Mr Khan has been on the tenterhooks since he put in his papers as Prime Minister following a no-confidence motion passed against him in the National Assembly with 174 votes on April 10 in 2022. Mr Khan and his close aide and foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi are already behind bars in Rawalpindi's Adiala jail, a special court judge on Monday ruled that Mr Khan and Mr Qureshi would be again indicted in the cypher case on December 12 for allegedly leaking state secrets in violation of the country's laws. Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqernain heard the case in the Rawalpindi prison where the duo is incarcerated.

To remind you, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) filed the chargesheet against the PTI leaders duo on September 30 under sections 5 and 9 of the Official Secrets Acts which entails a death sentence or up to 14 years in jail in case of conviction. Given that the Army in Pakistan has largely been in the driver's seat since the creation of the country in 1948, Pakistanis have taken the army rule in their country in their stride.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

COP28 CONTINUES TILL NEXT WEEK

Sir — The COP28 global climate conference will continue for another week. That means its formal completion will be announced on the 12th of December. But this meeting held in Dubai, in many cases, seems to be entangled in a web of controversies even before it has started. First, there was controversy over the name of its chairman, Sultan al-Jaber, who is himself the head of an oil company. Secondly, that document became public, which also includes the draft which states that the UAE is going to use this platform to increase the sales of its oil. Second, con-

FIRST COLUMN

DISCIPLINE YOUR SENSES

Our senses would always seek their objects but we must keep them on a leash



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We have six senses, which are actively looking for gratification by contact with their objects. For example, our tongues look for tasty foods except when we are full. There is nothing wrong with it if these pleasures are within 'dharma'/'maryada' (within allowable limits). God has allowed it, as stated by Lord Krishna in verse # 7.11 of the Bhagavad-Geeta, in which He stated, "I am passion in beings, according to religious principles." He emphasised this point further in verse # 6.17, when He counselled, "One whose eating and recreation are appropriate; of one who strives appropriately in activities; of one who sleeps and stays awake, as required; his sufferings are less. Because sufferings there will be in this material world, described by the Lord as a place of miseries." (8.15) But despite such warnings, we are forever ready to transgress allowable limits hoping to escape punishment. What happens will be clear as we go through the activities of these six active senses. Beginning with our tongue, all of us are guilty of indiscretions sometimes or other. Picture yourself invited to a very rich buffet dinner. You survey what is on offer, which will be a lot unless you are on a restricted diet. What should I eat? People load their plates as if they are starving. This explains our control over our senses. Shouldn't we consider what is best for us to eat? Is it on offer? Then, why think so much? Just eat enough because more food will be available in a few hours for breakfast.



Let us go to our eyes next. It used to be okay till multiple channels came and now smartphones. There is so much to see, especially now one can watch with no one watching. Unfortunately, we are being watched all the time because 'karmaphalas' are being made by our acts. Wise people restrict themselves to what is useful and at worst, what is harmless like a sports programme.

The pleasure of speaking occupies a very high place in modern man's desires. Everyone is an expert on everything with Google playing its role. Doctors get frustrated when patients begin telling them what they should know. One doesn't want to consider that if one was so wise why should he or she be in so much trouble?

The fourth sense, which is also very active is our ears. What do we want to hear most? Our appreciation, which is how good we are compared to everyone around us. Again, like question begs an answer: why aren't we satisfied with our lives then?

Our skin occupies an important position in how we think. We place comfort in all considerations. Air conditioners, heaters, etc are all fine, but how about a little sweating it out with walks, yoga exercises, etc? What does a modern person value the most? Muscles of course to show off. People spend hours in gyms to build what is not needed which gives them trouble as they age.

I have saved the next sense for the last, which gives us the maximum trouble. Yes, you have guessed it right. The sex pleasure is considered the topmost pleasure of all by almost everyone. Our thinking is normally defined by it. Lord Krishna has warned us about it in verse # 18.39, when He cautioned about 'pramad'.

The conclusion is obvious. We have senses and they would always seek contact with their objects. This is normal, but what is not normal is not restricting oneself to what is allowable. God would not have made such a system if it was not workable. It is very much so; only we have to be highly disciplined in thinking and acting, and we can live a satisfactory life.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher, views are personal)

Is India losing sheen for investors?



