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OPINION 6
WHY IS EUROPE TURNING RIGHTWARD

WORLD 8
RISHI SUNAK'S LEADERSHIP IN TURMOIL

MONEY 10
STOCK MARKETS SNAP SEVEN DAYS WINNING RUN

RAIPUR, FRIDAY DECEMBER 8, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

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BUTTLER DELIGHTED TO REGAIN FORM
12 SPORTS

BJP Most Preferred Choice of Voters: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday cited poll data for Assembly elections over the decades to assert that the BJP has become people's most preferred choice for governance as its record of retaining power is better than the Congress and other parties.

Speaking at the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting, he said not any leader but "team spirit" should be credited for the party's big win in the recent Assembly polls, noting that besides winning in three States, the party's strength has also grown in Telangana and Mizoram, sources said.

The Prime Minister also asked party leaders to use the language preferred by the masses in their interaction with them. While giving an example, he said they should use "Modi ki guarantee" instead of "Modi ji ki guarantee".

Quoting Modi, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi told reporters that the Congress faced Assembly polls 40 times while in power in those States and could win only seven of them, having a dismal success rate of 18 per cent.

The corresponding figures for the BJP are 22 out of 39 times, a success rate of 56 per cent, Modi noted. Regional parties have fared better than the Congress but not the BJP as they won 18 of 36 times when in power, notching up a success rate of 50 per cent.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives for the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting at the Parliament House in New Delhi PTI

It shows that the BJP is the most preferred party for running the Government, he said. In the case of a party in power in a State for two terms facing Assembly elections, the Congress' success rate is only 14 per cent compared to the BJP's 59 per cent, he added.

The Prime Minister reiterated that the four biggest "castes" for him are the poor, youth, women and farmers, and party leaders should work for their development. He asked MPs to participate in "Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra", a Government exercise aimed at saturation coverage of various welfare schemes.

Modi later wrote on X, "Earlier today, attended the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting. Our party karyakartas are buoyed by the party's performance in the recent Assembly elections and are looking forward to working even harder in the times to come, spreading the message of development among people of all walks of life".

"We will continue to fulfil people's aspirations and empower the poorest, downtrodden and marginalised," he added.

Earlier, Modi was given a standing ovation at the meeting following the party's stupendous win in three Assembly polls.

Party MPs raised slogans lauding his leadership as senior leaders, including BJP president JP Nadda, felicitated Modi at the first meeting of the BJP Parliamentary Party in Parliament's Winter Session.

The BJP scored a thumping win over the Congress in the Assembly polls in three States of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.

Modi's leadership has been cited as the primary reason for its big win. Even as the Congress snatched power from the BRS in Telangana, the BJP's vote share and tally rose. The BJP Parliamentary Party, which includes all its Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members, generally meets every week during sessions.

In the meetings, its leaders, including Modi, speak on different issues relevant to the agenda in Parliament and also to its organisational and political campaigns. Modi greeted with slogans by treasury benches in the Rajya Sabha. Modi was greeted with the thumping of desks and slogans by Treasury Benches as he entered the Rajya Sabha during the Question Hour on Thursday. He attends the Question Hour proceedings every Thursday, the day when queries related to the departments he handles are listed.

This is the first time he entered the Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session of Parliament that started on December 4. Soon after the Prime Minister entered the Upper House, some members also started raising slogans like "BJP guarantee, Modi guarantee" and "Teesri baar, Modi Sarkar" as he assumed his seat next to the Leader of the House Piyush Goyal.

BJP president J P Nadda was also present in the House.

In a separate event during the day, the Prime Minister urged people to become 'Viksit Bharat Ambassadors', saying it is an ideal way to spread the development agenda and utilise "our energies to fulfill our mission to make India a developed nation".

Modi said 140 crore Indians have shown the world what people-powered development is.

"Let us join in this mass movement by signing up on NaMo App, and accepting the 100 day challenge of performing simple but highly impactful tasks in the Viksit Bharat Ambassador module," he said.

Modi said he looks forward to personally meeting some of the most energetic and bright ambassadors from all walks of life.

US and Canada not on the same page for India on Khalistan: EAM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday said there was no question of "equitable treatment" of the United States and Canada in relation to the allegations that Indian officials were involved in the targeting of Khalistan separatists in the two countries, as one had provided inputs to India and the other had not.

Making this assertion in the Rajya Sabha, he also informed the Rajya Sabha that India has constituted an inquiry committee to look into the inputs received from the US as these have a bearing on the country's national security.

He made this assertion days after Washington alleged an Indian link to a foiled plot to kill Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on its soil.

Replying to a supplementary question on the US charges, the Minister said it is not directly connected to the original question which was on the foreign visits of Union Ministers.

"Insofar as the US is concerned, certain inputs were given to us as part of our security cooperation with the United States. Those inputs were of concern to us because they (were) related to the nexus of organised crime, trafficking and other matters.

"Because they have a bearing on our own national security, it was decided to institute an enquiry into the matter and an inquiry committee has been constituted," he said.

The Minister was also asked why there was no equitable treatment with regard to charges made by the Canadian Government. In response, he said, "Insofar as Canada is concerned, no specific evidence or inputs were provided to us. So, the question of equitable treatment to two countries, one of whom has provided input and one of whom has not, does not arise."

Last month, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with working with an Indian Government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun, who holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada.

Centre promises Chennai relief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has directed the Ministry of Home Affairs to release in advance the second installment of the Centre's contribution to the SDRF of ₹493.60 crore to Andhra Pradesh and ₹450 crore to Tamil Nadu in view of the floods caused by cyclone Michaung, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said.

Meanwhile in Chennai, following an aerial survey and a high-level meeting with Chief Minister MK Stalin at the Secretariat, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the first installment of `450 crore had been released earlier to the State.

"PM Modi is distressed by loss of lives in TN due to rains, flood," he said. In a post on X, Shah said the Prime Minister has also approved the first urban flood mitigation project of ₹561.29 crore for 'Integrated Urban Flood Management activities for Chennai Basin Project' under the National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF), which also includes Central assistance of ₹500 crore.

The severe cyclonic storm Michaung has affected Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Though the extent of damage is varied, many areas of these States have been inundated, affecting standing crops, the Home Minister said. "To help the State Governments with the management of relief necessitated by the cyclonic storm, PM @narendramodi directed the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to release in advance the Central share of the 2nd instalment of SDRF (State Disaster Response Fund) of ₹493.60 crore to Andhra Pradesh and ₹450 crore to Tamil Nadu," he said.

"I pray for the safety and well-being of all those affected. We stand with them in this crucial hour and will ensure the situation normalises at the earliest," Shah said. Michaung left behind a trail of destruction in Andhra Pradesh, damaging 770-kilometre roads, uprooting trees and killing livestock. 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.

Telangana welcomes its new Chief Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Congress legislature party leader A Revanth Reddy was on Thursday sworn in as Chief Minister of Telangana which was attended by top Congress leaders, including Sonia Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge. Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan administered the oath of office and secrecy to Revanth Reddy and the Ministers at L B Stadium.

Congratulatory messages poured for Reddy from top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but the new CM's 'Bihari DNA' remark recently drew sharp reactions from BJP leaders who sought explanation not only from him but top Congress and its ally INDIA Bloc members.

Members of Opposition parties, including Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee, Hemant Soren, MK Stalin and others like Sharad Pawar, Sitaram Yechury were invited personally by Revanth by phone calls but none could make it due prior scheduled engagements however maximum of them had participation in the oath ceremony by their representatives.

Modi assured the new CM all possible support to further the progress of the State. "Congratulations to Revanth on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Telangana. I assure all possible support to further the progress of the state and the welfare of its citizens," Modi said.

Besides Revanth, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka (Deputy Chief Minister), N Uttam Kumar Reddy, Komatireddy Venkata Reddy, C Damodar Rajanarasimha, D Sridhar Babu, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Ponnam Prabhakar, Konda Surekha, D Anasuya (popularly known as Seethakka), Tummala Nageswara Rao and Jupally Krishna Rao took oath as Ministers.

Senior Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, his deputy D K Shivakumar, and Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu also attended the ceremony.

Make in India eyeing one trillion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday claimed exports of manufacturing-based products have increased significantly due to the Make-in-India programme, leading to a huge growth in employment opportunities in the country.

Buoyed by the 'inflection turnaround', Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said earlier the services sector used to dominate the export figures, but pharmaceuticals, mobile phones and merchandise have replaced it now.

He attributed the increase in the export of manufactured goods to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Make-In-India programme. According to 2022-23 export data, of total exports of USD 762 billion, USD 453 billion came from manufactured goods and USD 309 billion from services, the Minister said.

"This is a big turning point. It is a reflection of change in the country's economy. Manufacturing-based exports impact a common man's life. If we study the economy of countries like Japan and South Korea, we will see that they all, during their economic journey, focussed on manufacturing while moving from low-income to middle-income and then high-income," Vaishnaw, who holds Railways, Communications and Electronics & IT portfolios, said at a Press conference.

"If we study the growth period around the 1800 or early 1900 period of countries such as the US, Germany, France, UK etc, we find that they also focussed on manufacturing for moving from low income to middle and high income.

"Countries that have passed through the growth phase, all gave importance to manufacturing. This is what Modi did as the first big economic programme, economic philosophy and economics thought that he launched, Make It India, which has a big place in that," Vaishnaw said.

"It is the reflection of a series of programmes and simplifications that were introduced after the success of Make in India, Design in India, Innovate in India among others.

According to him, manufacturing-based growth has enhanced employment opportunities which is obvious from the data of formal employment or the registration in the provident fund that has gone from 6 lakh monthly or around 70 lakh annually to up to 14 lakh to 15 lakh monthly or around 1.8 crores annually.

INDIA awaits BJP CMs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Amidst the ongoing huddle, the BJP is likely to name Central observers for electing the leaders of its legislature parties in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan on Friday amid indications that new Chief Ministers may be named over the weekend.

The ruling party at the Centre, which secured an immense mandate in the Hindi heartland States, came under severe criticism from Opposition parties led by the Congress. They questioned the delay in naming the Chief Ministers, even as the grand old party was swift in appointing the Chief Minister in its winning State of Telangana on the same day.

A senior BJP leader said the observers for all the three States are expected to be named on Friday. They will then travel to the respective States to oversee the meetings of newly elected MLAs where the future Chief Ministers will be named.

He said no decision has been taken yet on the choices of the Chief Minister and the party will keep in mind social, regional, governance and organisational interests in picking the three CMs.

Leaders from three States have been meeting the top party brass, including Home Minister Amit Shah and party president JP Nadda, but sources played down their significance, saying such meetings are routine.

"So many State leaders have been meeting our national leadership. There can be only three Chief Ministers. One should not be reading too much into it," party source said, noting that many of the probables include MPs who have resigned from Parliament and are meeting national leaders as courtesy.

As per agency reports, amid the suspense over whom the BJP will pick for the Chief Minister's post in Rajasthan, a visit by five BJP MLAs to a resort on the outskirts of Jaipur city created a buzz. The father of MLA Lalit Meena claimed the newly elected legislator from Kishanganj had been confined there by the other four. After his father informed the party office, Meena was brought there on Wednesday morning. It was not immediately clear whether the other four stayed back at the resort on Sikar Road.

BJP's Rajasthan unit president CP Joshi said, "There is no 'badabandi'. The MLAs are in their constituencies," he said, adding that any decision on who will the Chief Minister will be taken after the legislature party meeting."

Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, a seasoned BJP leader from Madhya Pradesh, and Baba Balaknath, who is from Rajasthan, met Shah on Thursday. Both quit Lok Sabha after becoming members of Assemblies of their States.

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje, whose meeting with many newly-elected MLAs have raised a few eyebrows, is also in the national Capital. She may also meet senior party leaders, sources said.

After Gujarat, Assam seeks a spot in the UNESCO sun

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Government on Thursday told the Parliament that Assam's Charaideo Moidams, or royal burial mounds of the Ahom dynasty is India's nomination for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List for the year 2023-24.

The unique burial mounds, represented by pyramid-like structures known as 'moidams', were used by the Tai-Ahom dynasty which ruled for around 600 years in Assam, from the 13th century to the 19th century, said Union Minister for Culture and Tourism G Kishan Reddy in response to a query in the Rajya Sabha. He was asked whether the Government has finalised India's nomination for consideration as World Heritage site for 2023-24 and the rationale behind the selection of sites for nominations.

In his written reply to the question, Reddy said, "The nomination dossier of 'Group of Moidams-The Mound Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty' has been submitted as India's nomination for the year 2023-24."

"Selection of sites or properties for World Heritage nomination depends upon its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), Authenticity and Integrity. These sites must fulfil one of the criteria of OUV as mentioned in the UNESCO Operational Guidelines, 2023," the Minister added.

The Moidams contain the remains of Ahom dynasty royalty. Previously, the Ahoms were buried, but after the 18th century, they adopted the Hindu mode of cremation, and bones and ashes were enclosed in a "moidam" which is an earthen pyramid. These moidams are commonly known as the pyramids of Assam.

SAIL Chairman emphasises on carbon footprint reductions

R SHARMA : BOKARO

SAIL Chairman Amarendu Prakash departed from Bokaro in the afternoon at the conclusion of his two-day visit. Before leaving Bokaro, he was given a guard of honor by CISF, BSL unit at Bokaro Niwas. Also the Chairman interacted with media along with Director In-charge RSP, Additional Incharge BSL Atanu Bhowmik and Executive Directors of BSL during which Chairman emphasized on carbon footprint reductions as major focus of SAIL and soon to share complete blueprint on Carbon reductions to make things more accountable specifically.

The Chairman while interacting with the Pioneer's questions on EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) said that CBAM is already in their preview and since carbon emissions reductions task is already in progress hence much more clarity in terms of CBAM and its uniformity is something to review upon. Also Chairman clearly presented a road map of SAIL towards employing friendly work culture and Digital adaptability.

Further On the second day of the Chairman's visit he inaugurated the Pragya Kendra established in Sector 09 of BSL. On this occasion, Director in-charge RSP and BSL Atanu Bhowmik, Deputy Commissioner Bokaro Kuldeep Chaudhary, SP Bokaro A. Priyadarshi, BSL Executive, Chief General Manager and other senior officers were present with him. SAIL Chairman visited the Capacity and Competency Building Center (CCBC) located at Pragyan Kendra and the Livelihood/Self-Employment Training Center for the women of the regional villages of Bokaro in collaboration with IIT/ISM, Dhanbad and inquired about the people receiving training there. Also Chairman Prakash inaugurated the center jointly operated by BSL's CSR and Dalmia Cement in Sector 01 and inquired about the facilities there.

Apart from this, the SAIL Chairman also held separate meetings with the members of Bokaro Steel Officers Association and SAIL SC/ST representatives.

XLRI s platinum jubilee: Vice President to inspire the grand occasion

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a momentous celebration of 75 years of academic excellence, XLRI Jamshedpur, the pioneer B-School, is all set to welcome the distinguished presence of the Vice President, Jagdeep Dhankhar, at the Tata Auditorium on December 10. The vice president will be gracing the ongoing Platinum Jubilee Year Celebrations, set to commence at 2 PM. The event will witness the esteemed presence of C.P. Radhakrishnan, the Governor of Jharkhand, and T V Narendran, CEO & Managing Director of Tata Steel Ltd & Chairman of XLRI.

The Platinum Jubilee Year, inaugurated on October 11, 2023, in the Tata Auditorium, XLRI by C.P. Radhakrishnan, has been a testament to XLRI's commitment to academic excellence and leadership development. Fr S George S.J., Director, XLRI Jamshedpur, emphasized, "XLRI has been a beacon of excellence in management education for 75 years. Fostering social consciousness among students is one of the hallmarks of Jesuit Business Education, and at XLRI, we lay great emphasis on inclusive and sustainable growth of people and communities and strongly advocate social responsibility alongside corporate activities."

As part of its legacy, XLRI has been the first B-school to introduce sustainability in its curriculum, actively recruiting faculty members specializing in sustainability issues. The institution is actively engaged in collaborating with corporate entities on sustainability projects, reflecting its commitment to societal and environmental concerns.

XLRI's upcoming events include the recently organized International POMS Conference from December 4-6, 2023, themed "Envisioning the Future of Operations for Sustainability," attracting academicians and practitioners worldwide. On December 9-10, 2023, XLRI will host its Alumni Homecoming, bringing together past and present leaders for a celebration of legacy and shared experiences.

To commemorate 75 years of labour and industrial relations research and education, XLRI, in collaboration with Leeds University Business School, Leeds, the UK, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, New Delhi, will host a two-day International Industrial Relations Conference from January 8-9, 2024. Other notable events on the horizon include MAXI Fair, the International Conference on Ethics & Responsibility in Business, Corporate Leaders Conference, Doctoral Consortium, Conference on Sustainability, Ethics & Inclusion, and a National CEO Conference, all scheduled for 2024.

Expressing gratitude to students, professors, staff, well-wishers, and Jesuit Fathers for their unwavering support, the XLRI family looks forward to a year of celebration, reflection, and strategic planning to continue its legacy of excellence in management education. The Vice President's presence adds an extra layer of prestige to the festivities, emphasizing XLRI's commitment to shaping future leaders and contributing to societal development.

Four poachers held, 3 muzzle loaded guns seized in PTR

High alert in PTR due to presence of two tigers

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Four poachers were arrested in the Garu east range of the tiger reserve Palamu. Three nuzzle loaded guns were also seized.

The four arrested poachers Amar Dayal Singh, Kuldip Singh, Rinku Singh and Kushdeo Singh have been booked under the various sections of the wild life protection act and were remanded in judicial custody in Latehar CJM court today, said the ranger Umesh Dubey.

Amar Dayal and Kuldip come from Baiga Toli while Rinku and Kushdeo hail from Kotam village.

Amar Dayal and Kuldip were caught in the jungles of Amba Pani while Rinku and Kushdeo were picked up from their houses at Kotam village.

Two muzzle-loaded guns were found and seized from the grasses where Amar Dayal and Kuldip had tried to hide it in the jungles of Amba Pani.

The third muzzle-loaded gun was discovered from the branches and leaves of the Mahua tree where Kushdeo Singh had hidden it, said ranger Umesh Dubey.

Amar Dayal and Ricky are habitual offenders of the wild life act.

Umesh Dubey said the four were in the jungles to poach wild boar. They fired one shot too but it missed the wild boar.

Following the presence of the two tigers in the tiger reserve Palamu, there is a high alert and sincere vigil across the whole of PTR which has two divisions North and South with 8 ranges in all.

Deputy director south division of the tiger reserve Palamu Kumar Ashish has appreciated the good works done by the ranger Umesh Dubey and his team in nabbing four poachers out to kill wild boar and also for seizing muzzle-loaded guns.

Ashish said our entire team in the south division is on high alert. There is also a suitable backup of the camera traps.

The nabbing of the four poachers and seizure of the three muzzle-loaded guns are the result of our teams' constant and continuous vigil reminded Ashish.

Sources said the poachers did not guess that the camera traps had recorded them. Sources said their images in the camera trap and then their physical movement noticed by the alert team led to their nemesis.

Four poachers and three muzzle loaded guns in the Garu east range of the tiger reserve Palamu. Photo by PNS

Following this a massive manhunt was launched by four teams which resulted in the overpowering of the four poachers and seizures of three muzzle-loaded guns reiterated by the deputy director south division of PTR.

Ashish declined to give any location of the tigers saying "I can only say that the PTR has 2 tigers now. But in which division or range I am not going to share anything even remotely."

Wild boar hunting gets frequent in winter here in the PTR. Villagers just pick up muzzle-loaded guns and sneak into the jungles of the PTR in search of the wild boar.

However, in majority of cases alert PTR team aborts such a hunting of the wild boar as this team of Umesh Dubey did by arresting 4 local poachers.

Sources said the two tigers in the PTR are safe and happy to find prey.

Chief conservator of forest and field director PTR Kumar Ashutosh has directed the field staff of the PTR to remain utmost vigilant and alert about the tigers.

'Sarkar Aapke Dwar' program organized in 3 Panchayats

PNS : LOHARDAGA

Your Plan Your Government at Your Door program was organized in the panchayats of three blocks of the district on Thursday. This includes Kharki Panchayat of Kisko block, Bagha Panchayat of Sadar block Lohardaga and Masmano Panchayat of Bhandara block. Despite the rain, a lot of enthusiasm was seen among the people regarding the program. In the program, stalls related to government run schemes were set up by all the departments in which applications were submitted by the people.

The programme in Kharki Panchayat was started by lighting the lamp by Block Head Suchitra Bhagat and other guests. In the program, beneficiaries were benefited from schemes like Sarvajan Pension, Birsa Irrigation Well Augmentation Scheme, Blanket Distribution Scheme, Caste, Residential Certificate, Maize Seed Distribution, Sona Sobaran Dhoti, Lungi-Saree Distribution etc. Deputy Chief Geeta Devi, Chief and other public representatives and district and block level officials were present in the program.

Aapki Yojana Aapki Sarkar Aapke Dwar program organized in East Singhbhum, in which Chief Minister Hemant Soren participated, was shown live on LED TV. The villagers saw and heard this programme.

Empowering session with national Strengthlift player

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a concerted effort to foster empowerment and inspire young minds, the Women's Cell of Karim City College orchestrated an engaging session titled 'Women Inspiring Women - Conversation on Empowerment' on Thursday. The event featured National Strengthlift player Pooja Sannigrahi as the keynote speaker, delivering valuable insights and anecdotes to an enthusiastic audience.

The program commenced with Adrija Malik, the keynote speaker, extending a warm welcome to the students, setting the tone for an interactive and enlightening session. Dr Mohammad Riaz, the College Principal, took the opportunity to honor Pooja Sannigrahi with a memento, recognizing her significant contributions.

Pooja Sannigrahi, an esteemed alumna of Karim City College, shared her life journey and the challenges she faced, imparting invaluable lessons on resilience and maintaining a positive mindset in the face of adversities. The session was marked by the active participation of college students, who eagerly absorbed the wisdom shared by the accomplished strengthlift player.

The esteemed presence of Dr. Kausar Tasneem, Dr. Basundhara Roy, Dr. Farzana Anjum, Dr. Shashi Prabha, and Dr. Mohammad Shahnawaz added an academic touch to the program, creating a vibrant and supportive environment for the students. The 'Women Inspiring Women' initiative by Karim City College's Women's Cell exemplifies the institution's commitment to nurturing not only academic excellence but also empowering the next generation of leaders. The session provided a platform for open dialogue, shared experiences, and the celebration of achievements, contributing to the holistic development of the students. The collaborative efforts of the Women's Cell and the inspirational presence of Pooja Sannigrahi made this event a memorable and impactful occasion.

Corruption, negligence in implementation of schemes will not be tolerated: MP

VINOD PRASAD : LOHARDAGA

Lohardaga MP Sudarshan Bhagat has said that the Bhandra Akashi Kairo Path being built under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana Pesharar Block, District Lohardaga, the name of the road has been changed from Pertol to Shanai Path, currently the place of work should be near Jodni Bazaar Tand. Through correspondence to Lohardaga Deputy Commissioner on Thursday, he said that the complaints of the public are being ignored and the sensor and the department are acting arbitrarily. While corresponding, he said that during the field visit, the villagers were told that under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, the construction work of Bhandara to Cairo Bhaya Akashi Path was started in September 2022. Quality is not being taken care of in road construction work. In the name of road construction, traffic has been disrupted by digging the road from Bhandra to Akashi.

In this way, huge irregularities are being seen in the road construction work. Till now many passenger autos have met with accidents. Many passengers have also suffered serious injuries. Two-three people have died so far in road accidents. Whereas this road is the main route from Bhandara to Akashi Railway Station. The villagers informed the sensor several times and this information was also given to the department through the Deputy Commissioner Lohardaga. But no initiative is being taken on this. The sensor has nothing to do with it. The villagers allege that very shoddy work is being done. PCC road is being built, casting work is going on. Water is not applied after casting.

The work of providing water before casting is also not happening. Villagers say that the road is becoming bad. The side in-charge says, wherever you have to complain, do it, we don't have anything to do with whom we have to go. Such words will not be tolerated. Therefore, keeping the public interest in mind, concrete action should be taken on the matter and the road construction work should be completed as soon as possible and traffic should be made smooth.

Several seats vacant in PG Departments of VBU

SHAILESH SHARMA: HAZARIBAG

In Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag the admission for post-graduation has been going on for the last month. Every post-graduation department is facing the problems of students. The seats are vacant in every department of the university. The same problem is being faced by colleges that are running post -graduation departments in their college. The admission process in different subjects will be over in the last week of December 2023-2025. About 50 per cent seats are filled by different departments. The departments have started classes with 50 per cent students. The same situation is being faced by the colleges that are running under the VBU. The first -year students are attending the classes. The college management is ready to conduct the first semester examination.

XISS hosts interactive Book Reading Session

PNS : RANCHI

Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS) Ranchi and Dream A Dream, a Bangalore based organisation collaboratively organized an Interactive Book Reading and Panel Discussion with Dr Connie K Chung, Author of 'When We Thrive, Our World Thrives'. The book, co-authored with Vishal Talreja, Co-founder of Dream a Dream, delved into the inspiring stories of 20 programme alumni of Dream A Dream and their journey from adversity to thriving. The interactive book reading session and interactions with faculty and students was held at XISS Auditorium on Thursday.

Addressing the gathering during the event, Author of the book, Dr Chung, said, "Through this book, my aim was to amplify the voices of those who have overcome challenges. The book not only shares stories of change but also shows how proper support from caring adults can help young minds thrive and lead their communities."

Dr Joseph Marianus Kujur SJ, Director, XISS Ranchi, during this unique book reading session said, "Creating an enabling environment and supportive ecosystem help young people coming from socially adverse backgrounds to thrive and be successful. We should also identify powerful stories of young people thriving in Jharkhand so that these stories inspire and motivate many young people."

Further, Parul Sharma, Education Specialist-UNICEF Jharkhand said that, "There is a need to connect with young people, have open and honest dialogues. Many young people in Jharkhand are shunning stereotypes related to gender and social categories, are emerging as their own advocates." Sharique Mashhadi, Associate Director, Dream a Dream highlighted that, "Thriving needs a supportive adult to guide and mentor with right information for developing their mindset to grow better in future." It is worthy to mention here that, Shahid Afrid, one amongst all these survivors and whose story is featured in this book, shared that with care and support, he not only changed the script of his life, but he wrote his own script.

Tent House owner shot at in a violent clash

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a disturbing incident that took place in the early hours of Thursday near Hotel Citi Inn along the NH-33 in Mango, a 28-year-old youth, identified as Imran Ali, became the victim of a violent clash between two groups of youths. The incident occurred in the Azadnagar Thana area, raising concerns about the safety and security in the locality.

Imran Ali, a resident of Bawangora locality in Azadnagar, engaged in a tent house decoration business, was shot at as he attempted to mediate between the two warring groups, consisting of 10-12 individuals. The clash reportedly took place near the hotel, drawing attention to the escalating tensions among the local youth.

Ali sustained a gunshot injury to his leg during the altercation and was immediately rushed to Tata Main Hospital. As of the latest update, he is in stable condition and out of immediate danger, undergoing treatment for the bullet wound.

The victim narrated the incident to the media, explaining that he had been at Citi Inn for dinner. Upon leaving the establishment past midnight, he encountered the two groups engaged in a heated confrontation. As a local resident, Ali instinctively intervened in an attempt to pacify the situation. However, the intervention took a violent turn when someone struck him from behind with a hockey stick, causing him to fall. Subsequently, another youth shot him.

According to Ali, the assailants fled the scene after firing several rounds into the air. After sustaining the injuries, Ali managed to contact some friends who promptly took him to Tata Main Hospital for medical attention.

The police, led by Azadnagar Thana OC Rakesh Kumar, are yet to obtain a formal statement from the gunshot victim. Kumar confirmed the shooting incident near Hotel Citi Inn and emphasized that the investigation would provide clarity on the circumstances surrounding the clash. He stated, "We are yet to take a statement from the victim who is undergoing treatment at Tata Main Hospital." The police are actively working on unraveling the mystery behind the shootout, and further details are expected to emerge as the investigation progresses.

Diploma students shine in Pharmacy at GJPC

AVINASH ANJAN : HAZARIBAG

The dedicated students of Gyan Jyoti Pharmacy College Hazaribag for the session 2021-23 have been recognized for the excellent 80% results achieved in the field of Diploma in Pharmacy.Out of total 60 students, 49 students achieved success and 5 passed.In recognition of this inspiring achievement, it is announced that he has achieved great success with his high level of education and commitment.Speaking on the occasion, Shambhu Kumar, Head, Gyan Jyoti Pharmacy College, said as a result of the committed and diligent efforts of the students, our Diploma in Pharmacy students have been successful in achieving recognition in the field.We respect their difficulties and congratulate them on their excellent work.

College Secretary Vinay Kunar said that with this unparalleled dedication and success, Gyan Jyoti Pharmacy College has gained a significant reputation in the field of pharmacy education.We appreciate the students and pledge to help them move towards success in their future.The students of Diploma in Pharmacy of Gyan Jyoti Pharmacy College deserve their high praise.In today's times, pharmacy plays a very important role and Gyan Jyoti College will always make continuous efforts to move one step further towards the fulfillment of social service objectives. Principal Neetu Sinha and teachers Gan Ujjwal Kumar, Dr. Anil Kumar, Kajal Kumari, Dr. Abhinash Kumar had important contributions in the success of the students.

BJP spokesperson meets BSNL Ranchi GM

Stresses on need to connect remote areas of Latehar to BSNL network

PNS : RANCHI

State BJP spokesperson Pratul Shahdev today visited BSNL headquarters in Ranchi and met General Manager UP Shah there. He urged that BSNL's service should be expanded in militancy-affected areas like Latehar.

Pratul handed over to the GM a list of 50 rural and forest areas in Bariatu, Barwadih, Balumath, Chandwa, Garu, Herhanj, Manika and Sarju blocks of Latehar where towers need to be installed. Shah assured Pratul that Latehar would be his priority. It is on the list and he is planning for expansion to spread the network of BSNL.

Shahdev urged UP Shah to also connect with the Panchayat level representatives through the district officials so that they get a chance to tell about the future plans of the Central Government. General Manager UP Shah also had a long discussion with Pratul on the location of towers in Latehar.

Pratul has expressed hope that now under the scheme of the Central Government, there will be no problem of connectivity in Latehar district in the future. Pratul drew the attention of the General Manager towards the poor connectivity of BSNL in Chandwa and other areas, which was assured to be rectified.

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Congress to review debacle, Bhupesh, Baij in Delhi today

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

The Congress will review the reasons behind its election debacle in Chhattisgarh at a meeting to be held in New Delhi on Friday.

Outgoing Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and state PCC chief Deepak Baij on Thursday left for Delhi.

The Congress suffered a shock defeat in the state. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) snatched power from it by winning 54 of the total 90 seats.

The Congress, which had won a two-third majority with 68 seats in 2018, was reduced to 35 seats. The Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP) won a single seat.

According to Sushil Anand Shukla, head of the state Congress communication wing, the meeting in Delhi will also discuss the Congress losses in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram and the party's victory in Telangana.

Baghel won from his seat Patan defeating BJP's Vijay Baghel by 19,723 votes. Janata Congress Chhattisgarh (J) president Amit Jogi came third in Patan with 4,822 votes.

But Baij lost the Chitrakot seat to BJP's Vinayak Goyal by 8,370 votes. As many as 31 sitting MLAs, including nine ministers, of the Congress were defeated in the electoral contest.

Two teens among nine Maoists held

STAFF REPORTER
DANTEWADA

Nine Maoists including two teenagers involved in setting ablaze 14 vehicles were arrested on Thursday in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh.

Dashru Oyam, Santosh Mandavi alias Paklu, Gopi Kunjam, Chhotu Oyam, Rakesh Kadiyam, Lalu Kadti, Maniram Oyam and two teenage boys were apprehended between the jungles of Chidrapal and Munder villages, Dantewada's Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai said.

Maoists set fire to vehicles engaged in construction work in Bhansi area on November 26.

GGU remembers Ambedkar

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

Guru Ghasidas University (GGU) Vice Chancellor Professor Alok Kumar Chakrawal on has underlined the need to imbibe the ideals and principles of Dr Bhimrao Baba Saheb Ambedkar.

He said this at an event at the University on Wednesday to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr Ambedkar.

Chakrawal urged the audience to strive for the creation of a society free from discrimination and to realize Dr Ambedkar's dream of building a harmonious society.

Eminent orthopedic specialist and social worker Dr. Vinod Tiwari, who was the chief guest, described Dr Ambedkar as a great human being.

C'garh tops in accidental deaths

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh recorded most accidental deaths at 56.4 per one lakh population in a year and came third in suicides among Indian states in 2022, according to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data.

In accidental deaths, Chhattisgarh was followed by Haryana (53.5) and Maharashtra (53) against the national average of 31.2.

Union Territories Ladakh and Puducherry reported accidental deaths at 78.7 and 65.7 respectively.

Accidental deaths fall in two categories: Deaths due to forces of nature including lightning, heat/sun stroke and landslides and due to other causes including traffic accidents, killed by animals, spurious liquor and factory mishaps.

Chhattisgarh reported 16,893 accidental deaths in 2022, including 248 due to forces of nature and 16,645 due to other causes, said NCRB, which functions under the Union home ministry.

In 2021, the state recorded 19,265 accidental deaths, including 244 due to forces of nature and 19,012 due to other causes, which declined by 12.3 per cent in 2022.

Among the 4,15,306 accidental deaths due to other causes in the country in 2022, consumption of illicit and spurious liquor caused 617 deaths, it said.

Similarly, suicides in Chhattisgarh accounted for 28.2 per one lakh population, the third highest, after Sikkim (43.1) and Kerala (28.5) among 28 states in 2022.

The all-India rate of suicides (per one lakh population) was 12.4 last year.

In accidental deaths, Chhattisgarh was followed by Haryana (53.5) and Maharashtra (53) against the national average of 31.2.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands (42.8) and Puducherry (29.7) were ahead of Chhattisgarh in suicides.

Chhattisgarh reported 8,446 suicides in 2022, 7.9 per cent more than in 2021.

Combating e-Cigarettes and escalating vaping

IANS

Mothers Against Vaping, a united front of concerned mothers combatting the escalating vaping crisis among our youth, today, strongly raised the issue about e-Cigarettes and other new age gateway products which include Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), heat-not-burn (HNB), e-hookah and much more. It stressed on the urgent need to understand that through these products the International Tobacco companies are purposefully targeting little children, teens and the youth with the immoral intention of luring them into using new-age gateway devices and securing them as lifelong customers. This predatory targeting of children has also been highlighted by experts globally, and most recently it was raised in discussions in the Scottish Parliament.

Members of the Scottish Parliament have been informed by an Australian Expert Epidemiologist that Vaping or E-Cigarettes predisposes children to smoking cigarettes later in life. Epidemiologist Professor Emily Banks underscored to the Members of the Scottish Parliament or MSPs the concerning and immoral intentions of vaping and tobacco giants to create 'lifelong customers' in children and teenagers. Her remarks aligned with growing expert support for a complete ban on disposable e-cigarettes in Scotland.

The Parliamentarians were informed about the easy accessibility of brightly-coloured candy vapes deliberately targeting children, readily available in Scottish shops. The MSPs were briefed about a concerning rise in the use of these devices among schoolchildren in Scotland. Startling statistics revealed that one in ten 13-year-olds and a staggering 25 percent of 15-year-olds were vaping in 2022. Professor Banks emphasized that vaping is significantly restricted for approximately 25 percent of the global population. Interestingly, China has its own stringent restrictions on vaping products, despite being a primary producer of the fruity e-cigarettes prevalent in the UK market.

Mothers Against Vaping has consistently criticized international Tobacco and Vaping companies for deliberately targeting children to establish a consumer base for their addictive and harmful products including all kinds of new-age gateway devices such as e-cigarettes and heat-not-burn electronic devices. Stressing on the critical need for increased awareness, they highlighted on the urgency of educating the public about such intentions of these companies.

Mothers Against Vaping member, Dr. Varuna Pathak, a Former Professor of Gynaecology and Obstetrics at the Gandhi Medical College said, "Targeting children as a future market by tobacco and vaping companies is entirely unacceptable. Our stance against this unethical practice has been validated by global experts. Professor Banks' emphasis on this issue aims to increase awareness among stakeholders, urging for a halt to the advertisement and sale of vaping devices to children."

"Despite the ban on vaping devices and e-cigarettes in India, their availability is cultivating a generation addicted to these habits, potentially leading them towards tobacco use. It's crucial to debunk misconceptions that paint e-cigarettes as harmless vapor inhalation. Recent research underscores the substantial harm caused by inhaling these substances, posing risks to lung health and impacting various facets of children's development, including cognitive abilities and brain development," Dr. Pathak added.

Recent studies have provided evidence indicating that the aerosol from new-age gateway devices such as e-cigarettes contains particulate matter linked to mechanisms such as lung inflammation, DNA damage and an increased risk of lung cancer. Experts have highlighted that e-cigarettes and many new age gateway products are reported to contain approximately 900 to 2,000 distinct chemical entities with a substantial number still being unknown. Among the known components, many are recognized as hazardous, raising concerns about the potential health risks associated with e-cigarette and many other new age gateway products.

The ultrafine particles and chemicals found in e-cigarette aerosols possess the ability to deeply penetrate the lungs, posing substantial risks to human health. These aerosols consist of particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5), notorious for its adverse impact on respiratory health. Additionally, the vapor emitted by e-cigarettes contains cancer-causing chemicals and heavy metals, including nickel, tin, and lead, further compounding the potential health hazards associated with e-cigarette and other new age gateway products usage.

Dr. Bhavna Barmi - Internationally acclaimed Clinical psychologist, Public Speaker and Head Psychologist at Fortis Escorts Heart Institute said, "In addition to being considered a gateway to lifelong tobacco habits, these new-age gateway devices are fostering a new generation of individuals becoming habituated to these products. This rising trend is not only prevalent globally but also noticeable in India. Similar to the concerns raised by Scottish parliamentarians, our own parliamentarians should engage in discussions with experts to ensure that vaping and e-cigarettes do not take root within our country."