AS MITTAL

The slowdown in foreign direct investment in India is a cause for concern, as multinational corporations are finding other competitors more attractive

India's GDP grew by 7.6% in the second quarter (July-September) of the year, a positive sign of economic growth. However, the steepest declines in foreign direct investment (FDI) are a matter of concern, especially considering India's recent emergence as a promising investment destination and a viable alternative to China. This decline is particularly worrying as it is happening despite positive projections of India's growth by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and The World Bank.

According to the latest report by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), FDI inflows have slowed down drastically. The decline in FDI inflows has been steep, and the situation has only worsened, with a further decline of -24% in April-September 2023. The current FDI inflows stand at \$20.48 billion, down from \$26.91 billion over the same period last year. Even the overall FDI inflows in 2022-23 witnessed a 16% decline, standing at \$71.3 billion from \$84.8 billion in 2021-22. The steepest declines in FDI have been in crucial sectors such as computer software and hardware, automobile, infrastructure construction activities, and metallurgical industries. For instance, inflows in computer software and hardware fell from \$14.4 billion in 2021-22 to \$9.3 billion in 2022-23, in the automobile industry from \$6.9 billion to \$1.9 billion, in infrastructure construction activities from \$3.2 billion to \$1.7 billion, and in metallurgical industries from \$2.2 billion to \$219 million.

The slowdown in foreign direct investment (FDI) in India is a cause for concern, as multinational corporations (MNCs) are finding Vietnam, Indonesia, and other competitors more attractive. This is a clear indication that the "China plus one" strategy of MNCs is not working for India. During January-September of this year, FDI in Vietnam increased by approximately 8% compared to the same period last year, reaching about \$18 billion. In the case of Indonesia, FDI flows stood at around \$10 billion during January-September of this year, similar to the levels seen last year.

The factors that influence capital flows into countries include the global and domestic macroeconomic environment, the domestic policy and regulatory environment, and political stability. Since India is expected to benefit greatly from the "China plus one" strategy, policymakers must pay closer attention to these FDI trends.

It is well known that FDI flows are more likely to gravitate towards countries with broader and deeper trade agreements. Lower tariffs and other benefits negotiated through free trade agreements (FTAs) incentivise foreign investment. Therefore, the decline in FDI flows to India may reflect this. A deeper assessment of the country's prospects is needed to address this issue.

India is genuinely the alternative to China for companies looking to diversify if it is the "one" in China plus one strategy if the Government's PLI scheme is a powerful enough incentive to draw in investments, and if the solid foundations of India's growth forecasts are taken into account, then MNC investor should be long on India. Any concerns regarding an uncertain business environment, an uneven playing field, or the fear of arbitrary changes to the rules of the game must not deter investors from investing in India.



THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CAPITAL FLOWS INTO COUNTRIES INCLUDE THE GLOBAL AND DOMESTIC MACROECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, THE DOMESTIC POLICY AND POLITICAL STABILITY.

More states should be in the ambit of FDI: The scope of FDI must be expanded to more Indian states. FDI has been concentrated in only a few states due to their location and favourable business environment. Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat have together attracted a staggering 69% of the FDI inflows into the country, with Maharashtra being the top recipient. However, it is disappointing to note that Punjab ranks a lowly 12th in attracting FDI, with a cumulative investment of a meagre Rs. 7693 crore in the past four years, which is a paltry 0.49% of the total inflows of Rs. 15.08 lakh crore from October 2019 to September 2023.

In contrast, the neighbouring state of Haryana has been more successful, ranking sixth with FDI equity inflows of Rs. 67,502 crore, accounting for a substantial 4.17% of the total inflows during the same period. Punjab's successive governments have been striving to attract investments, particularly from foreign investors, but they have been facing major hurdles such as location disadvantage, poor connectivity, and frequent protests.

The existing industry in Punjab has also been complaining about disruptions in their operations and movements due to the aforementioned issues. Haryana is way ahead in this regard with a significant

advantage due to its proximity to Delhi NCR and superior connectivity.