"Recent trends indicate a shift where more young individuals are initiating nicotine use through vaping rather than traditional cigarettes. This presents a significant challenge—a new generation becoming addicted solely through the use of e-cigarettes, which in turn will give rise to various psychological challenges amongst users," added Dr. Barmi.

According to a recent study conducted by the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), there is a notable trend: more individuals identified as 'never smokers' are engaging in vaping and other new age gateway products compared to established smokers. This shift represents a significant change in the tobacco landscape. The study suggests that these 'never smokers' are inclined towards consistent vaping and are less likely to initiate smoking combustible cigarettes. Notably, the study highlights that within the age group of 18 to 24, a majority—56 percent—of regular vapers have never been regular cigarette smokers. This data hints at a potential trajectory for future e-cigarette and new age gateway products users.

More than 45 nations which include Australia, Singapore, Thailand, Argentina, Japan, Brazil have implemented e-cigarette bans. In 2019, India commendably banned vaping and e-cigarettes under the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Act. Despite this, Mothers Against Vaping urges for continuous vigilance, warning against complacency. They highlight the risk of e-cigarettes and other new age gateway products acting as an entry point for children, potentially steering them from vaping to smoking, thereby, fostering a new generation of adult smokers.

Man gets life term for killing friend

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

A court here on Thursday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for killing his friend in Raipur in 2019.

Additional Public Prosecutor RS Bhamra told The Pioneer that Second Additional Sessions Judge Vijay Kumar Minj found Rahul Ahuja guilty.

On August 13, 2019, Ahuja stabbed Raju Gupta to death.

Flag Day lauds valour of armed forces

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan on Friday said the Armed Forces Flag Day was the day to express gratitude to soldiers and their families.

Addressing a function, the Governor lauded the valour of the soldiers and said they served the motherland with dedication.

The Governor honoured family members of martyred Jawans and appreciated those who donate for the families of the armed forces personnel. The Chhattisgarh Sainik Board Secretary and the Director of Sainik Welfare, Brigadier Vivek Sharma, earlier urged people to donate as much as possible on the Armed Forces Flag Day.

The money will be used for the rehabilitation and welfare schemes for widows of the soldiers.

Three arrested for attacking student

STAFF REPORTER
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Police on Thursday arrested three persons for attempting to murder a school student last month here.

Harsh Kosle, Abhay Raksel and Ravi Raksel have been arrested, Raipur Additional Superintendent of Police Lakhan Patle said.

On November 27, they attacked Tanmay Kadu when he objected to their rash driving while returning home after tuition at Tagore Nagar area.

AXIS BANK

AXIS Bank Ltd
A.C.Market, 4th Floor, 1, Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata- 700071

Public Notice for – E-Auction of pledged assets being Gold

The Borrowers, in specific and the public in general are here buy notified that public auction of the gold ornaments pledge in the below accounts is proposed to be conducted by the Axis Bank at the below mentioned Branch.
The below mentioned Borrowers has availed the credit facility from the Axis Bank Limited against the pledge of gold ornaments ("Gold Loan Facility") in favour of the Bank towards the security. The Demand notices were issued to the Borrowers/Guarantors calling up the Borrowers/Guarantors to pay their outstanding amount towards the Gold loan facility availed. As the Borrowers/Guarantors have failed to repay the outstanding loan amount, the bank is constrained to invoke the pledge and proposed to conduct an e-auction sale of pledged gold ornaments more particularly described in schedule of property hereunder on **18-12-2023 (dated) at 12.30 PM-3.30PM**(time of e-auction) on "As Is Where Is", "As Is What Is", "Whatever There Is" and "No Recourse Basis".
Details of Borrowers and outstanding amount.

Branch Name	Customer Name	Loan A/c No.	Amount Outsranding	Date of Demand Notice	Gross Weight Grams	Net weight grams.
BAIKUNTHPUR [CT]	MD SALFAN	XXXXXXXXXXX0993	48523	28-Aug-23	15.000	12.750
BAIKUNTHPUR [CT]	DHEERAJ KUMAR SAHU	XXXXXXXXXXX3444	116724.77	8-Mar-23	11.790	11.790
CHAMPA [CT]	SHAILA PANDEY	XXXXXXXXXXX0465	183020	10-Oct-23	81.400	81.400
JAGDALPUR [CT]	MD JAVED KHAN	XXXXXXXXXXX6151	198126	30-May-23	62.000	60.500
JHILMILA [CT]	MUKESH KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXX6374	66543	20-Apr-23	21.400	21.100
JHILMILA [CT]	MUKESH KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXX6374	31247	20-Apr-23	21.400	21.100
KANKER KNK [CT]	RADHESHYAM SHANDILYA	XXXXXXXXXXX9924	57824	17-Sep-22	12.800	12.500
KANKER KNK [CT]	SHAILESH KUMAR BAGHEL	XXXXXXXXXXX4840	44247	30-May-23	12.700	12.000
KHARSIA KHI [CT]	VIRENDRA KUMAR SANDIL	XXXXXXXXXXX1555	53331	30-May-23	25.800	24.800
MANGLA CHOWK BILA [CT]	RAJAT KUMAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXX6263	118836	30-May-23	37.100	34.300
RAIPUR [CT]	MANISH KUMAR SHRIVAS	XXXXXXXXXXX3510	48260	20-Sep-23	15.400	15.000
RAIPUR [CT]	AKHILESH JETHI	XXXXXXXXXXX9884	05919	4-Nov-23	56.000	52.800
RAJNANDGAON [CT]	YUVRAJ KUMAR SAHU	XXXXXXXXXXX3384	305111	25-Aug-23	96.400	79.700
SEEPAT ROAD, BILASPUR [CT]	RAJNI YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXX2387	29756	30-May-23	9.700	9.100
SHANKAR NAGAR R RAI [CT]	JASBIR SING	XXXXXXXXXXX6171	52175	4-Nov-23	15.280	14.000
URLA, RAIPUR [CT]	AVNISH KUMAR TIWARI	XXXXXXXXXXX5866	33800	25-Oct-23	10.000	9.800

Axis Bank Ltd. has the authority to remove account/change the auction date without any prior notice. Auction will be held online **https://gold.samil.in** (website of online vendor) between **12.30 pm-3.30pm** (time). For detailed Terms and conditions, please log into given website__**https://gold.samil.in** (website of online vendor)

Date: 08.12.2023
Place: Kolkata

Authorized Officer
Axis Bank LTD

'Indian ambassador met former Navymen on death row in Qatar'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Indian ambassador to Qatar on December 3 met eight former Indian Navy personnel who were handed death sentence by a Qatari court in October, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday. Giving this update here, MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said two hearings on the appeal against the death sentence have already taken place.

"We are closely following the matter and extending all legal and consular assistance...Our ambassador got consular access to meet all eight of them in prison on December 3," Bagchi said at a media briefing.

The Indian nationals were given consular access earlier as well.

The Navy veterans were on October 26 given death sentence by Qatar's Court of First Instance. India described the ruling as "deeply" shocking and vowed to explore all legal options in the case.

The Indian nationals, who worked with private company Al Dahra, were arrested in August last year reportedly in an alleged case of espionage.

Neither the Qatari authorities nor New Delhi made the charges against the Indian nationals public.

In its reaction to the ruling by the Qatari court, the MEA last month said that it is attaching "high importance" to this case and is exploring all legal options. The charges were filed against the eight Indian Navy veterans on March 25 and they were tried under Qatari law.

All of the former navy officers had "unblemished stints" of up to 20 years in the Indian Navy and had held important positions including that of instructors in the force, former military officials had said.

In May, Al-Dhara Global closed its operations in Doha and all those working there (primarily Indians) have since returned home.

In the past, the Navy had taken up the case of the former naval personnel with top brass of the government for securing their release.

Modi to inaugurate first Indian Art, Architecture and Design Biennale

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday will inaugurate the first Indian Art, Architecture and Design Biennale at Red Fort here. During the programme, he will also inaugurate the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat Centre for Design' and the student biennale 'Samunnati', the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said on Thursday.

The Indian Art, Architecture and Design Biennale (IAADB) will serve as an introduction to the Cultural Space at Delhi, it said.

In the statement, the PMO said it has been Modi's vision to develop and institutionalise a flagship global cultural initiative in the country like the international biennales at Venice, Sao Paulo, Singapore, Sydney and Sharjah, among others.

In line with this vision, a nationwide campaign to reinvent, rebrand, renovate and rehouse museums was launched. Further, the development of cultural spaces in five cities -- Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Varanasi -- has also been also announced.

The IAADB is being organised between December 9 and 15 and follows key initiatives like the International Museum Expo held in May and the Festival of Libraries in August.

The biennale has been designed to initiate a holistic conversation between artists, architects, designers, photographers, collectors, art professionals and the public to strengthen the cultural dialogue, the PMO statement added.

It will also provide avenues and opportunities to expand and collaborate with the creators of art, architecture and design as part of the evolving economy.

Each day of the week, IAADB will hold different theme-based exhibitions such as 'Rite of Passage: Doors of India', 'Bagh e bahar: Gardens as Universe: Gardens of India', 'Sampravah: Confluence of Communities: Baolis of India', 'Sthapatya: Anti-fragile algorithm: Temples of India', 'Vismaya: Creative Crossover: Architectural Wonders of Independent India' and 'Deshaj Bharat Design: Indigenous Designs', among others.

The student biennale at Lalit Kala Akademi will provide an opportunity for students to showcase their work, interact with peers and professionals, and gain valuable exposure within the architecture community through design competitions, display of heritage, installation designs and workshops, the statement said.

Donate wholeheartedly to Armed Forces Flag Day Fund: Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday appealed to the people to wholeheartedly donate to the Armed Forces Flag Day (AFFD) Fund and become a part of the government's endeavour to ensure the welfare of the Veer Naris, Ex-servicemen and their families.

In a message on AFFD, which is celebrated on December 7, Rajnath termed it as the moral responsibility of every citizen to contribute to the efforts being made by Ministry of Defence (MoD) towards the care, assistance, rehabilitation and treatment of veterans, war widows and their dependents through a number of welfare schemes.

"It is our collective duty to ensure that they get due recognition from all of us," he said.

The defence minister emphasised that the soldiers safeguard the borders with discipline, dedication and patriotism, besides making a valuable contribution in relief and rescue operations during natural and man-made disasters as well as peacekeeping missions across the globe.

He paid tributes to the brave

soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of the motherland, with many becoming physically disabled to protect the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the nation. He exhorted the people to ensure their contribution in the AFFD Fund and inspire others to join this noble cause.

The AFFD is celebrated to honour the fallen heroes and the personnel uniform who fight valiantly on the borders to protect the motherland.

The Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare, MoD has been working for the welfare and rehabilitation of war widows, wards of fallen soldiers and ex-Servicemen, including disabled ones by providing financial assistance for their identified personal needs such as penury grant, children's education grant, funeral grant, medical grant and orphan/disabled children grant.

Recently, Medical Treatment Grant for the veterans/dependents was increased to Rs 50,000 from Rs 30,000, Vocational Training Grant for Widows was enhanced to Rs 50,000 from Rs 20,000 and Serious Diseases Grant was raised to Rs 1.50 lakh from 1.25 lakh, which is a continuous process. The assistance is provided out of the AFFD Fund. Contributions to the fund are exempt from Income Tax under Section 80G(5)(vi) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

During the Financial Year 2022-23, a grant of approximately Rs 250 crore was distributed to more than 99,000 beneficiaries.

Apart from this, institutional grants have also been given to Paraplegic Rehabilitation Centre, Kirkee and Mohali, Cheshire Home, Dehradun, Lucknow and Delhi and 36 War Memorial Hostels across the country.

MP Bidhuri expresses regret for objectionable remarks against Ali

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

BJP Lok Sabha MP Ramesh Bidhuri on Thursday expressed regret for his objectionable remarks against BSP's Danish Ali in a meeting of the Lok Sabha Privileges Committee, which heard both leaders separately.

Sources said Bidhuri in his deposition before the committee noted that senior BJP leader and Union minister Rajnath Singh had conveyed his regret in the House for his comments on September 21 when he was making a speech during a discussion on the success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission.

Bidhuri used some objectionable comments to target Ali, who was accused by several BJP leaders of using derogatory words for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provoke the South Delhi MP.

As a row erupted in the House, Singh rose to convey his regrets. "I express regret if the opposition is hurt by the remarks made by the member," the Deputy Leader of the House in Lok Sabha said.

With Bidhuri expressing regret, sources said, the committee was likely to bring closure to the matter and send its report to the Speaker.

BJP president J P Nadda had also issued a show-cause notice to Bidhuri, known for his fiery comments which have at times sparked controversies.

With Ali and several other opposition members writing to Speaker Om Birla for taking action against Bidhuri, and quite a few BJP members accusing the BSP MP of making a running commentary during his speech and using derogatory words against the prime minister, the Chair sent complaints of both sides to the Privileges Committee. Ali also appeared before the committee and spoke in detail about the incident, sources said.

Erosion of coastal line, medical cabin in trains among issues discussed in Rajya Sabha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Erosion of country's coastal line, glorifying violence in films and its impact on youth and an appeal to have a medical cabin in trains were some of the issues which figured in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Raising the issue of erosion of coastal line, Jose K Mani asked the government to undertake a comprehensive scientific study and formulate a coastal protection plan.

During Zero Hour mention, the Kerala Congress (M) MP raised concerns over coastal erosion along shores of Kerala, saying "It is a matter of grave concern that requires immediate attention."

Coastal erosion poses a threat not only to the environment but also to the livelihood of coastal communities, he added.

India has a 7,560 km long coastline of which Kerala has a 590 km stretch. "According to the study by the National Centre for Coastal Research, 33.6 per cent of the Indian coastal line is vulnerable to erosion and nearly 46 per cent of Kerala coastline is already affected," he said.

These statistics, he added should not be viewed as a mere number, but warning of the impending crisis in the state and nation, Mani added.

He further said the coastal erosion is due to various factors such as climate change, unregulated human activities, inadequate Coastal Zone Management, mining and tourism.

Prashant Nanda (BJD) cited the death of a 38-year-old man on board a Rajdhani train due to medical reasons and suggested that long haul trains should have a coach with ICU, ventilator and oxygen facilities.

Ranjeet Ranjan(Congress)spoke about the bad influence of movies and songs depicting violence and negative roles portrayed by heroes.

Vivek K Tankha raised the issue of shortage of emergency beds in AIIMS and demanded that they should be increased.

Kanimozhi NVN Somu(DMK)expressed concern over the menace of spam calls despite regulation by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

"There is a pressing need to have a preventive framework other than just filing complaints through the TRAI," she said.

She demanded that the telecom department take immediate action to curb unsolicited calls and SMS in spite of TRAI regulations, or DND (do not disturb) registration.

'States except Punjab made significant progress in stopping stubble burning'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

As the national Capital region grapples with poor air quality index, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Thursday told Rajya Sabha that Haryana and other states have made significant progress in stopping cases of stubble burning in farms but Punjab has not.

Replying to supplementaries during Question Hour in Rajya Sabha, he said, "It is unfortunate the maximum incidents of stubble burning have taken place in Sangrur district in Punjab, which is the home district of chief minister Bhagwant Mann."

Yadav said the Centre has provided special grants to state governments to stop farmers from not burning stubble in their fields and the Centre has provided machines and other measures.

"I can say that the progress seen in stopping stubble burning in Haryana and other states, the same progress has not been made in Punjab. I would say that if the measures provided by the Centre were put to use, then Punjab would have also seen the same progress in stopping stubble burning as seen in other states," he told the members.

Yadav said the Centre has released a fund of Rs 2,440 crore for stopping such stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

He also informed the house that the Centre has earmarked a sum of Rs 19,711 crore for tackling air pollution problem in the country.

To a question on whether the Centre would review the air pollution law of 1981 and the National Ambient Air Quality Standards in 2009 in light of the growing evidence about the impact of air pollution, Yadav said the Centre has identified 131 cities across the country for reducing pollution and standards have been set there.

There has been a satisfactory improvement in air pollution in these cities, he said. "Some municipal corporations in these cities which have done good work have also been awarded in this regard," the minister said.

In response to another question on considering making it mandatory to supply glass or recyclable bottles, he said the Centre has banned single-use plastic across the country and has requested State authorities to also aid in implementing this.

Replying to another query, he said the government is awaiting a report from the newly constituted panel tasked to finalise the draft notification to officially earmark the eco-sensitive areas (ESA) in Western Ghats.

The environment ministry, based on the Kasturirangan committee report, had in 2014 published a draft notification identifying the ESAs and suggested measures for its protection.

Due to objections from several states, a new panel was set up 12 years after the Madhav Gadgil committee, and a decade after the K Kasturirangan Committee submitted their respective reports.

The new panel was to submit the report last year but has sought more time.

Responding to several queries on this issue during the Question Hour in the Upper House, Yadav said, "One more committee headed by former Director General of Forest Sanjay Kumar was formed to address the ground-level problems faced after the issuance of the (earlier) draft notification. I believe the committee is working in a satisfactory way."

"We are waiting for the committee's report on their assessment of the ground situation," he added.

The minister said conserving the Western Ghats is important for the country's ecology. It is spread across 16,000 sq km across six states -- Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It has more than 4,000 plant varieties comprising 27 per cent of the country's total plant varieties.

He said the 2014 draft notification was issued after the Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports. However, a new panel was set up after concerns and several representations from MPs, including from Kerala.

Land use, mining, water resources and other human activities have led to soil erosion in the Western Ghats. However, the government is implementing several measures, including afforestation, to protect the ESAs, Yadav said.

The environment minister added that at the recent COP28 meet, India initiated the 'Green Fund' at the global level and listed out areas where it can start green initiatives.

CDS Chauhan calls for domestic defence industries to bolster tech capabilities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff General (CDS) Anil Chauhan on Thursday called upon the domestic defence industries to bolster technological capabilities to address traditional and future challenges.

Inaugurating the Avionics Exposition 2023 organised by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)here, he urged the industry to understand the requirement of services, and evolve solutions that fit country's terrain, climate and operational requirements.

"India's challenges must be resolved with Indian solutions as a series of contemporary events have exposed the vulnerability of global supply chains," he said.

The CDS pointed out that the government has adopted the 'Aatmanirbharta' approach to mitigate uncertainties and this vision demonstrates its confidence in the domestic industry.

"A number of steps are being taken to strengthen the defence industrial capabilities under the 'Aatmanirbharta' initiative. We are boosting our indigenous and innovative defence capabilities," he said.

Highlighting the economic prospects of self-reliance in defence including aerospace and avionics, General Chauhan asserted that the defence industrial sector has a large potential to achieve the country's economic goals.

"Global Military Avionics Market is projected to grow US$ 56.998 billion by 2030. This provides us a window of opportunity which needs to be exploited by believing in the mantra of 'Make for India, Make for World'," he said.

The CDS underscored the significance of new-age technologies and termed it essential for modern militaries to be ready to fight today while preparing for an "uncertain and ambiguous" future, in the era of dynamic global security landscape and rapid technological advancements.

Stating that the convergence of new technologies is making the battle space more automated and autonomous, he stressed that the advent of technological solutions in the field of networking, data analytics and robotics have heralded a new landscape in the field of avionics. General Chauhan urged the military and the scientific community to maintain pace with the technological requirements, so that the nation remains ahead of the curve.

IAF airdrops indigenous heavy platform

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A C-17 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force on Thursday airdropped in a military zone in Agra an indigenously developed heavy platform that can carry a maximum load of 16 tonnes, officials said.

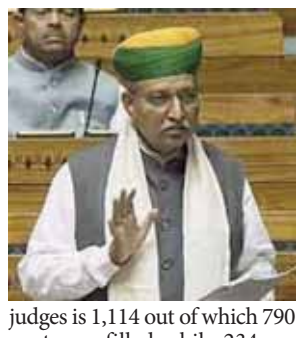
It is for the first time that a platform having a dimension of 24 feet by eight feet with 16 tonnes load capacity was airdropped from an IAF plane, they said.

"An Indian Air Force C-17 airdropped an ADRDE-developed Type V Platform (24 ft), for the first time. This successful outcome is a result of the efforts of dedicated teams from IAF, Indian Army, and ADRDE, in showcasing the strength of indigenous innovation," the IAF's Western Command posted on 'X'.

The Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE) is a premier defence research laboratory.

'Government in process of filling up 112 vacant HC judge posts'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI



Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Thursday told the Rajya Sabha that the government is in the process of filling up 112 vacant posts of High Court judges.

Appointment of judges in higher judiciary is a collaborative and integrated process involving the executive and the judiciary. It requires consultation and approval from various constitutional authorities, he said during the Question Hour in the Upper House.

Meghwal said the total sanctioned strength of high court judges is 1,114 out of which 790 posts are filled while 234 are vacant, he said.

Different High Court Collegiums have recommended 292 names out of which, 110 have been appointed while 112 are in the process, the law minister added.

He told the House that the sanctioned strength of judges in the Supreme Court is 34 and all of them are filled up as of now.

Meghawal also mentioned that the Narendra Modi government raised the sanctioned strength of judges for both the High Courts and the Supreme Court.

During the UPA regime, the sanctioned strength of High Court judges was 906 and the Supreme Court judges were 31, he said in response to queries from Congress and DMK leaders on delay in clearing the names of advocates for the post of High Court judges.

NDA undertakes hikes across the country

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The National Defence Academy (NDA) has undertaken hikes to four corners of the country to commemorate the 75 glorious years of its existence. The hikes to Easternmost and Southernmost points by NDA cadets and staff are presently underway, defence ministry said here on Thursday.

The hike to Indira Point (Southernmost corner of India) by a team comprising 10 NDA cadets and 03 instructors started on December one and will finish December nine.

During the hike, the team visited places of historical importance in the Andaman and Nicobar Island including Indira Point, cellular jail, Aberdeen Bazaar, PVC memorial, and Tsunami Memorial.

Another team comprising 10 NDA cadets and 03 instructors began the hike to Kibithu (the Easternmost corner of India) on December one and they will finish it on 10 Dec 2023.

During the hike, the team visited places of historical importance in the vicinity of Kibithu including Walong War Memorial, Wacha Border Meeting Point, and Dichu View Point.

On December four, the team visited Kibithu village and interacted with the local population.

Situation remains grim in parts of Chennai, suburbs

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Cyclone Michaung

Parts of the city and its suburbs in adjoining districts remained water-logged on Thursday, days after Cyclone Michuang brought torrential downpour, paralysing life in the metropolis and its surrounding areas.

Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram and Chengalpet bore the brunt of cyclone Michuang, which crossed the coast in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday, before it brought heavy rains to the said four districts on December 4.

The government said relief activities have been expedited and that efforts to pump out stagnant water were on in different places in the city.

Velachery and parts of west Tambaram suffered from waterlogging today as well, even as food packets were air-dropped in the Pallikkaranai area here.

Manali in north Chennai was among the severely affected areas. Officials said drinking water, 12,000 litres of milk, milk powder, bedsheets and food for about 15,000 people in Manali have been dispatched.

Residents complained of inflated milk prices in many localities.

Chief Minister M K Stalin visited Anakaputhur locality near the city and reviewed the relief work underway. He also distributed food to the affected people.

The opposition hit out at the ruling DMK over the pace of relief work. AIADMK general secretary and Leader of Opposition, Edappadi K Palaniswami claimed that of the 35,000 key interior roads under the city corporation, 20,000 were still inundated.

In a statement, he questioned the government's assertion of implementing a Rs 4,000 crore storm water drain project in the city and demanded that CM Stalin release a white paper on the matter.

PMK leader and former Union Minister Dr Anbumani Ramadoss said normalcy was yet to return in many parts of the affected districts and urged the government to speed up the work.

Cyclone flattens crops in AP, leaves farmers in despair

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

On December 5, Cyclone 'Michaung' hit the coast of Andhra Pradesh with destructive winds and heavy rains, flattening thousands of acres of standing crops, inflicting huge losses on farmers in the state.

While the state government has assured compensation, the tenant farmers, a severely affected lot are not hopeful of relief as they believe it may not reach them.

They said the landowners may not share the relief sums with them. According to information shared by the Nellore district administration, agricultural crops in more than 8,400 acres and horticultural crops in 1,700 acres were damaged.

In Krishna district, paddy crops in 17,000 hectares, groundnut in 903 hectares, black gram in 2,275 hectares and cotton in 213 hectares, among others were destroyed.

A statewide estimate of the crop loss is yet to emerge as a note from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said agriculture and horticulture damage will be assessed after rainwater recedes.

2015 attack on BSF convoy

NIA attaches properties of 2 LeT terrorists

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

The National Investigation Agency on Thursday attached the properties of two key Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives for their involvement in the 2015 terror attack on a BSF convoy in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Two BSF personnel were killed and 13 others injured in the attack, which took place on August 5, 2015 on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway in Narsoo village of Udhampur district. One terrorist was killed and another, identified as Naveed, was arrested in the retaliatory action by the security forces.

"The two accused whose properties have been attached today were also subsequently arrested and are currently undergoing trial in the NIA special court, Jammu," the anti-terror probe agency said.

As per the NIA investigations, the duo -- identified as Fayaz Ahmed Itoo alias Fayaz Khar and Khursheed Ahmed Bhat alias Surya -- are members of the banned Pakistan-backed terror organisation LeT, the agency said.

All the prime accused in the case (RC-08/2015/NIA/DLI) have been charge-sheeted and are under trial under various provisions of Ranbir Penal Code, Arms Act, Explosive Substances Act 1946, Passport (Entry into India) Act 1920 and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 1967.

In the instant case, four immovable properties, that include a single storey residential house belonging to Fayaz Ahmed Itoo, in village Khudwani, Tehsil Qaimoh in district Kulgam and a two-storey residential house, along with two plots of land, belonging to Khursheed Ahmed Bhat @ Surya in village Chursoo and Sail, Awantipora, district Pulwama, have been attached under Section 33 (1) of UAPA, 1967, in pursuance of the recent orders of NIA Special Court, Jammu.

Soldiers dedication in protecting nation is unparalleled, says Modi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday honoured the courage and sacrifices of the country's brave soldiers on Armed Forces Flag Day, saying their dedication in protecting the nation is "unparalleled".

In a post on X, the prime minister also urged the people to make contributions to the Armed Forces Flag Day fund. Since 1949, December 7 is observed as Armed Forces Flag Day throughout the country to honour the martyrs and the men in uniform who valiantly fought and continue to fight on borders to safeguard the country's honour.

"Today, on Armed Forces Flag Day, we honour the courage, commitment and sacrifices of our brave soldiers. Their dedication in protecting our nation is unparalleled," Prime Minister Modi wrote on X.

"I also urge you all to make contributions to the Armed Forces Flag Day fund," he added.

Speaking at the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting, Modi said, "We remember our the brave soldiers on the Armed Forces Flag Day and said the country's first scam had taken place in their area only."

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters, senior party leader and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the prime minister remembered the martyrdom of soldiers with great respect and paid tribute to them on the occasion of the Armed Forces Flag Day.

"It's Armed Forces Flag Day today. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech today, while addressing MPs, remembered the martyrdom of the soldiers with great respect and paid tribute to them," Prasad said.

"Through this platform of the party, we also pay our respects to the martyrs," he said, asserting that the BJP will always salute the sacrifice of the country's soldiers.

"There was a time when for several years there used to be talks about scams in the Army. The first scam in the Army was of Jeep, then submarine scam and AugustaWestland chopper scam," Prasad said in an apparent attack on the Congress.

"On one hand there was cut and commission in every thing and on the other hand there was not even bullet proof jackets for the soldiers of the country," the BJP leader said.

He said it's a matter of pride that Prime Minister Modi has done a lot for the armed forces, ranging from making equipment available to implementation of one-rank-one- pension for them.

"It's been nine years (since BJP came to power at the Centre under PM Modi), there has not been any scandal in purchases," the BJP leader added.

Speaking at the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting, the prime minister said that while the results of the just concluded assembly polls were "excellent", the mood of the country is that it doesn't want to stop in its march towards progress.

"Our job is give it leadership," Modi told BJP MPs.

The prime minister said India's economy is today discussed all over the world. India should become self-reliant in every sphere of life, he added.

Modi said, "This is such a country where someone from the Red Fort says give up cooking gas subsidy and one crore people give up gas subsidy," he said.

"Don't underestimate the people of such a country," he added.

He said that his 'Vocal for Local' call remained successful this Diwali with sale of local goods worth Rs 4.5 lakh crore during the festival.

Nizamabad PFI criminal conspiracy case

NIA chargesheets 17th accused

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has chargesheeted a man in connection with a criminal conspiracy by the banned Popular Front of India (PFI) in Nizamabad in Telangana to recruit, radicalise and train youths to carry out acts of terror and violence, an official said on Thursday.

Nossam Mohamad Yunus is the 17th accused charge-sheeted under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act by the NIA in the case.

The charge sheet was filed in a special NIA court in Hyderabad, the official said.

A spokesperson of the agency said Yunus is a trained PFI cadre who was engaged in motivating and radicalising impressionable Muslim youths with the aim to carry out violent terrorist activities in furtherance of the PFI conspiracy to establish an Islamic Rule in India by 2047.

"NIA has found that the accused was involved in recruiting vulnerable youth and imparting weapons training to them in PFI weapons training camps, specifically organised for that purpose in a clandestine manner.

"He was training them in the use of lethal weapons to kill their 'targets' by attacking their vital body parts such as throat, stomach and head. Further, he was also found actively promoting enmity between different religious groups in the country," the spokesperson said.

The case was initially registered by the VI Town police in Nizamabad district of Telangana in July last year. The NIA took over the investigation from the Telangana Police a month later and filed its first charge sheet against 11 accused in December last year and second charge sheet against five accused in March.

The NIA has been probing the anti-India activities of PFI and its many affiliates, which were declared as an "unlawful association" by the Ministry of Home Affairs in September last year, the spokesperson said.

The official said the ban on the PFI and its associates came after investigations conducted by various state police units and national agencies exposed their role and involvement in violent activities in many parts of the country.

Maharashtra Government not keen to face questions: Patole

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Thursday alleged that the government was not keen to face questions concerning farmers after an adjournment motion by his party colleague and leader of opposition in assembly Vijay Wadettiwar was rejected.

An adjournment motion is moved to discuss a "definite matter of urgent public importance".

Speaking to journalists at Vidhan Bhavan here after the adjournment of the House on the first day of the Winter Session, Patole said that had the government been serious about issues tied to farmers, then it would have allowed the adjournment motion moved by Wadettiwar.

Farmers had high hopes from the session's first day, he said.

The Congress leader said that the Eknath Shinde government is ready to discuss issues related to Vidarbha but has no time to look into matters about farmers in the region.

Accusing the government of arriving in Nagpur for "tourism", he said this session will have only 5 days in a "real sense".

The Winter Session, which started on Thursday, is scheduled to end on December 20.

Patole said the government should spell out clearly whether it wants to help the farmers or just make announcements.

Earlier in the day, the Opposition protested at the Vidhan Bhavan demanding farm loan waiver, bonus on paddy crop and higher minimum support prices (MSP) for cotton and soybean. It said farmers have been badly hit by unseasonal rains and hailstorms.

Deputy Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday had slammed the Opposition for skipping the customary tea party ahead of the session saying it did not raise any issue related to the Vidarbha and Marathwada regions.

FBI director Christopher to visit India next week

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FBI Director Christopher Wray will visit India next week against the backdrop of Washington's allegations about an Indian link to a foiled plot to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil.

US ambassador to India Eric Garcetti referred to Wray's upcoming visit at an event on Wednesday while talking about the strength of US-India relationship and frequency of visits to New Delhi by top Biden administration officials.

"This was the Number 1 country she (US Secretary of Treasury Janet Yellen) went to outside of the United States -- four times this year. The Secretary of State (Antony Blinken) just came here for the third time. Secretary of Defense (Lloyd Austin) for the second time. The FBI director is here next week," he said.

It is expected that Wray will hold talks with senior Indian security officials.

The Washington Post last week reported that the Biden administration was so concerned after discovering the plot to kill Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun that it sent CIA Director William J Burns and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines to India in August and October respectively to demand investigation and hold those responsible to account. US Principal Deputy NSA Jonathan Finer visited India this week during which he held talks with External Affairs Minister Jaishankar, NSA Ajit Doval, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra and Deputy NSA Vikran Misri.

Following the visit, the White House said Finer conveyed to New Delhi the importance of holding accountable anyone found responsible in the probe announced by India to investigate the alleged Indian link to the "lethal plotting".

Last week, India described as a "matter of concern" the US linking an Indian official to a man charged with conspiring to kill Pannun.

It said follow up action will be taken based on findings of an inquiry panel investigating the allegations.

India has already constituted a probe team to investigate the allegations.

The US federal prosecutors charged Nikhil Gupta, 52, of working with an Indian government employee in the conspiracy to kill Pannun.

End ban on liquor in State, Bihar Government told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

Welcoming the Manipur government's move to lift the ban on liquor in the State, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC), the apex body of Indian alcoholic beverages industry, has now urged the Bihar Government to end prohibition in the state to boost its economy, end unlawful trade of poor quality alcohol in state, and avert hooch tragedies.

CIABC has been urging Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to end prohibition in a manner that the government is able to get revenues for the state's development without compromising on the desired social goals.

"By ending over three-decade long prohibition, the Manipur government has taken a positive step forward which would not only earn Rs 600-700 crore as annual tax revenues, but also help tackle the menace of sale of illegal liquor and spread of drugs. It is going to give a major fillip to the state's economic growth." said CIABC Director General, Vinod Giri.

CIABC said that the Bihar Government should also follow suit and lift prohibition which has crippled the growth and development of Bihar and led to so many deaths due to hooch tragedies.

"Bihar is paying a heavy price of the prohibition policy in the form of proliferation of unlawful and spurious liquor, hooch tragedies, rise of crime syndicates and loss of legitimate Government revenues. Bihar's growth and development has been affected as the state is losing out on revenue from the legitimate liquor trade which is estimated at around Rs. 10,000 crore per annum. Repeated hooch tragedies have so far seen over 300 deaths since 2016, close to 5 lakh cases are pending in courts clogging justice delivery system, and around 3 lakh people have been put behind bars for something which the rest of the country finds perfectly lawful. Liquor mafia has been thriving in the state. Keeping all these aspects in mind, we have been urging the Bihar government to end prohibition and open up liquor trade in the state in a responsible manner," said Giri in a statement.

The CIABC DG also noted that prohibition has led to creation of liquor mafia, besides causing major damage to the state's economy and potential investments, thus hitting job creation.

Revenue from liquor sales used to be a major source of revenue for the state exchequer. Bihar is missing out on an annual revenue of around Rs.10,000 crore, forcing the state towards debt crisis."

Kerala Governor not discharging his duties: Vijayan

PTI ■ KOCHI

The ongoing war of words between the Left government and the Kerala Governor heated up further with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday alleging that Arif Mohammed Khan was not discharging his duties.

Vijayan, while responding to reporters' queries about some statements made by Khan a day ago, said he has no problem if the Governor was a "Sangh Parivar follower".

"But the Governor has to function as a Governor. He is presently not discharging the duties of a Governor," the chief minister alleged.

Khan on Wednesday had said that he was open to advice from the state government, "but not pressure from them."

He was referring to the appointments of Vice Chancellors (VCs) to various universities in the state.

The Governor had also said the state government should come to Raj Bhavan and give him an explanation if they wanted urgent action regarding any bill or ordinance.

He also asked Vijayan to ensure that the Marxist party's members and supporters avoid calling Pakistan Occupied Kashmir as 'Azad Kashmir' and not "stoke the fires of separatism and regionalism."

Khan made these comments in response to media reports about him not signing two ordinances sent for his approval by the government.

On the ordinance issue, the chief minister said that if the Governor had anything to say to him, he should say it directly and not through the media.

Ever since the recent Supreme Court verdict quashing the reappointment of Gopinath Ravindran as VC of Kannur University and berating the Left government for its "unwarranted intervention" in the matter, there has been a war of words between Khan and the Left government.

The apex court had found fault with Khan's order reappointing Ravindran to the post, saying the Governor had earlier "abdicated or surrendered" the statutory powers for reappointing the VC.

It had also said it is the Chancellor who is conferred with competence under law to appoint or reappoint VCs. "No other person, even the pro-chancellor or any superior authority can interfere with the functioning of the statutory authority," it had held.

Following the verdict, Khan had said that state Higher Education Minister R Bindu was not to be blamed as the chief minister had used her for seeking the reappointment of Ravindran.

He had accused the chief minister of having exerted pressure on him in the matter.

RAIPUR | FRIDAY | DECEMBER 8, 2023

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Shooting from the hip

Yet another unsavoury remark from the DMK irks sensible Indians and sits in favour of BJP

The DMK, the ruling party in Tamil Nadu, recently touched a raw nerve with its MP DNV Senthilkumar referring to the Hindi heartland as "Gaumutra States", though better sense soon prevailed and he apologised for the remark. However, the damage has been done and it would take some time for the DMK's partners to douse the fire. Anyway, it is not the first time the party has indulged in such capers. The latest remark which carries a derogatory connotation, seen in conjunction with Chief Minister MK Stalin son Udhayanidhi's criticism earlier of Sanatan Dharma, raises questions about the DMK's stance on cultural and religious diversity in India. While the context in which the term was used is crucial, people have interpreted it as an attempt to belittle the cultural and linguistic diversity of the northern States. Earlier, Udhayanidhi's unflattering utterances had drawn criticism from various quarters, with accusations of religious insensitivity and intolerance flying thick and fast. The DMK, historically known for its opposition to the perceived imposition of Hindi and Brahminical practices, has seemingly extended its critique to cultural and religious aspects as well. The party has a long history of championing Dravidian identity and opposing what it sees as the cultural hegemony of north India. The DMK was founded on the principles of social justice, self-respect and anti-Brahminism. Its roots lie in opposing the 'imposition' of Hindi as the sole official language, leading to the ill-famed anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu in the 1960s.