It is high time that Punjab takes firm steps to improve its position in attracting FDI, as its highest ranking was only ninth in 2020-21, when it attracted FDI equity investment of Rs. 4,719.45 crore, primarily in food processing, auto components, engineering goods, and textiles. The declining trend in FDI inflows to Punjab since then is a cause for concern. Therefore, the state must create a more conducive environment for businesses and investors, and promote its potential in various sectors, to attract more FDI and boost its economy.

Disadvantage: Despite signing and negotiating bilateral free trade agreements, India has failed to secure a trade agreement with the European Union or become part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) countries including China, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea for free trade agreements. The trade agreement between the 10 member states of ASEAN and their free trade agreement partners - Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and Korea - has deepened economic integration between these countries, which are at the heart of manufacturing supply chains.

As a result, India's exclusion from such agreements and the supply chains that run through these regions puts it at a significant dis-

advantage in this manufacturing ecosystem. The Way Forward: Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) have a far greater potential to facilitate the growth of the Indian economy than Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI). However, India needs to take swift and assertive action to speed up structural reforms, root out corruption, and reduce red tape in bureaucracy to strengthen its position as the most attractive investment destination for FDI. India has adopted a negative list approach in its FDI policy, which outlines only those sectors and activities where foreign investment is regulated. Sectors not mentioned in the document are open to obtaining 100% FDI under the automatic method.

The liberal and attractive policy regime for investors, combined with a favourable business climate and reduced regulatory framework, have resulted in higher FDI inflows. But this alone is not enough. India needs to complement this with a sound trade policy that boosts exports, encourages inclusive development, and incentivises R&D to make our manufacturing ecosystem globally competitive, thereby fetching FDI at a large scale.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are strictly personal)

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the steel industry

A step-by-step approach is the best to implement artificial intelligence. Scores of AI models are available for use in the steel units which can be tried without much hassle

Technology is ever-evolving. While it becomes difficult to keep pace with rapid technological advancements in all expanses of life, it is equally difficult to discount them because these are highly value-accretive. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one such technology. The manufacturing sector, in general, and the steel sector, in particular, are integrating AI into their daily operations to improve productivity, health and safety, reduce operational costs and reap countless other operational and functional benefits. Survival will be at stake for those who will not. In a developing nation or the Global South, cheaper availability of steel is a prequel to ensure sustainable development. Since raw materials for



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making steel are unlikely to be economical in the foreseeable future, adaptation of modern disruptive technologies and processes is the only way out. Estimates suggest that the proper adaptation of AI in the entire value chain of steelmaking can save between \$60 and \$100 per tonne. Apart from this, a key takeaway from the recently concluded ISA Steel InfraBuild Summit in Lucknow was that the use of AI in architecture will enable engineers and architects to design, plan, and build steel structures more efficiently, resulting in proper economics and savings in infrastructure and real estate.

In the steel sector, AI can be adopted from R&D and innovation to procurement, manufacturing and back-office

process digitalisation to supply-chain inventory, marketing, and whatnot. All these can lead to a 60% growth in EBDITA in three years. Greenhouse gas emissions can also be reduced by 5-10%. Maintenance is, as always, a difficult task. Each manufacturing unit has its maintenance plan tailored to its particularities. Proper implementation and use of AI can help predict the exact timing of maintenance, thereby reducing shutdown time, cutting maintenance costs, and enhancing the lifespan of the machinery. The Indian steel industry has been the early adopter of AI.

Adaptation of AI has the highest impact on steel manufacturing in the entire value chain. In the coke oven plant, sinter plant, blast furnaces,

continuous caster and rolling, among others, the implementation of AI has multiple benefits ranging from 1-2% yield improvement to a 50-80% reduction in quality losses. Energy consumption also improved by roughly 10%. Autonomous or semi-autonomous data or content examination also makes predictions and recommendations easier. Integration of sales and production data improves revenue management and customer satisfaction.