The recent remarks, however, seem to have moved beyond the linguistic and cultural debate and entered the realm of religious sensitivity, or the lack thereof. The DMK, by identifying the Hindi heartland as "Gaumutra States" and expressing criticism of Sanatan Dharma, risks alienating a significant chunk of Indian population that identifies with these cultural and religious aspects. The DMK's comments have naturally elicited strong reactions from political opponents, cultural groups and religious leaders across the country. Critics argue that such statements contribute to the polarisation of the diverse Indian society and undermine the principles of unity in diversity. The political fallout of these remarks could affect the DMK's alliances and relationships with parties outside Tamil Nadu. Its recent jibes against the Hindi heartland and its criticism of Sanatan Dharma have ignited a contentious debate on its stance on cultural and religious diversity. The DMK leaders must understand that such utterances do nobody any good, politically or otherwise. These would be construed as an attack on Hinduism and would then be difficult for the INDIA bloc to defend, of which the DMK is a part. The latest comments have gone beyond the traditional boundaries of political discourse. As parties play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, it is essential for their leaders to speak carefully, fostering unity and understanding rather than deepening the divides.

PICTALK

Aspirants participate enthusiastically in a state level bullock cart race in Tumkur district PTI

Why is Europe turning rightward

PRAFULL **GORADIA**

The European nations are abandoning liberalism and using nationalism to prevent immigration from Asia and Africa

There is no doubt that Europe is leaning Right. National elections held in the Continent are bringing forth governments one by one, which can be called right-wing, but not fascist. The Netherlands has all but elected Geert Wilders, an unapologetic opponent of Islam. Giorgia Meloni, Italy's rightwing and nationalist Prime Minister, is going strong; She has thrown out China's BRI project and refuses to toe the European Union's line on immigration. Emmanuel Macron of France, who began as a centrist is turning right, much to the consternation of that country's socialists and leftists, while indications are that the far-right, anti-immigrant and anti-Islam Marine Le Pen might win France's next elections. President Emmanuel Macron has often spoken of the need to build a "Europe that protects".

In a landmark 2017 Sorbonne speech, he had also called for "a sovereign, united and democratic Europe". Finland has a strong right-wing prime minister, Petteri Orpo, who is no friend of unrestricted immigration. Hungary under Viktor Orban has already called the European Union a dysfunctional arrangement and no longer obeys its diktats. Now Greece is throwing up rightwing politicians, who have opened their doors to Indian investments, but more importantly, Greece has stated that it will never be friends with India's enemies. Much to everyone's horror, the Alternative Fur Deutschland (AFD), a nationalist and right-wing German party is gaining ground in that country and might soon rule Deutschland. The AFD is reportedly a hard-right party opposed to the liberal and green environmentalist agendas of Germany's conventional political parties, and also their liberal stance on immigrants coming into Germany. The days of former German Chancellor Angela Merkel's 'welkuming' policies towards Turkish and Middle Eastern migrants are now more or less over.

Whether the new rulers admit and say it or not, they have been elected in response to a dread of Islam. The fascists had captured power between the two World Wars, which itself had been a fearful response to the threat of communism.

In the context of World War II, Fascism/Nazism or class collaboration were conceptually appropriate to the growth of ideologies that propagated and promoted class conflict. Logically, the antidote to the fear of Islam should have been more and more influence of Christianity. Unfortunately, however, the grip of Christianity over the minds and hearts of Europeans, with the march of modernity and the progress of advanced learning and education, has dissipated. Education encourages thinking, and a thinking individual does not accept any assertion without research or survey, preferably of an empirical nature.

Over and above this difficulty, three religions have competed with the same claim. To start with, Judaism, then Christianity and thereafter Islam have the same contention and beliefs. To worship without being allowed to pursue spirituality or seeking an opportunity to see or feel the divine is a very limiting and constraining experience. This can seem harsh to the thinking person.

Experts in Europe say that currently, only about 25 per cent of people in West Europe declare themselves as Christians, and only a small minority of even these people are church-goers. In other words, Christianity is in no position to help to keep Muslims out of the Continent. Between the two world wars, waging class conflict was seen as something normal until it was countered with class collaboration. In its heyday, Christianity could have helped combat Islam. Today, the Europeans are abandoning their liberation and using nationalism to prevent further immigration from Asia and Africa. In a way, this is an about-turn, because, after WWII, nationalism had become unwelcome. Books were written to show that fascism was nothing but an intensification of nationalism and therefore, was unwelcome any longer. The coming together of Europe under the banner of the European Union (EU) was a demonstration of the post-WWII European opposition to nationalism.

> THE EUROPEAN FAR RIGHT HAS BEEN OFTEN ACCUSED BY ITS LEFTIST AND LIBERAL CRITICS OF REPRESENTING THE WORST THINGS IN EUROPEAN IDEOLOGICAL TRADITIONS

The European far Right has been often accused by its Leftist and liberal critics of representing the worst things in European ideological traditions. These are; namely, exclusive "nationalist essentialism", dogmatism that runs counter to the values that were bequeathed by the Enlightenment and political authoritarianism, which the Right is accused of re-energizing. But the European Right today conveys a simple but powerful message today, based on three core ideas: rediscovery of the nation and national identities; warning of the dangers of unrestrained immigration, particularly from Islamic countries, which is derided as xenophobia; and anti-politician, anti-establishment populism. In this regard, the far Right offers its followers an exclusive identity. The European Right has identified conventional politicians, i.e., the establishment as the culprits and advocates simple and now increasingly unavoidable solutions like throwing out unwanted foreigners and overthrowing the traditional political class.

Right or wrong, good or bad, this seems to be catching on in today's Europe. The Soviet Union was a superpower inhabiting a part of Europe's geography, to which also the European Union was an answer. An ideologically non-descript Russia, with its fifteen republics having seceded is no longer seen as an almighty threat. As a result, quite a few European experts may begin to consult crystal gazers to check up on the future of the European Union.

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

Natural calamities: India's preparedness is exemplary

RAJDEEP **PATHAK**

From Tsunami of 2004 to the recent Cyclone Biparjoy, India has made remarkable progress in dealing with natural calamities

Cyclone Michaung made landfall in Andhra Pradesh, Southern India, near Bapatla on December 4, 2023, with winds reaching 100 kmph. Preceding landfall, heavy rains caused destructive flooding in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, claiming at least nine lives. The Indian Meteorological Department issued 'severe cyclonic storm' warnings, leading to the suspension of various activities such as industrial operations, transport services, businesses, and schools. Chennai airport was also temporarily closed due to the floods. Rescue operations, involving the deployment of 29 additional NDRF teams along the Andhra coast, are underway. The response to 'Cyclone Yaas' in Odisha exemplifies this – reducing casualties from 10,000 in 1999 to 10 in May 2021. Odisha's approach involved technological integration and strategic planning. The state established the first 'Odisha State Disaster Management Authority', local planning committees; an 'Early Warning Dissemination System' and also built resilient housing.

Moreover, Odisha formed over 20 units of the 'Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force' (ODRAF) with specialized personnel for multi-disaster response.

In the wake of the 2004 Tsunami, India recognized the need for a comprehensive disaster management framework. The 'Disaster Management Act of 2005' was a significant legislative step that established the 'National Disaster Management Authority' (NDMA). One of the key aspects of India's disaster management strategy has been the emphasis on early warning systems. The 'Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre' (ITEWC) was established in 2007, equipped with state-of-the-art technology to monitor seismic activity and issue timely alerts. This was a crucial development, considering India's vulnerability to earthquakes and tsunamis due to its location on the seismically active Ring of Fire. Additionally, the community-based response and national solidarity following major disasters set India apart, showcasing an effective approach to tackling natural disasters and minimizing damage. The involvement of local communities in planning and response mechanisms has proven effective. This was visible in the case of the 2018 Kerala floods. Also, embracing community-centric approaches and integrating traditional knowledge and wisdom with modern technology has further aided in reducing mortality rates.

The successful deployment of 'Early Warning Systems' was evident during the 2019 earthquake in the Andaman Islands. The ITEWC promptly detected the seismic activity, allowing authorities to initiate evacuation measures swiftly. This not only minimized casualties but also showcased the efficacy of technology in enhancing preparedness.

Floods, another recurring natural calamity in India, have witnessed innovative technological interventions. The 'National Remote Sensing Centre' (NRSC) utilizes satellite imagery to monitor river basins and assess flood risks. This enables authorities to implement preventive measures and coordinate timely responses, as demonstrated during the 2013 Uttarakhand floods. As per reports, the utilization of 'geospatial technology' facilitated accurate mapping of affected areas, aiding in rescue and relief operations.

The "INDRISHTI" application, developed by the 'National Disaster Response Force' (NDRF), allowed for real-time information sharing among different agencies, ensuring a synchronised response. Despite these strides, it is essential to acknowledge the persistent vulnerabilities and the need for ongoing efforts. The Himalayan region, for instance, remains susceptible to earthquakes, and the potential consequences demand continued research and preparedness.

(The writer is a programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BJP WINS SEMI FINALS

Sir — With superior organisational skills, better resources at hand, and fail-proof strategies, the BJP won the key assembly elections that were dubbed semi-finals. Had the Congress party shown some accommodative mindset towards its friends in the INDIA group, it could have gotten better results in the lost three states. Though it might not have helped Congress win the elections, it would have left it with formidable friends to go with the final war. The fragile bonding among the opposition camp is quite evident if the number of absentees for group meetings is any indication.

In Telangana, the Congress party could win the elections, as it sorted out intra-party hiccups in time and showed a united voice. In the coming general elections, it should first win the trust of alliance parties with mutual respect before challenging its formidable rival. For that, a lot of groundwork in drawing rooms is needed.

DVG Sankara Rao | *Vizianagaram*

GUARANTEE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Sir — Congress would do well to introspect rather than find fault with the system or blame the BJP for the results. Prime Minister Modi's guarantee-warranty has emerged strongly and effectively in the recent assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh. Well-planned imposition of internal discipline at the district and tehsil level, practical and trustworthy selection of candidates, poll promises made in the manifesto, etc. have left a lasting effect on the populace. The national issues dominated the local issues. The failure of the opposition parties mainly happened due to corruption, nepotism, and malfunctioning in government officesl. India Block failed to gauge the pulse of the public.

The BJP's "double engine" government in many states and at the Centre succeeded in implementing public welfare schemes under a time-bound plan. This massive victory has shattered the overconfidence of the Indian Bloc and especially shaken Congress.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | *Faridabad*

Cyclone Michaung plays havoc

Natural disasters are seen as acts of nature. However, what Chennai has witnessed in the aftermath of Cyclone Michaung is a lack of human action, as the city's residents yet again bore the brunt of nature's fury. For many in Chennai, it is a repeat experience of the 2015 floods caused by Cyclone Vardah.

Come November-December every year, citizens of Chennai are getting more scared as even moderate rains wreak havoc on the city and affect their normal lives considerably. Over the years, unfortunately, the governments of the two Dravidian majors have failed in their preparedness and response mechanisms to confront the relentless force of nature. And it is the fate of Chennai that it should brace itself to be hit by cyclones every year in the future. What's the government's plan to keep us safe from these natural calamities? There is always a new type of calamity that affects Chennai drastically. Everyone asks one question: When will the government take such measures to tackle these natural calamities?

Ranganathan Sivakumar | *Chennai*

HISTORIC DAY FOR THE NAVY

Sir — On the golden occasion of Navy Day 2023 (4 December), a 43-foot-tall statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (at Rajkot fort in Malvan, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra) and the royal seal (known as Raj Mudra) on the Navy flag were unveiled by the Prime Minister. This is the first time a Navy Day event has been held at a remote location from a major Naval base. Of course, all this is pleasant, but what is going on in our neighbourhood? It is imperative to pay equal attention. It was Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who laid the foundation of the Navy. The naming of Indian Navy posts by Indian culture is certainly commendable.

What does it mean to throw aside the yoke of slavery and live with a stiff neck, creating your independent existence? Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has given an ideal example of this. Maharaj is known in different parts of the world. But to spread his fame more, and who exactly was he? Indianisation of posts is important to create this curiosity in the minds of the world. Due to this, disputes at the international level, bitterness in relations, etc. are trivial issues. There is no point in stressing about it. India is an independent country. There is nothing wrong with the decision to Indianise posts as per Indian culture. The biography of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is being taught in universities in England and America. Also, students are doing this study with interest. India wants to walk with the work of his venerable role model.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj built Forts Jaldurg (Forts in the Sea) when no technology was available in his time. He not only laid the foundation of the navy but also established a strong dominance over the sea. Now, technology has advanced a lot. So it will be interesting to see how India utilises Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj knowledge and today's advanced technology for establishing dominance over the ocean. The world should see his talent in the next few years through the work of the Indian Navy.

Er Jayesh Rane | *Mumbai*

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FIRST COLUMN

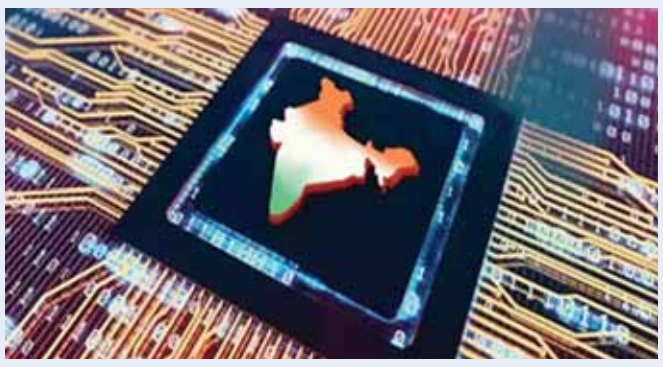
SHAPING UP INDIA'S 'TECHADE'

Technology is at the heart of future geo-political arrangements

KUMARDEEP **BANERJEE**

Much of the discourse in Delhi this week was focused on the use of technology and its impact on society. This happened at a time when most of India was discussing the impact of the crucial state election results on the upcoming national elections next year. The conspiracy narrative that finally emerged after the last votes had been counted was that somehow, the winning team managed to technologically hack the electronic voting machines, at a mass level, which resulted in an outcome that wasn't expected! The techno-political challenges apart, there were many parallel conversations that pointed to the centrality of technology in modern geopolitical equations.

External affairs minister was addressing a global technology summit that discussed in detail the role technology, is likely to play in the wake of expected higher decibels on the political front (with the two largest democracies India and the US getting in the election mode next year and the overall impact on future of the planet. External affairs minister S Jaishankar said "We all intuitively know that the march of technology is really the history of human progress and actually pretty much every era has its particular sets of technological advancements which have defined it. We also know that the history of the world, the balances of power, the making and unmaking of nations, of civilizations are all in one way or another a reflection of how technology has grown. Now, in terms of the policy challenges that it presents, one of course is the need to regulate technology because many technologies also come with downsides and we have seen that expressed in world affairs through regimes and treaties and rules."



In one of the most candid admissions, the minister highlighted the pitfalls of India following an ideological (to be read as non-aligned) blinder-induced foreign policy approach for nearly three decades. The obvious reference was to the opt-out from the US block on nuclear technology cooperation back in the 1960s when the then US president had offered India to build a nuclear weapon of its own. India had refused on ideological high grounds and the prevailing foreign policy mindset. Some of these drained onto the national psyche, where India beyond a point, was content with importing most finished goods while sticking to being a monsoon-dependent agrarian economy. Keeping to the context Mr Jaishankar said "Where India is concerned, I think today we are, in many areas, very clearly playing catch-up. We're playing catch-up because while our era of reform started three decades ago, the era of reform was not necessarily the era of technology, and we conceptualised reform in much narrower terms.

if I were today to sum up the last decade because I think we are now very clearly at the tail end of what is the second term of the Modi government, perhaps one major difference has been the centrality of technology in approaching public policy and to approach governance and towards national security. So, if one looks today at the domestic direction, the push on manufacturing, and this itself is a debate in this country, there are people who believe that it is not our competence, I would say even our karma, to do manufacturing, and that we would be wasting our time, energy and resources embarking on that path. But here's a common-sense proposition. You're not going to be able to do R&D if you don't have competitive manufacturing. You can't encourage people to be at the cutting edge if you are not at the middle level of the same business." This focus on technology at the heart of future geo-political arrangements is one dominant theme getting into 2024.

(The writer is a policy analyst, views are personal)

Has SAARC lived up to its expectation?

SANTOSH **MATHEWS**

SAARC Charter Day is observed on December 8 by eight member countries. It is time to analyse its journey; what has been achieved and where it is headed

The South Asian Regional Cooperation also known as SAARC, is a regional cooperation comprising eight countries i.e. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. When SAARC was initially constituted in 1985, there were only seven member states however in 2007, Afghanistan was added to this regional grouping.

The SAARC was set up in order to ensure that economic, social and cultural development occurred in the region. However, over the last few years, we have seen a decline in any kind of engagement on these fronts. Further the major objective of ensuring that the living standards of the people has gone downhill and there have been blatant human rights violations in the region which has caused individuals to lose their dignity in a myriad of ways. Regional integrity which was the founding idea behind SAARC has faced a serious blow with the skirmishes and standoff between India and Pakistan. These conflicts have spilt over into other avenues as well, which has effectively brought the SAARC functionalities to a grinding halt. Thus, also putting the peace and harmony of the region in jeopardy. The conflicts have prevented states from being able to build sustainable cooperation to promote economic, social or cultural development as a regional block. However, one must note that despite the fact that the regional block is not functioning as it was envisioned, states continue to have individual interactions with each other on various fronts of cooperation.

The major driving factor behind the creation of SAARC was the acceleration of the process of economic growth. Further in order to realize this the SAARC states created an institutionalised regional economic cooperation through the Committee on Economic Cooperation.

The agenda for this committee was to promote various methods and ways through which economic and trade relations could be intensified. The biggest step undertaken by the committee towards helping realize this goal was the creation of the SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) in 1993. The SAPTA came into force in 1995 with the sole goal of promoting free trade among the member states in the region. To a large extent, this Agreement can be credited for reducing the trade barriers in the region to a large extent and for kindling the fire of free trade in the region. The SAPTA was replaced by the South Asian Free Trade Area at the twelfth SAARC meeting which was held in Islamabad. The South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) though signed in 2004 was operationalized in 2006 and for a while, it was able to promote trade in the region but has fallen flat at the present due to political conflicts that exist between the two nuclear power states of the South Asian region.

> WE MUST NOT LOSE HOPE AS THE REVITALISATION OF SAARC IS IN OUR BEST INTEREST AND COULD CHANGE THE WAY WE ARE PERCEIVED ON INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS

Over the years both the SAPTA and the SAFTA have failed to achieve their goals of accelerated economic growth in the region. Further, the incapacitation of Afghanistan to act as a state the Taliban has ruined the economy of the state. However, there is a need to strengthen the SAFTA and create a more durable structure like that of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Drawing a parallel with recreating the same possibilities through SAFTA that the AfCFTA is set to bring to the region. According to a recent World Bank report the AfCFTA is set to boost the regional income by 7% which when converted to dollars amounts to $450bn. Thus, impacting the quality of life of women, daily wage labourers and unskilled. This in turn enables the region to lift around 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035. The AfCFTA will be able to achieve this goal by diversifying exports, accelerating growth, competitively integrating into the global economy and increasing foreign direct investment. If the SAARC could implement the SAFTA in a much more aggressive manner it would aid in the upliftment of around 736 million people living in extreme poverty in the South Asian Region.

Terrorism is not something that is new to the region and is however something that is overlooked to a large extent. States in the region tend to engage and counter-terrorism as individual actors rather than work together collectively as a block to prevent this from escalating in the region. Terrorism and politically instigated violence is not something that is new to the region and has persisted from before the inception of the SAARC. There is a need for SAARC to contribute to the strengthening of practical and implementable counter-terrorism cooperation. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is a permanent organ of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and it aims at the promotion of cooperation between member states against three identified tents of counter-terrorism i.e. terrorism, separatism and extremism. If the SAARC could create something similar to the RATS it would greatly benefit their current individualistic fight against terrorism.