With precise data, AI's ability to predict market data and price fluctuations helps manufacturers adjust production, manage inventories, and respond swiftly to changing market conditions. Enhancing safety is also another essential

aspect. No wonder steel manufacturers worldwide are embracing AI to ensure faster delivery of business requirements. This is the age of intelligent manufacturing. Far from having a steel-producing smart factory, intelligent manufacturing encompasses all of it - sourcing raw materials to production to marketing products through an integrated intelligent supply chain.

Steel consumption mirrors the health of an economy. Aspiring to be in the league of a developed nation, India has miles to go to catch up with the global steel consumption average. The building, construction and infrastructure sector consumes nearly 70% of all steel in India. The growth of the steel sector will largely depend on the demand emanating

from the infrastructure sector. While AI adaptation will benefit the steel sector, implementing AI in the infrastructure sector will help assess the sector's specific needs - such as identifying cost-effective high-strength steel structure-based designs and offering tailor-made products.

Adaptation, both in the steel and the infrastructure sector, is a challenging task. A mindset of experimentation and a determination to bring about positive changes are required. With AI, the ultimate goal is to implement an automated and unsupervised process linked with software and processes to improve performance over time. However, there is no substitute for human capital, and once integrated with AI, it will do wonders if used for the ben-

efit of mankind and planet Earth. The apprehension that AI will displace jobs is unfounded. However, the dynamics of the job will change, requiring manpower with digital skills. It also warrants upskilling existing employees. A step-by-step approach is the best to implement AI. Building on the following line from the learnings of the first will yield the best results. Scores of AI models are in use in different steel manufacturing units in the country. The use of transformative technology will only go up in the days ahead. We need to be ready to adapt to the changes and implement it.

(The writer is the Secretary General of the Indian Steel Association (ISA), views are personal)

ICC RANKINGS

Ravi becomes world number 1 T20I bowler



PTI ■ DUBAI
Young Indian leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi on Wednesday rose to the top spot in the ICC T20I bowling chart on the back of his recent performance against Australia.

The 23-year-old was India's go-to bowler in the just-concluded series against Australia, taking nine wickets from five games. Bishnoi, who is on 699 rating points, has jumped five places to displace Afghanistan spinner

Rashid Khan (692) from the top slot. Sri Lankan spinner Wanindu Hasaranga and England's Adil Rashid, who both have 679 points, are in joint third. Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana (677) completes the top

five. Bishnoi is the only Indian bowler in the top 10 in the shortest format even as Axar Patel climbed nine spots to be 18th. Meanwhile, the swashbuckling Suryakumar Yadav, who captained India during their 4-1 T20I series win against Australia,

held on to the top spot among batters, while opener Ruturaj Gaikwad dropped a place to be seventh. Hardik Pandya retained the third spot in the all-rounders' list, despite missing the series against Australia due to injury.

Bangladesh takes control of 2nd test



After New Zealand reduced to 55-5 on eventful 1st day

AP ■ MIRPUR (BANGLADESH)

Bangladesh took full control of the final test against New Zealand after 15 wickets fell on an eventful day one Wednesday as the hosts pursue a first ever test series win against the Kiwis. The home side was all out for 172 but hit back strongly to reduce New Zealand to 55-5 in 12.4 overs before bad light forced stumps. Both teams' batters struggled on a wicket where most of the balls kept low and the bounce was uneven. The New Zealand bowling attack maintained a tight line and length to create pressure by conceding just eight runs in the first seven overs after Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto opted to bat first.

Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner (3-31) and offspinner Glenn Phillips (3-65) shared six wickets to wreak havoc on the Bangladesh batting lineup. Ajaz Patel, another left-arm spinner, claimed 2-54 while skipper Tim Southee took one wicket without conceding a single run in 5.2 overs. Mushfiqur Rahim made a team-high 35 before becoming the first Bangladeshi batter to be dismissed for handling the ball. While defending a delivery from fast bowler Kyle Jamieson, the

team's most experienced batter used his right hand to push the ball away even though it wasn't close to the off-stump. After New Zealand appealed for the out, the third umpire checked and then gave him out for obstructing the field. Bangladesh's first boundary came in the eighth over when Zakir Hasan drove Patel through cover for four. The pressure eventually got the better of Zakir (8) when he played a rash shot against Santner and chipped it straight to mid-on. In the next over, Patel dismissed Mahmudul Hasan (14) after he was beaten by the drift to give a catch at short-leg. Momtazul Haque (5) was the next to go when he was caught behind off Patel's bowling. But the biggest blow for Bangladesh followed in the next over when captain Najmul Hossain Shanto (9), who hit a century in the previous test, attempted a reverse sweep against Santner. The on-field Umpires turned down the appeal but New Zealand reviewed it successfully to leave Bangladesh 47-4. Mushfiqur and Shahadat Hossain, playing his only second test, shared a 57-run partnership which eventually kept Bangladesh ahead on a tricky wicket. The dismissal of Mushfiqur



Mushfiqur becomes first Bangladesh batter to be out for obstructing field

PTI ■ MIRPUR (BANGLADESH)

Former captain Mushfiqur Rahim on Wednesday became the first Bangladesh batter to be given out for 'obstructing the field' in a bizarre dismissal on the opening day of the second Test against New Zealand here. The 36-year-old Rahim defended a rising delivery from New Zealand quick Kyle Jamieson in the fourth ball of the 41st over and then extended his right hand to apparently keep the ball away after it bounced up wide outside off stump. The Black Caps were quick to appeal and the on-field umpires referred the matter to the TV umpire Ahsan Raza who gave Rahim out. According to Law 37.1.2, "The striker is out obstructing the field if, except in the circumstances of 37.2, in the act of

receiving a ball delivered by the bowler, he/she wilfully strikes the ball with a hand not holding the bat. This will apply whether it is the first strike or a second or subsequent strike. The act of receiving the ball shall extend both to playing at the ball and to striking the ball more than once in defence of his/her wicket." Earlier such dismissals were classified as "handled the ball" but a change in the laws in 2017 brought them under "obstructing the field" category. Former England captain Michael Vaughan was the last batter to be given out 'handling the ball' against India in 2001. Rahim was Bangladesh's top-scorer with his 35 off 83 balls as the hosts were bundled out for 172 inside 67 overs. Bangladesh won the first Test in Sylhet by 150 runs.

ACC U-19 ASIA CUP

India opens campaign against Afghanistan

Faces Pakistan on Sunday

PTI ■ DUBAI

India will face Afghanistan in the opening match of the ACC Men's U-19 Asia Cup cricket tournament here on Friday. Pakistan will play Nepal in the other match of the opening day. Arch-rivals India and Pakistan will face each other on Sunday. Eight teams will compete for the top prize in the 50-over event which is being hosted by the Emirates Cricket Board.

The teams have been divided into two groups of four each. India, Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan are placed in Group A. Bangladesh, Japan, Sri Lanka and hosts UAE feature in Pool B. The top two teams from each of the two groups will progress to the semi-finals which will be played on December 15. The tournament final will be played at the Dubai International Stadium on December 17. All group matches and semi-finals will be played at the ICC Academy Ovals 1 and 2. All tournament matches will begin at 9:30 am local time.

Will play IPL until I cannot walk anymore: Maxwell

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Star Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has vowed to play in the world's biggest cricket league, the IPL "until he can't walk anymore". The 35-year-old, who played a massive role in Australia's ODI World Cup-winning campaign in India recently, will once again don the colours of Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL next year. "The IPL will probably be the last tournament I ever play, as I will play the IPL until I can't walk anymore," Maxwell was quoted as saying by Australian Associated Press (AAP) at the Melbourne Airport on Wednesday. "I was talking about how good the IPL has been to me throughout my career, the people I've



met, the coaches I have played under, the international players that you get to rub shoulders with, how beneficial to my whole career that tournament has been. "You're rubbing shoulders with AB (de Villiers) and Virat (Kohli) for two months, talking to them while watching other games. It's just the greatest learning experience that any player could ask for," he said. Maxwell feels Australian cricketers should play in the IPL for experience ahead of the T20 World Cup in the United States and the West Indies in June. "Hopefully, a lot of our Australian players can get over to the IPL and get to work in slightly similar conditions to the

West Indies, where it is a little bit drier, it will spin." Maxwell will return to action as captain of Melbourne Stars in the Big Bash League opener against Brisbane Heat in the opener at the Gabba on Thursday. After winning the ODI World Cup by beating favourites India at home, Australia are now looking to reclaim the T20 world title which they won in 2021. "As soon as we won this World Cup, we all talked about the refocus towards the next one," Maxwell said. "I'm hoping it's going to be a really exciting summer for the BBL, with what is just around the corner. "Hopefully a little bit more importance on putting your name up in the headlines for the right reasons and trying to push for those spots," he added.