From the perspective of India, why does SAARC play an important role in the foreign policy of India? If the SAFTA is properly operationalized it would be able to achieve its goal which is to reduce the customs duties to zero in the region. Thus, enabling India to boost its economic growth not just in the region but internationally as well. Further, the framework agreement on energy cooperation in the South Asian Region would enable India to mitigate the shortage faced in electricity production. Further, it would allow all member states to achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Accord as the electricity created under this Agreement leans towards green energy sourced from renewable sources. SAARC as an organisation had come up with a Visa exemption scheme wherein certain categories of dignitaries were exempted from Visas. If this idea is to see fruition there is a need for states to set aside their differences and work together. India has always been the forerunner of Space development initiatives and it would be an added feather to the cap of India if we could launch the SAARC regional satellite. It would also help boost the amity between the respective member states. Further, the revitalization of SAARC would play an important role in enabling India to curb the rampant spread of Chinese influence in the region. With the Chinese influence becoming stronger in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal, it is imperative for India to show these states that India can do for them what China offers as with the political tilt of various governments of the member states of SAARC the influence of China waxes and wanes. India needs to capitalise on this before it is too late and the damage is done. SAARC as a regional grouping is still of incredible importance. It is true that SAARC as a regional grouping is dormant now. However, we must not lose hope as the revitalisation of SAARC is in our best interest and could change the way we are perceived on international platforms.

(The writer is a professor at Puducherry University, views are personal)

Road safety: Rising accidents is a cause of concern

In the last few years, the nation has witnessed an alarming surge in road mishaps, surpassing even China in harrowing game of road safety roulette

SIDDHARTH **MISHRA**

SIMRAN **DAS**

According to the annual report on road accidents in India, 2022 released by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the grim reality reveals a huge toll on lives and resources. A staggering 461,312 incidents were reported in 2022 alone, resulting in a catastrophic loss of 168,491 lives and causing injuries to 443,312 individuals. Shockingly, these figures depict an alarming escalation of 11.9% in accidents, 9.4% in fatalities, and 15.3% in injuries compared to the previous year, underscoring the gravity of the situation.

These figures carry far more significance than just numbers; they stand for broken lives, devastated families, and a massive socio-economic burden on society. Every victim of road accidents serves as a stark reminder of how vital it is to deal with this growing emergency. The question now becomes apparent: Why is our nation, known for its inventiveness and resourcefulness, unable to address this issue and provide an appropriate and effective solution to the growing menace of road accidents?

This situation seems to be the result of several circumstances, including a mix of careless driving, speeding, intoxication, and a disregard for following traffic regulations. This, together with insufficient enforcement of traffic laws and lack of awareness among people, keeps the situation dangerous on India's highways.

It is obvious that for ensuring road safety, improving the condition of the road networks is crucial. Dangers for commuters are further compounded by poorly maintained roads, inadequate signages, insufficient illumination, and a dearth of separate pedestrian sidewalks and cyclist pathways.

Furthermore, a plausible factor contributing to this menace is the ease of getting a license by people as well as the faulty administrative procedure for issuing driving licenses in India. There are apparent loopholes and variations in the driving examinations for issuing licenses in different Indian states. The procedure for obtaining driver's licenses may further vary from district to district. In certain places, it is fairly flexible, while in others, it is quite rigid. Here, the role of corruption, assumingly prevalent in local offices, cannot be denied which, probably, becomes a cause of issuing licenses to undeserving persons, who, through their negligent driving, put the lives of others in danger. This is not a secret that driving licenses can be obtained relatively easily in our country. On the contrary, getting a driver's license in countries such as Germany is almost akin to a quest for a holy grail. In Germany, getting a driver's license is considered one of the toughest jobs as it requires passing highly difficult tests and procedures. Moreover, a corruption-free system makes sure that people with full driving competence, capacity and skill as well as an understanding of road conditions only get a driver's license. Moreover, in Germany, detailed road safety regulations are in place which require the parties involved in an accident as well as those witnessing an accident on the road mandatorily to stop, notify the police, assist the victims and ensure that help arrives. Any contravention of such rules makes the violator liable for heavy penalties and punishments.

Moreover, Indian laws for ensuring road safety need reforms, especially Indian penal laws. The lax colonial age law in this respect is usually misused and also lacks in creating an effective deterrence. For example, Section 304 A of the IPC allows for a maximum sentence of two years for causing death by negligence—a very short sentence, when compared to the current needs. The Motor Vehicle Act of 1988 also requires significant reforms. While the Act was amended and Section 134A was added to protect people who save the lives of others from criminal or civil liability as a result of the Save Life Foundation's PIL, no significant changes have been observed till now.

Road safety must become a top priority as India moves forward on its path to development and global leadership. To ensure safer roads for all, it is essential to adopt a culture of responsible driving, support infrastructural improvements, push for strict policy reforms and enforce laws strictly.

(Siddharth Mishra is an Assistant Professor Faculty of Law University of Delhi, and Simran Das is a Student Faculty of Law; views are personal)

Fighting between Israel and Hamas rages in Gaza's 2nd largest city

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

Israeli troops battled Hamas militants on Wednesday in the centre of the Gaza Strip's second-largest city, the military said. The ground offensive has sent tens of thousands of Palestinians fleeing to the territory's southernmost edge and prevented aid groups from delivering food, water and other supplies. Two months into the war, Israel's offensive into southern Gaza was bringing to Khan Younis the same fierce urban fighting and intensified bombardment that obliterated much of Gaza City and the north of the territory in recent weeks.

But in the south, the areas where Palestinians can seek safety are rapidly shrinking. Ahead of the assault, Israel urged residents to evacuate Khan Younis, the childhood home of two top Hamas leaders. But much of the city's population remains in place, along with large numbers who were displaced from northern Gaza and are unable to leave or wary of fleeing to the disastrously overcrowded far south.

Cut off from outside aid, people in United Nations-run shelters in Khan Younis are fighting over food, said Nawraz Abu Libdeh, a shelter resident who has been displaced six times. "The hunger war has started," he said. "This is the worst of all wars."

The UN says some 1.87 million people — over 80 per cent of the population of 2.3 million — have already fled their homes, many of them displaced multiple times. Almost the entire population is now crowded into southern and central Gaza, dependent on aid.

Late Wednesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres used a rarely exercised power to warn the Security Council of an impending "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza and urged members to demand a cease-fire. He invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter, a step no UN chief has taken in half a century, which says the secretary-general may inform the council of matters believed to threaten international peace and security.

A journalist films a display of people who were killed at the Nova music festival in an Oct. 7 cross-border attack by Hamas, during a press tour of the 06:29 memorial recreating the festival grounds on the day of the massacre, in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Wednesday. *AP/PTI*

Israel accused the UN chief of "a new moral low" and "bias against Israel". The United States signalled it would not support Security Council action.

Earlier Wednesday, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said, "Palestinians in Gaza are living in utter, deepening horror". Speaking at a news conference in Geneva, he said that "my humanitarian colleagues have described the situation as apocalyptic".

Israel's campaign has killed more than 16,200 people in Gaza — most of them women and children — and wounded more than 42,000, the territory's Health Ministry said late Tuesday. The agency has said many are also trapped under rubble.

The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Israel has vowed to fight on, saying it can no longer accept Hamas rule or the group's military presence in Gaza after the October 7 attack that triggered the war. Hamas and other militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took captive some 240 people in that attack.

An estimated 138 hostages remain in Gaza after more than 100 were freed during a cease-fire in late November. Their plight and accounts of rape and other atrocities committed during the rampage have deepened Israel's outrage and further galvanized support for the war.

URBAN WARFARE NORTH AND SOUTH

The refugee camp within Khan Younis was the childhood home of Hamas' top leader in Gaza, Yehya Sinwar, and the group's military chief, Mohammed Deif, as well as other Hamas leaders — giving it major symbolic importance in Israel's offensive.Israeli military spokesperson Daniel Hagari said Sinwar is "not aboveground, he is underground", but would not elaborate on where Israel believes him to be. "Our job is to find Sinwar and kill him."

The military said its special forces at Khan Younis had broken through defense lines of Hamas fighters and were assaulting their positions in the city centre.

It said warplanes destroyed tunnel shafts and troops seized a Hamas outpost as well as several weapons caches. The Israeli accounts of the battle could not be independently confirmed.

Video released by the military showed commandos and troops moving amid sounds of gunfire down city streets strewn with wreckage and buildings with giant holes punched into them. Some took positions behind an earthen berm, while others inside a home fired out through a window, its flowered curtains fluttering around them.

Hagari said heavy fighting was also continuing in the north, in the Jabaliya refugee camp and the district of Shujaiya.

Hamas posted a video it said showed its fighters in Shujaiya moving through narrow alleys and wrecked buildings and opening fire with rocket-propelled grenades on Israel armoured vehicles. Several of the vehicles are shown bursting into flames.

Its account could not be independently confirmed. But Hamas' continuing ability to fight in areas where Israel entered with overwhelming force weeks ago signals that eradicating the group while avoiding further mass casualties and displacement — as Israel's top ally, the US, has requested — could prove elusive.Israel accuses Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for 16 years, of using civilians as human shields when the militants operate in residential areas and blames that for the high civilian death toll. But Israel has not given detailed accounts of its individual strikes, some of which have levelled entire city blocks.

The military says 87 of its soldiers have been killed in the Gaza ground offensive. It also says some 5,000 militants have been killed, without saying how it arrived at its count.

PUSHED TO THE EDGE

Tens of thousands of people have fled from Khan Younis and other areas to Rafah, on Gaza's southern border with Egypt, the UN said.

Rafah, normally home to around 280,000 people, has already been packed with more than 470,000 who fled from other parts of Gaza.

Johnson denies he wanted to let Covid 'rip' through population

AP ■ LONDON

Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday rejected suggestions that he wanted to let COVID-19 "rip" through the population as he defended his handling of the pandemic during a second day of testimony at a public inquiry into the crisis.

Johnson shook his head and responded "No, no, no" as he was confronted with a series of diary entries by his chief scientific adviser that indicated he had argued in favour of letting the virus spread rapidly to increase immunity to COVID-19 rather than imposing further restrictions on the people of Britain.

The former prime minister, who is testifying under oath, said he was simply pushing scientists to explain why such a strategy wouldn't work as the government debated whether to impose a second national lockdown in the autumn of 2020 when infection rates were rising and vaccines weren't yet available.

Johnson said critics should look at his public statements and actions, rather than "people's jottings from meetings that I have been in" when they assess the government's response to the pandemic.

"I think, frankly, it does not do justice to what we did — our thoughts, our feelings, my thoughts, my feelings — to say that we were remotely reconciled to fatalities across the country, or that I believed that it was acceptable to let it rip," a frustrated Johnson said under questioning from the inquiry's chief legal counsel, Hugo Keith.

Johnson's government implemented a series of less draconian measures including a 10 p.m. curfew, work from home advice and regionally targeted restrictions in September and October of 2020 before it finally imposed a second national lockdown on October 31.

Johnson defended his efforts to balance the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. He was grilled about his government's "Eat Out to Help Out" programme, which supported the hospitality industry by subsidising restaurant meals, and delays in imposing a second national lockdown as infection rates began to rise toward the end of 2020.

Leading scientists have testified that they weren't part of the discussions on the program and that it was obvious it would increase transmission risks. Johnson said he had no reason to question the restaurant initiative.

"I must emphasise, it was not at the time presented to me as something that would add to the budget of risk," he said. His remarks came after weeks of testimony by other ministers, including former Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who said they sought to raise the alarm inside the government. Hancock argued that thousands of lives could have been saved by putting the country under a lockdown a few weeks earlier than the eventual date of March 23, 2020.

RWANDA DEPORTATION POLICY

Rishi Sunak's leadership in turmoil

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's leadership of the governing Conservative Party is facing turmoil on Thursday after a bruising Cabinet resignation and open attacks by backbenchers over his government's controversial policy to deport illegal migrants to Rwanda.

The 43-year-old British Indian prime minister is caught in the middle of two strands within his party, one on the extreme right voiced by sacked home secretary Suella Braverman calling for an extreme agenda to override legal challenges and the other more centrist view of the UK not being seen to breach its human rights obligations. The clash came to a head on Wednesday night when Robert Jenrick, someone seen as a Sunak ally, resigned as his Immigration Minister, declaring that his boss' new Safety of Rwanda Bill designed to override a Supreme Court block "does not go far enough".

"I cannot continue in my position when I have such strong disagreements with the direction of the government's policy on immigration," wrote Jenrick in his resignation letter to Sunak.

Describing the small boat crossings across the English Channel by illegal migrants as doing "untold damage" to the country, Jenrick insisted that the government needed to get much tougher against "highly contested interpretations of international law".

"I have therefore consistently advocated for a clear piece of legislation that severely limits the opportunities for domestic and foreign courts to block or undermine the effectiveness of the policy. A bill of the kind you are proposing is a triumph of hope over experience," he added.

In his reply letter, Sunak countered by saying that the new bill would be "the toughest piece of illegal migration legislation ever put forward by a UK government" and that his former Cabinet ally's opposition to it was "based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the situation".

"If we were to oust the courts entirely, we would collapse the entire scheme. The Rwandan government has been clear that they would not accept the UK basing this scheme on legislation that could be considered in breach of our international law obligations. There would be no point in passing a law that would leave us with nowhere to send people to," he claimed.

UK PM loses ally as immigration minister resigns

London (PTI): Britain's Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick has resigned from Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Cabinet over "strong disagreements" with the government's Rwanda policy of deporting illegal migrants.Jenrick, who was seen as a Sunak ally until recently, Wednesday said he felt the emergency legislation presented in a parliamentary statement by his boss, Home Secretary James Cleverly, did not go far enough to end the "merry-go-round of legal challenges".

Sunak responded to his resignation by saying he was "disappointed" but that his reasoning to quit the post was "based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the situation".

"It is with great sadness that I have written to the Prime Minister to tender my resignation as Minister for Immigration," Jenrick said in a post on X after questions in the House of Commons where he was missing from the front bench.

"I cannot continue in my position when I have such strong disagreements with the direction of the government's policy on immigration," he said. Jenrick said that small boat crossings across the English Channel were doing "untold damage" to the country and the government needed to place "national interests above highly contested interpretations of international law".

"I have therefore consistently advocated for a clear piece of legislation that severely limits the opportunities for domestic and foreign courts to block or undermine the effectiveness of the policy," he wrote in his resignation letter to Sunak on Wednesday. "A bill of the kind you are proposing is a triumph of hope over experience," he added. In his reply, Sunak countered by saying that the new bill would be "the toughest piece of illegal migration legislation ever put forward by a UK government".

'Vegas shooter who killed 3 is professor'

Las Vegas (AP): Terrified students and professors cowered in classrooms and dorms as a gunman roamed the floors of a University of Nevada, Las Vegas building, killing three people and critically wounding a fourth before dying in a shootout with police.

The gunman in Wednesday's shooting was a professor who had unsuccessfully sought a job at the school, a law enforcement official with direct knowledge of the investigation told The Associated Press.

He previously worked at East Carolina University in North Carolina, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorised to release the information publicly.

The attack was the worst shooting in the city since October 2017, when a gunman killed 60 people and wounded more than 400 after opening fire from the window of a room at Mandalay Bay casino on the world-famous Las Vegas Strip only a couple miles from the UNLV campus.

Lessons learned from that shooting — the deadliest in modern US history — helped authorities to work "seamlessly" in reacting to the UNLV attack, Sheriff Kevin McMahill said at a news conference.

At about 11:45 a.m., the gunman opened fire on the fourth floor of the building that houses UNLV's Lee Business School, then went to several other floors before he was killed in a shootout with two university police detectives outside the building, UNLV Police Chief Adam Garcia said.

Authorities gave the all-clear about 40 minutes after the first report of an active shooter.

Three people were killed and a fourth was hospitalized in critical but stable condition, police said. It wasn't immediately clear how many of the school's 30,000 students were on campus at the time, but McMahill said students had been gathered outside the building to eat and play games.

Vivek Ramaswamy calls Nikki Haley 'fascist, corrupt'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Calling her "fascist" and "corrupt," biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy launched a tirade against his Republican presidential rival and fellow Indian-American Nikki Haley, who refrained from a verbal duel, saying it is not worth her time to respond to him.

Ramaswamy launched the volley of charges against the former South Carolina governor and US ambassador to the UN in Arizona during the Republican Party's fourth presidential debate, which was attended by just four candidates, the other two being former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

The front-runner for the Republican Party's nomination, former President Donald Trump, skipped the debate once again and held a fundraiser in Florida instead.

Participating in the debate, Ramaswamy, 38, accused Haley of having "a corruption problem" and held up a pad of paper with "NIKKI = CORRUPT" written on it. This resulted in a mix of boos and cheers from the audience. He called her "a puppet" and accused her of "using identity politics" as "a form of intellectual fraud."

"Nikki, you were bankrupt when you left the U.N. After you left the UN., you became a military contractor," he started and recounted her journey to end with further allegation: "That math doesn't add up. It adds up to the fact that you are corrupt."

"It's not worth my time to respond to him," Haley, 51, said when asked by the moderator to respond to the allegations. However, Ramaswamy did not give up and continued to attack Haley.

"The only person more fascist than the Biden (US President Joe Biden) regime now is Nikki Haley, who thinks the government should identify every one of those individuals with an ID," he alleged. "That is not freedom, that is fascism, and she should come nowhere near the levers of power, let alone the White House," he said.

Ramaswamy was referring to a recent remark by Haley in which she said that social media users needed to be verified by name, "Every person on social media should be verified, by their name. That's, first of all, it's a national security threat. When you do that, all of a sudden, people have to stand by what they say," she said.

Republican presidential candidate businessman Vivek Ramaswamy with his wife Apoorva and son acknowledges supporters after a Republican presidential primary debate hosted by NewsNation on Wednesday, at the Moody Music Hall at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. *AP/PTI*

Turkish, Greek leaders signal improved relations between two NATO allies

AP ■ ATHENS

After several years of strained relations that raised tensions to alarming levels, longtime regional rivals Greece and Turkiye made a significant step on Thursday in mending ties during a visit to Athens by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Ahead of his one-day visit, Erdogan had promised a "win-win" approach that could lay the foundation for broader cooperation, with hopes of also resetting his country's ties with Western allies.

"It is natural for there to be problems between two countries, even more so among brothers," Erdogan said after meeting with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. "The issue is the will to resolve those problems and differences of opinion." With both leaders showing a marked departure from the testy, sometimes outright belligerent rhetoric of the last few years, Erdogan said of the Aegean Sea through which the two NATO members' border runs: "We want to convert the Aegean into a sea of peace and cooperation. We wish to be an example to the world with the joint steps we will take as Turkiye and Greece." "I say it openly," Erdogan said, according to a translation of his comments. "There is no problem between us so great that it cannot be resolved, provided we move with good faith and we focus on the big picture."

The longstanding disputes between Greece and Turkiye have led the two countries to the brink of war three times in the last 50 years. Centring on maritime boundaries and exploration rights for resources in the Aegean Sea and eastern Mediterranean, the latest flare-up occurred in 2020, when navy ships from the two countries shadowed each other in the eastern Mediterranean.

As relations deteriorated, Erdogan said as recently as last year that he no longer had any interest in meeting with Mitsotakis. But Thursday's visit will be the third time this year that Erdogan and Mitsotakis have met, signalling a significant push to improve ties.

"Our bilateral relations have experienced turbulence that at times have dangerously threatened them, and with them (threatened) security and peace in the Eastern Mediterranean," Mitsotakis said, addressing the Turkish president as "my dear president", and "Mr. President, dear Tayyip". Mitsotakis noted the importance of the "calmer path" that bilateral relations have been on over the past few months. "Greece and Turkiye, Turkiye and Greece should live in peace, express their known differences, discuss them honestly and keep looking for solutions," he said. "And if these are not resolved, however, they should not automatically produce tensions and crises."

Erdogan was accompanied on his trip by several ministers, with joint Cabinet talks with Greek ministers and the signing of several cooperation agreements on the agenda.

The significance of improved relations extends beyond bilateral ties and could help Turkiye mend rocky relationships with the European Union and other Western allies.

One crucial agreement in Athens focuses on migration, establishing communication channels between the coast guards of the two countries. Mitsotakis also said he is backing holiday visas for Turks visiting Greek islands and is backing Ankara's request to ease travel restrictions for Turkish nationals in the European Union.

Shah selected as BBC chairman

AP ■ LONDON

Dr Samir Shah, an India-born media executive with over 40 years of experience in TV production and journalism, has been named as the UK government's preferred candidate to take over as the new BBC chairman.The 71-year-old, who was honoured with a CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) by Queen Elizabeth II in 2019 for services to television and heritage, will replace Richard Sharp, who was forced to resign after his communication with former prime minister Boris Johnson came under scrutiny.

Shah will now be quizzed by cross-party MPs of the House of Commons Media Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee for pre-appointment scrutiny before formally taking charge of the public service broadcaster.

"With a career spanning more than 40 years in TV production and journalism, Dr Shah has a wealth of experience to bring to the position of BBC Chair," UK Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer said on Wednesday, confirming the selection as per the appointment process.

"He has a clear ambition to see the BBC succeed in a rapidly changing media landscape, and I have no doubt he will provide the support and scrutiny that the BBC needs to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future," she said.

The minister said Shah's knowledge of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and his belief in its role as a national broadcaster alongside his extensive work to promote diversity in broadcasting will be invaluable in helping to ensure that the BBC reflects, represents and serves communities across the whole of the UK.

"The BBC is, without doubt, one of the greatest contributions we have made to global culture and one of our strongest calling cards on soft power," Shah said.

"If I am able to put what skills, experience, and understanding of public service broadcasting I have built up during my career to help this brilliant organisation meet the complex and diverse challenges it faces over the coming years, it would be an honour," he added.

US military grounds entire fleet of Osprey aircraft

Washington (AP): The military announced late Wednesday it was grounding all of its Osprey V-22 helicopters, one week after eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members died in a crash off the coast of Japan.

The Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps took the extraordinary step of grounding hundreds of aircraft after a preliminary investigation of last week's crash indicated that a materiel failure — that something went wrong with the aircraft — and not a mistake by the crew led to the deaths.

The crash raised new questions about the safety of the Osprey, which has been involved in multiple fatal accidents over its relatively short time in service. Japan grounded its fleet of 14 Ospreys after the crash. Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, head of Air Force Special Operations Command, directed the standdown "to mitigate risk while the investigation continues," the command said in a statement. "Preliminary investigation information indicates a potential materiel failure caused the mishap, but the underlying cause of the failure is unknown at this time."

In a separate notice, Naval Air Systems Command said it was grounding all Ospreys. The command is responsible for the Marine Corps and Navy variants of the aircraft.

The Air Force said it was unknown how long the aircraft would be grounded. It said the standdown was expected to remain in place until the investigation determined the cause of the Japan crash and made recommendations to allow the fleet to return to operations.

Divides over trade, Ukraine in focus as EU, China's leaders meet

AP ■ BEIJING

A top European Union official told Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Thursday that China and the EU must address both the imbalances in their trading relationship and Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The two are divided on both issues. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, meeting Xi in the Chinese capital, said they need to manage their differences responsibly.

"China is the EU's most important trading partner," von der Leyen said in opening remarks posted on the commission's website. "But there are clear imbalances and differences that we must address."

Xi said that China and the EU should handle their differences through dialogue, and pushed back against what his government sees as a shift in European policy on China toward a more strident and competitive approach. The two sides "should not regard each other as rivals because of different systems, reduce cooperation because of competition, and confront each other because of differences", he said, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The meeting comes a day after EU member Italy announced it was withdrawing from Xi's signature "Belt and Road" initiative that aims to build a global network of Chinese-financed roads, ports and power plants. Italy became the first G7 country to sign on to the initiative in 2019, when the government at the time promoted it as a way of increasing trade with China while getting investments in major infrastructure projects.

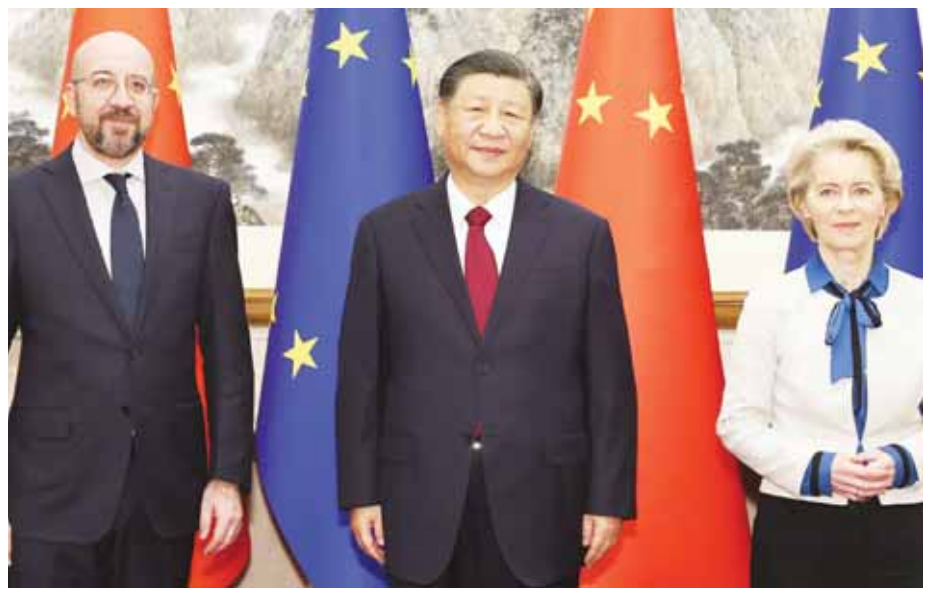
Neither outcome materialized. In the intervening years, Italy's trade deficit with China has ballooned from 20 billion euros to 48 billion euros (USD 21.5 billion to USD 51.8 billion.) Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin defended the initiative and appeared to imply that Italy had been influenced by forces hostile to China.

"China firmly opposes smearing and undermining cooperation in building the Belt and Road and opposes stoking bloc confrontation and divisions" Wang said at a daily briefing on Thursday.

After nearly three years of self-imposed isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic that took a heavy toll on its economy, and having adopted an assertive foreign policy that seeks to challenge the US-led world order, China now appears to be taking a slightly more moderate tone.

Xi held four hours of talks with US President Joe Biden last month in California in their first face-to-face meeting in a year, with the leaders vowing to stabilise their fraught relationship. Von der Leyen and Charles Michel, the president of the EU Council, met Xi in the morning and were meeting with China's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Qiang, later in the day. Von der Leyen, as commission president, heads the day-to-day business of the EU, while Michel chairs the summits of EU leaders.

The talks were "candid, frank, in-depth and constructive", Wang Lutong, director general of the Foreign Ministry's European Department, told reporters following the meetings. He repeated China's call for an immediate cease-fire in Ukraine and the opening of talks between Western leaders and Russian President Vladimir Putin.



In this photo released by Xinhua News, Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping, centre, stands for a group photograph with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, right, and European Council President Charles Michel prior to their meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on Thursday, December 7, 2023. AP/PTI

Dialogue on human rights, economic cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, open trade, the environment, food security and China's claim to Taiwan were also discussed, Wang said. The European Union is calling on China to improve market access for products from its 27 member countries to address an annual trade imbalance of more than USD 200 billion. China exported USD 458.5 billion worth of goods to the EU in the first 11 months of this year and imported USD 257.8 billion, according to Chinese customs data released on Thursday.

The EU has angered China by launching an investigation into the latter's subsidies for electric vehicles to determine whether they give manufacturers in China an unfair competitive advantage in European markets.

"China has never deliberately pursued a trade surplus," spokesperson Wang said ahead of the summit. He noted recent import and supply chain expos that he said encourage foreign companies to sell to the Chinese market of 1.4 billion people. Wang also took aim at possible EU restrictions on technology exports to China. "I'm afraid it's unreasonable if the EU imposes strict restrictions on the export of high-tech products to China while expecting a significant increase in exports to China," he said.

The EU is looking for better market access for a range of products including cosmetics, infant formula, wine and other alcoholic beverages. China has angered the EU by taking a neutral stance in what most European countries see as a Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU is calling on China to use its influence with Russia to end the invasion, ensure that exports from or via China are not aiding Russia's war effort and support Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's peace formula.

Von der Leyen said the EU and China have global responsibilities as major powers and a shared interest in peace and security. "That is why it is essential to put an end to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and establish a just and lasting peace consistent with the UN Charter," she said.

Xi said China and the EU should promote political settlements of international hotspot issues, according to CCTV, which did not include any specific mention of the wars in Ukraine or Gaza.

US House motion urges Pak to uphold democratic institutions, human rights

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A resolution has been introduced in the US House of Representatives urging Pakistan to uphold democratic institutions, human rights, and the rule of law, as the cash-strapped country prepares for general elections in February.

The resolution introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Mitch McCormick and Congressman Dan Kildee this week affirmed its strong support for democracy in Pakistan, including free and fair elections reflecting the will of the people of Pakistan. It also called on the President and the Secretary of State to work with the Government of Pakistan to ensure democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are upheld.

The resolution that has been sent to the House Foreign Affairs Committee "urges the Government of Pakistan to uphold democratic institutions, human rights, and the rule of law, and respect the fundamental guarantees of due process, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech of the people of Pakistan."

It condemns attempts to suppress the people of Pakistan's participation in their democracy, including through harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention, or any violation of their human, civil, or political rights; and condemns any effort to subvert the political, electoral, or judicial processes of Pakistan. The resolution comes at a time when Pakistan, which is facing both political and economic instability, is preparing to hold the general election on February 8.

Sharif's appeal against conviction in Al-Azizia case to be heard on merit

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

In some relief to former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the Islamabad High Court on Thursday decided to hear on merit an appeal by him against his conviction in the Al-Azizia Steel mill corruption case as he eyes a record fourth term as premier in the next elections.

Sharif, 73, was sentenced to seven years in jail and imposed a heavy fine by an anti-corruption court in December 2018 after he failed to convince the court that he had nothing to do with the steel mill set up by his father in 2001 in Saudi Arabia.

A division bench comprising IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurang-zeb announced the decision. The same bench had acquitted the former premier in the Avenfield case on November 29. After hearing arguments, the bench rejected a plea by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to send back the case to the trial court for its re-trial. The decision by the IHC means that it would hear the actual substance of the case, including the charge, the defence and the weight of evidence, and not just focus on matters of procedure or jurisdiction. The former premier was present at the time of the hearing and should have been relieved by the court's decision to hear the appeal on merit as he had already been acquitted in the Avenfield case which like the Al-Azizia steel mill case is based on allegation of assets beyond means. Sharif was living in exile in Saudi Arabia at the time the mill was set up after the former military ruler Pervez Musharraf toppled his government in 1999 and bundled out of the country the former first family. Sharif's son Hussain Nawaz was the administrative head of the mill.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) maintained that the mill was established by using the corruption money Sharif accumulated during his rule, a charge he denied saying that part of the funds for the facility were provided by the Saudi government. It was also stated during the hearing that the Qatari royal family had invested in the mill while Sharif's father Muhammad Sharif chipped in with USD 5 million as his share. However, the defence side failed to provide credible proof of funds used to set up the mill and the former premier was declared as guilty. Sharif filed an appeal in the Islamabad High Court but he left Pakistan in 2019 and the process was stalled as he was declared absconder for failing to appear in the court. On his return in October after more than four years, his appeal was revived and not up for hearing.

He was already acquitted in the Avenfield case in which he was convicted in July 2018 and sentenced to ten years in Jail. He also got relief in the Flagship corruption case in which he was declared innocent by the court in 2018 but the acquittal was challenged in the IHC by the NAB. Sharif, the only Pakistani politician who became the prime minister of the coup-prone country for a record three times, returned to the country in October to lead his party in general elections scheduled in February 2024.

Last week, the anti-corruption watchdog withdrew its appeal and Sharif's innocence was restored in the case. Sharif landed into hot waters in 2017 when he was disqualified by the Supreme Court following a protracted tussle with the military establishment.

Court asks ISI chief to submit report on audio leak of call between Imran's wife, her lawyer

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad High Court on Thursday asked the ISI chief Lieutenant General Nadeem Anjum to submit a report on who was behind the alleged leaked audio of a call between former prime minister Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi and her lawyer Latif Khosa. The court also asked the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to conduct audio forensics of the leaked call between the former first lady and her counsel to probe the origins of its release, Geo News reported.

Justice Babar Sattar issued the order during the hearing of a petition filed by Khosa against the leaked audio between him and his client. Justice Sattar also directed for a copy of the plea to be sent to the Director-General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt Gen Anjum, seeking a report from the spy chief with findings detailing who was behind the audio leak.

The court also issued notices to FIA, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra), and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), seeking their response on the matter. The court adjourned the hearing of the case till December 11.

During the proceedings on Thursday, Justice Sattar questioned how private conversations of people were being broadcast on television channels. He also overruled the objections to the application. "What is the registrar's office's objection to the application?" he asked. Khosa, in his reply to the judge, said the objection is on filing a miscellaneous application and not a separate plea. "A miscellaneous petition can be filed in the audio leaks case." The lawyer said that counsel-client conversations are privileged. "Big Boss is listening to everything, you must know this," Justice Sattar quipped, leaving the courtroom with laughter. He then asked who was recording the audio, in reply to which Khosa said, "Everyone knows who records."

The judge emphasised that the court could not work on assumptions. Khosa, who is also representing the former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman, in multiple cases, said the matter was not only concerning for him but for all lawyers across Pakistan.

"How will the justice system work if a lawyer cannot talk to his client freely?" he asked. The judge then inquired if the audio surfaced on social media. "Audio was also aired by all TV channels," Khosa replied. "Did it first surfaced on Twitter or elsewhere," Justice Sattar inquired, probing the platform where the audio first surfaced. He said it was possible to find out who recorded the audio if the origins of its release were distinguished. Khosa censured Pemra for its ignorance while news channels ran the audio leak on air. "Otherwise, Pemra turns off the screen upon taking someone's name [on-air]," the lawyer said. Khosa also complained that people have stopped talking to him over a phone call as his mobile set is no longer safe.

On Wednesday, Khosa filed a petition against the audio leak of his conversation with Bushra Bibi, requesting the court to ask respondents, delinquent authorities, officials and agencies not to tape the former first lady's telephone calls nor telecast or print it in the electronic, print or social media. The plea, filed on behalf of Khan's wife, sought action against those behind leaking the conversation.

"It is further prayed that to stem the illegal intrusion into the petitioner's privacy of communication through cell/telephone or otherwise the respondents be directed to remove the surveillance gadgets/devices and those found involved be directed to be prosecuted under the law," the petition read.

Russian lawmakers clear path for Putin's 5th term

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian lawmakers on Thursday set the date of the country's 2024 presidential election for March 17, moving Vladimir Putin a step closer to a fifth term in office.

Members of the Federation Council, Russia's upper house of parliament, voted unanimously to approve a decree setting the date. "In essence, this decision marks the start of the election campaign," said Valentina Matviyenko, speaker of the Federation Council. Russia's central election commission is to hold a meeting on the presidential campaign on Friday. Putin, 71, hasn't yet announced his intention to run again, but is widely expected to do so in the coming days now that the date has been set.

Under constitutional reforms he orchestrated, he is eligible to seek two more six-year terms after his current one expires next year, potentially allowing him to remain in power until 2036. Having established tight control over Russia's political system, Putin's victory in the March election is all but assured. Prominent critics who could challenge him on the ballot are either in jail or living abroad, and most independent media have been banned. Neither the costly, drawn-out war in Ukraine, nor a failed rebellion last summer by mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin appear to have affected his high approval ratings reported by independent pollsters. Who would challenge him on the ballot remains unclear. Two people have announced plans to run: former lawmaker Boris Nadezhdin, who holds a seat on a municipal council in the Moscow region, and Yekaterina Duntsova, a journalist and lawyer from the Tver region north of Moscow, who once was a member of a local legislature. For both, getting on the ballot could be an uphill battle. Unless one of five political parties that have seats in the State Duma, Russia's lower house, nominates them as their candidate, they would have to gather tens of thousands of signatures across multiple regions. According to Russian election laws, candidates put forward by a party that is not represented in the State Duma or in at least a third of regional legislatures have to submit at least 100,000 signatures from 40 or more regions. Those running independently of any party would need a minimum of 300,000 signatures from 40 regions or more.

Those requirements apply to Putin as well, who has used different tactics over the years. He ran as an independent in 2018 and his campaign gathered signatures. In 2012, the Kremlin's United Russia party nominated him, so he didn't need them. The central election commission plans online voting in addition to traditional paper ballots in about 30 Russian regions and is considering stretching the voting across three days -– a practice that was adopted during the pandemic and widely criticized by independent election monitors. Those measures on top of restrictions on monitoring adopted in recent years will severely limit the possibility of independent observers, according to Stanislav Adnreychuk, co-chair of Golos, a prominent independent election monitoring group.

Russian schoolgirl shoots classmate dead, kills self

AP ■ MOSCOW

A Russian schoolgirl shot several of her classmates with a gun on Thursday, killing one person and injuring five others, before killing herself, state news agencies and authorities said. The shooting happened at a school in Bryansk, in a region that borders Ukraine, Russia's Investigative Committee said.

Children were reportedly among the wounded. One of the people injured was in serious condition, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said. Video shared by Ria Novosti showed children cowered in a classroom behind a door barricaded with upended desks and chairs during the attack.