Du Plessis hints at return to international cricket

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Former South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis has hinted at a comeback to international cricket ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup, saying that he has been in discussion with the Portea's white-ball coach Rob Walter for the past couple of years. Du Plessis last featured in a T20I three years ago in 2020. While his last match for South Africa was a Test against Pakistan in February 2021. "I believe that I can return to international cricket," du Plessis told the broadcaster of Abu Dhabi T10 league. "We have been speaking about this for the last couple of years. It's just figuring out the balance of the T20 World Cup next year. It's certainly something we have spoken about with the new coach," he added. Despite not featuring for South Africa, du Plessis has been doing well in the domestic circuit as well as in T20 leagues across the world. With 730 runs from 14 games for the Royal Challengers

Bangalore, du Plessis was the second highest run getter in the IPL earlier this year. The 39-year-old led South Africa in the 2014 and 2016 T20 World Cups but wasn't considered for the last two editions of the tournament, despite never officially retiring from white-ball cricket. On Monday, South Africa white-ball coach Walter had said the likes of du Plessis, Quinton de Kock and Rilee Rossouw will be considered for the T20 World Cup, scheduled to be played in June next year in the West Indies and the USA. "Given that some of our front-line bowlers are missing out and there are guys - let me throw it out there just to create some media hype - like Faf (du Plessis) and Rilee (Rossouw) as well as Quinny (De Kock) that could well be considered for a T20 World Cup and then also the SA20 that happens next year - 80% of the side picks itself but there is definitely a space for other guys to get themselves into the conversation," Walter had said.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Too much cricket is affecting development of all-rounders: Kallis

Jacques Kallis, one of the last multi-skilled legends, says quality all-rounders have become a scarcity in modern-day cricket, especially in Test cricket, because of "too much cricket across formats". While Sir Garfield Sobers (8032 runs and 235 wickets) is considered greatest of 'em all' across generations, Kallis (25,000-plus runs and nearly 600 wickets in three formats) is inarguably one of the legendary all-rounders the modern era has seen. In the 1980s, there were four great all-rounders in Imran Khan, Richard Hadlee, Ian Botham and Kapil Dev while the new millennium saw emergence of Kallis and Andrew Flintoff. But with advent of T20 cricket and mushrooming leagues across the globe with new rules have actually discouraged development of multi-skilled cricketers. "It is a tough question to answer, all-rounders don't come around every day. There aren't many throughout the history. Lot of

things, amount of cricket that is played certainly plays a role," Kallis told PTI during an exclusive interview. The former Proteas captain is in India to play the Legends League Cricket. While he didn't name Indian Premier League but the former KKR coach isn't a great fan of 'Impact Player' rule where a team can change one player during its batting or bowling innings as per need. "A few T20 competitions have substitutes (IPL) and I am not a big fan of that as it takes away the all-rounder out of your team. The teams that do not have good all-rounders are now playing with 12 men. I am not a huge fan of that. "There are lot of little things that add up on to why there aren't too many all-rounders at the moment, as it is surprising as they add so much value to the



game. But it's a whole lot of little things coming together," Kallis said. **CENTURION WILL BE TOUGH FOR INDIA:** The Indian team would be embarking on a tough away tour of South Africa, the only major Test playing nation where it hasn't won a single Test series in 31 years. The focus will be on the two Test matches, which is a part of

World Test Championship (WTC) cycle even as ODIs and T20s are part of the full tour. The stars from both sides (Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Kagiso Rabada) will only be playing the traditional format during the series. "This is a good Indian team but South Africa is tough to beat in South Africa. Centurion will probably suit South Africa and Newlands will probably suit