Preliminary investigations found that the 14-year-old girl had brought a pump-action shotgun to the school that she used to fire at her classmates, Russia's Investigative Committee said. The girl's father was taken for questioning as a witness, RIA Novosti said. Investigators also wanted to ask him how his daughter came into possession of the gun, the Telegram channel Shot reported. The presidential Children's Rights Commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova said on her Telegram channel that she was overseeing the care of the injured children. In March, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Lvova-Belova and Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes, accusing them of responsibility for the abduction of children from Ukraine. Russia's Interior Ministry said it was looking into a motive for the shooting, which is one of several school shootings in the country in recent years. In September 2022, a gunman opened fire in a school in central Russia, killing 17 people and wounding 24 others before shooting himself dead.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
NO.-EM/IOHP/GW-22/2023/609 Dt.06/12/2023
e-TCN No. EM/IOHP-43/2023
Name of the work: **"Revamping of Electrical Installations at E House-I & E House-II of IOHP"**. Estimated Cost: **Rs.2,82,17,500/-**. Last date & Time of Submission of Bid: **Dt.12/01/2024 up to 17:00 Hrs.** Refer our website for details https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.
Sd/- Executive Engineer (E), Iron Ore Handling Plant, Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PR/68/2023-2024 dtd.07.12.2023

Office of the Executive Engineer (E)
RDSS Division, Electricity Department-II
New Delhi Municipal Council
Room No. 1804 "A", 18th Floor, Palika Kendra, New Delhi: 110001
Office Tel.:- 011-23340588
2nd Call e-procurement Tender Notice

Name of Work:-	Request for Proposal/Bid (RFP)/RFB for appointment of PMA for "Consultancy Services for Assisting and Supporting in Project Management to NDMC for Implementation of (i) Smart System Metering Work (DT and Feeder Metering) and (ii) Implementation of Loss Reduction Infrastructure Works under Phase-I of RDSS, GoI".
Tender Value	Rs.4,83,00,000/-
Tender ID No.	2023_NDMC_250860_1

Date of Release of tender through e-procurement solution : 05.12.2023
Pre-Bid Meeting (In the O/o CE(E-II), Palika Kendra, ND) : 12.12.2023 at 11:30 Hrs
Last date/time for receipt of tenders through e-procurement : 29.12.2023 at 15:00 Hrs
Date/time for opening of Bid through e-procurement : 29.12.2023 at 16:00 Hrs

Further details can be seen at **https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in** and **https://www.ndmc.gov.in/tenders.aspx**.
Note:- To participate in e-tender in NDMC registration with application services provider NIC is mandatory.
Executive Engineer (E) RDSS

Agnes Chow says she still feels under watch of Hong Kong police in Canada

AP ■ BANGKOK

Pro-democracy activist Agnes Chow, who left Hong Kong for Canada and doesn't plan to return to fulfil her bail conditions, said on Thursday she still feels under the watch of the Chinese territory's police after moving to Toronto. Chow is one of Hong Kong's most prominent young activists and was arrested in 2020 under a Beijing-imposed national security law that was enacted following 2019 anti-government protests.

While she has not been charged and was released on bail, police confiscated her passport before returning it to her this year under certain conditions, including a visit to mainland China with authorities. Chow said in an interview with The Associated Press that Hong Kong's national security police called her twice to ask her about her status after she left the city to pursue further studies in September.

"They keep trying to make me feel like I'm under their eyes," she said. The intimidation of Hong Kong dissidents like Chow reflects the severe erosion of the freedoms promised to the former British colony when it returned to China in 1997. But both the Beijing and Hong Kong governments have hailed the security law, saying it brought back stability to the city.

On Tuesday, Hong Kong leader John Lee hit out at Chow's decision to not return to Hong Kong to meet her bail conditions. He called Chow a "liar" and said attempts by police to offer her lenient treatment eventually led to them being deceived. Chow will be pursued for life unless she turns herself in, he said.

Chow rejected the government's claim that police had offered her leniency, insisting her personal safety and freedom had been infringed. She said the restrictions imposed by the authorities on her daily life had badly affected her mental health.

She said in an Instagram post on Sunday that her passport was only returned to her so she could pursue a master's degree after she agreed to go to mainland China with national security authorities. During that trip in August, she visited to an exhibition on China's achievements and the headquarters of tech giant Tencent, she said. She was asked to pose for photos.

Later, police asked her to write a thank you letter to them before returning her passport to her, she said.

Chow pondered for "a really long time" whether to publicise her experience. She said her trip showed the Hong Kong police were adopting more of the style of mainland Chinese authorities to "control" and "intimidate" political dissidents. "If I did not make my story public, these photos, these letters might one day become the evidence of my patriotism. That is something I do not want to see," she said.

Chinese navy ships first to dock at new pier at Cambodian naval base linked to Beijing

Phnom Penh (AP): Chinese naval vessels have become the first ships to dock at a new pier at a Cambodian naval base that the United States and some international security analysts say is destined to serve as a strategic outpost for Beijing's navy. The docking of the two ships, which received little publicity, coincided with an official visit to Cambodia this week by China's top defense official, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission He Weidong.

News of at least two Chinese ships docking at the Ream Naval Base on the Gulf of Thailand came out indirectly, through a Facebook post on Sunday by Cambodian Defense Minister Tea Seiha. It said he visited the base to see preparations for Cambodian navy training and to inspect progress on infrastructure construction, but did not mention China by name. He also posted photos showing Cambodian officials with Chinese Ambassador Wang Wentian, and reviewing Chinese sailors. At least two warships could be seen in the photos, one whose gangway identified it as the Chinese navy corvette Wenshan.

Satellite photos taken Sunday by Planet Labs PBC analyzed by The Associated Press show what appear to be two Chinese warships docked at the base. They correspond to the images shared online by Tea Seiha.

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No spectacular announcement in February budget: Sitharaman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday ruled out any "spectacular announcement" for her sixth budget on February 1 next year, saying it would just be a vote on account before the general elections.

A full Budget for the 2024-25 fiscal would be presented in July next year by the new government elected after the April-May general elections, she said at the CII Global Economic Policy Forum.

"I am not going to play a spoilsport, but it is a matter of truth that the February 1, 2024, budget that will be announced will just be a vote on account because we will be in an election mode. So the budget that the government presents will just be to meet the expenditure of the government till a new government comes to play," she said.

"No spectacular announcements come in that time (in a vote on account). So you will have to wait till after the new government comes in and presents the next full Budget in July 2024," Sitharaman said in reply to a question on whether she would announce a "supercharged budget" in February.

Piyush Goyal, who was holding additional charge of the Ministry of Finance after Arun Jaitley fell ill, had presented the last interim budget in 2019.

After the Narendra Modi-led government swept to power for the second straight time, Sitharaman was appointed as the finance minister and she presented the full budget on July 5, 2019.

Traditionally, a vote on account is an authorisation for incurring certain expenditures required till a new government takes office.

Governments in the past have refrained from making any major policy announcement during the vote on account, but there is no constitutional bar from making big announcements.

Goyal had announced a Rs 6,000 per year cash dole to 12 crore farmers in the interim Budget 2019.

Goyal had also announced tax sops for the middle class, including hiking the standard deduction available to the salaried class to Rs 50,000, from Rs 40,000.

Also, a full tax rebate was announced for individual taxpayers having taxable annual income of up to Rs 5 lakh. The 2019 interim budget had proposed that such taxpayers would not be required to pay any income tax

Also, ministers have made political speeches which some saw as a pitch for re-election.

Before the vote on account, Governments also do not present the customary pre-budget Economic Survey that traditionally is presented a day before the presentation of the full budget.

The survey which details the state of the economy and directional events, is presented when the full budget is tabled in Parliament in July.

Stock markets snap seven days winning run; Sensex falls 132 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty snapped their seven-day winning streak on Thursday due to profit taking by investors after recent sharp gains triggered by negative cues from Asian markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 132.04 points, or 0.19 per cent, to close at 69,521.69. The gauge hit the lowest intra-day level of 69,320.53.

Broader index Nifty also declined 36.55 points, or 0.17 per cent, to settle at 20,901.15.

Analysts said crude oil prices in international markets failed to boost sentiment amid selling pressure from foreign institutional investors even as traders stayed on the sidelines ahead of RBI's monetary policy decision.

The Reserve Bank of India is expected to maintain the status quo on the interest rate in its bi-monthly monetary policy decision to be announced on Friday.

Major laggards among Sensex constituents included Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Steel and ITC.

Power Grid, UltraTech Cement, NTPC and Titan emerged as winners.

As many as 17 shares of the 30-share Sensex ended the session in red, while 23 Nifty firms closed lower.

According to Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, the market took a breather as investors are in a wait-and-watch mode ahead of the monetary policy announcement.

"A better-than-estimated Q2 GDP growth, ease in global oil prices and drop in global bond yield will be the silver lining for the MPC. However, the expectation of a rise in domestic November inflation, drop in Rabi cultivation and increase in foodgrain prices will influence RBI to adopt a cautious approach in the short-term," he said.

About the movement in Nifty, Rupak De, Senior Technical analyst at LKP Securities, said the index hovered within the bands of 20850-20950 as "sentiment remains somewhat cautious ahead of the RBI policy meet".

"The near-term trend remains sideways to weak as long as it stays below 21000, a psychologically crucial level. A decisive breakout above 21000 might induce a resumption of the uptrend. Until then, we anticipate weakness over the near term," De said.

In the broader market, the BSE largecap index moved up marginally by 0.02 per cent, the midcap gauge gained 0.66 per cent and smallcap advanced by 0.28 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, FMCG, metal and teck declined by 0.85 per cent, 0.75 per cent and 0.38 per cent respectively.

In contrast, utilities and power defied the trend and surged by 3.16 per cent and 2.67 per cent, respectively. Besides, services gained 1.63 per cent, cosumer durables rose 1.22 per cent and oil & gas jumped 1.00 per cent.

Meanwhile, in Asian markets, Nikkei 225 declined by 1.79 per cent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was off 0.73 per cent and China's Shanghai Composite fell 0.09 per cent.

One97 Communications stock settles 19 per cent lower

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of One97 Communications, parent firm of Paytm, settled 19 per cent lower on Thursday, a day after the company announced it will focus on high-ticket lending and go slow on loans that are less than Rs 50,000.

The scrip of the company nosedived 18.74 per cent to close at Rs 660.70 apiece on the NSE.

On the BSE, Paytm shares tumbled 18.69 per cent to end at Rs 661.30 per share.

During the day, the scrip of Paytm plunged 20 per cent to hit the lower circuit of Rs 650.65 and 650.45 per piece on BSE and NSE, respectively.

On the volume front, 3.68 crore shares were traded on the NSE, and 48.50 lakh shares changed hands on the BSE, during the day.

At the end of the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 132.04 or 0.19 per cent lower to settle at 69,521.69 points, while Nifty slipped 36.55 points to 20,901.15.

On Wednesday, One97 Communications, which operates under the Paytm brand, said it will focus on high-ticket loans and go slow on loans that are less than Rs 50,000.

"We are seeing better performance on the merchant side than the consumer side.

"We will try to do a lot more there. Our focus now on the calibration of business is on high ticket, slowing down to less than Rs 50,000," Paytm's President and Chief Operating Officer Bhavesh Gupta said at an analyst call on Wednesday.

He said postpaid loans will gradually start reducing in the overall lending business.

The company acquires 3.5-4 lakh new postpaid loan customers on an average every month, out of which around 70 per cent opted for borrowing of less than Rs 50,000.

'Levying border adjustment tax to meet green commitments morally wrong'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said any move on imposition of cross-border adjustment tax by developed countries to meet their green commitments is morally wrong and goes against the interest of developing countries of 'Global South'.

"The single mono-sided decision of imposition of border adjustment tax ...The logic just goes against the concern of the Global South...

"But cross-border imposition (of tax) and that money going towards somebody else's green agenda, if anything, is not moral at all," Sitharaman said at the CII Global Economic Policy Forum.

The minister said every country will need to generate resources to meet the green commitments made globally.

Her comments come in the backdrop of the European Union's announcement to impose carbon tax on imports from certain sectors.

The CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) or carbon tax (a kind of import duty) will come into effect from January 1, 2026, but from October 1 this year, domestic companies from seven carbon-intensive sectors, including steel, cement, fertiliser, aluminium and hydrocarbon products, will have to share data with regard to carbon emissions with the EU.

In her address, Sitharaman said the base energy requirements of a country cannot be filled by renewable energy sources, but it is possible to think in terms of spreading renewable energy in such a way that individual participation is ensured.

India is rapidly moving in the renewable energy space, particularly in solar, and is in talks with many countries for a grid connectivity across the world by the ISA members.

Hyundai to increase vehicle prices from January 1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automaker Hyundai Motor India Ltd on Thursday said it will hike the prices of its vehicles from next month citing rising input cost, adverse exchange rate and increase in commodity prices.

The company, which sells a range of vehicles starting from Grand i10 Nios to electric SUV IONIQ5, priced between Rs 5.84 lakh to Rs 45.95 lakh, however, did not specify the quantum of the proposed price increase to be effective from January 1, 2024.

The price increase is owing to rising input cost, adverse exchange rate and increase in commodity prices, amongst other reasons, Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL), said in a statement.

HMIL COO Tarun Garg, COO said the company always tries to absorb the cost escalations to the extent possible and ensure customers are not burdened. "However, it has now become imperative to pass on some portion of the rising input cost to the market through a minor price increase," he added.

HMIL said it will continue to make consistent internal efforts to minimize future price impact to customers.

The company joins the likes of Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Honda and Audi among others which have also announced plans to increase vehicle prices in January.

Sunsure Energy partners Sandoz India for 31 million units of green power

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sunsure Energy on Thursday said it will supply 31 million units of green power to Sandoz India for a period of 25 years.

The company will supply power to the facility of the pharma player in Maharashtra, Sunsure Energy said in a statement. Sunsure Energy partners with Sandoz India for the supply of renewable energy from a 20 MW solar power plant. It will supply over 31 million units of green energy annually for the next 25 years, the statement said.

The partnership will enable Sandoz India to offset 26 million kg of Co2 annually.

"Sunsure will set up this captive renewable energy plant with Sandoz India as the sole user of power. This green power commitment will be fulfilled through Open Access supply of power to Sandoz India's facilities in Maharashtra," the statement said. Shashank Sharma, Founder-Chairman and CEO, Sunsure Energy, said, "This partnership stands as a significant stride towards advancing the adoption of green energy in the pharmaceutical sector in India and globally."

'Hiring activity for white collar jobs dips 12 per cent during October, November'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hiring activity for white-collar jobs witnessed a 12 per cent on-year decline during October-November largely due to fall in recruitment trends in IT-Software, telecom and education sectors, a report said on Thursday.

White-collar recruitment during October-November declined by 12 per cent with 2,433 job postings, compared to 2,781 during the corresponding months in 2022, according to the Naukri JobSpeak Index.

The Naukri JobSpeak is a monthly Index representing the state of the Indian job market and hiring activity based on new job listings and job-related searches by recruiters on the resume database of Naukri.Com.

While, telcom, education, retailing sectors witnessed 18 per cent, 17 per cent and 11 per cent decline, respectively, during October-November compared with the same months in 2022, sectors like hospitality, travel, auto and auto ancillary the hiring trend was stagnant, the report said.

Meanwhile, Oil and Gas sectors recorded 9 per cent increase in hiring in the October-November period compared to the last year, on the back of rapid expansion by energy companies and the setting up of new refineries across the country, the report noted.

Similarly, the Pharma sector registered a 6 per cent increase in new job offers in the October-November against the same months of 2022, it added.

The report further revealed that the insurance sector also saw positive momentum as hiring grew by 5 per cent in the October-November period, over the same period last year.

"It was encouraging to see core non-IT sectors like Oil and Gas, Pharma and Insurance growing at a healthy clip during a cluttered festive period. November's 1 per cent growth in IT vs October could be a much awaited positive sign, as we eagerly await next month's trends," Naukri.Com Chief Business Officer Pawan Goyal said.

The overall hiring in the IT sector was 22 per cent lower in the October-November, compared to the same months last year, it noted.

However, despite witnessing substantial corrections in the first half of 2023, the sector reported a 1 per cent growth in November over October.

New job openings in AI-related fields like machine learning engineer and full stack data scientist increased by 64 per cent and 16 per cent respectively during the two months under review, compared to the year-ago period, the report said.

Meanwhile, when it came to cities the non-metros, once again, outperformed the metros in terms of hiring. Vadodara clocked a 9 per cent growth in new job offers in the last two-months against the same period of 2022, while Ahmedabad stayed flat.

Metros like Delhi NCR and Mumbai clocked negative growth of 12 per cent each, while the IT-focused cities of Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Pune recorded negative growth of 20 per cent, 18 per cent, 21 per cent, and 18 per cent in October-November compared to the same period of 2022.

The report also found that organisations continued to show preference for senior professionals in terms of hiring, a trend seen in most of 2023. Hiring for senior professionals with more than 16 years of experience went up by 26 per cent in the last two months against the same months of 2022.

While, for freshers, new offers recorded negative growth of 13 per cent in the last two-month over the same period last year, the report added.

Monthly average office rent up 7 per cent annually in April, September: Anarock

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rentals for prime office spaces rose by an average 7 per cent year-on-year to 83 per square feet per month across seven major cities during the first six months of the current fiscal on rise in construction cost, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Anarock on Thursday released its India Office Market Update for H1 (April-September) of 2023-24 fiscal, stating that Grade A office rental values averaged at Rs 83 per square feet per month across seven major cities against Rs 77.5 per square feet in the year-ago period.

The first half of this fiscal year remained lacklustre for commercial office space activity across the top seven cities, with both net absorption and new completions remaining largely stagnant compared to the same period last year.

New office supply rose 5 per cent and net office absorption saw a marginal decline of 1 per cent during the period under review, the consultant pointed out.

"Interestingly, average rental values across the top 7 cities witnessed a 7 per cent growth in H1 FY24, as compared to the same period in FY23, essentially due to increased construction and input costs," Anarock Regional Director & Head - Research Prashant Thakur said.

During the April-September period of this fiscal, Chennai witnessed the highest 10 per cent year-on-year increase in average monthly office rental values to Rs 68 per sq ft from Rs 62 per square feet in the year-ago period.

Hyderabad saw a 8 per cent increase in average rent to Rs 66 from Rs 61 per square feet.

Bengaluru, Pune, and Kolkata each saw 7 per cent annual growth in office rent, while Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Delhi-NCR registered 5 per cent increase each.

Average monthly office rental in Bengaluru rose to Rs 90 per square feet from Rs 84 per square feet.

In Pune, the average office rental grew to Rs 79 from Rs 74 per square feet a month, while in Kolkata rentals increased to Rs 58 per sq ft from Rs 54 per square feet.

MMR, the most expensive office market in the country, saw rental increasing to Rs 136 per square feet from Rs 130 per sq ft In NCR, the average office rentals rose to Rs 85 from Rs 81 per square feet.

India a labour rich country with enough institutional maturity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has the potential to grow at 8 per cent as the country is labour-rich with enough institutional maturity of a functioning democracy, Niti Aayog vice chairman Suman Bery said on Thursday.

Bery also cautioned that North India has not been doing well traditionally compared to South India, and this can create tensions in a federal polity.

"So, 8 per cent growth or something approximating that means continuous change that needs to be politically managed," he said while addressing the Global Economic Policy Forum 2023, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the finance ministry.

According to Bery, the modernisation journey of India is unusual and unique.

"And if I wanted to bet on India for the next 25 years, I would point to first, the fact that we are not labour constrained in a world which is increasingly labour constrained. But much more importantly...We have the institutional maturity of a functioning democracy with established rules of the game for the transfer of power we have just seen magnificently in the state elections," he added.

Bery noted that economic growth in a country like India

is a prerequisite for equity.

"So, growth is not an end in itself, but it is a means to an end to raise living standards and secure India's strategic and institutional economy," he said.

Bery pointed out that India is the fastest-growing major economy but still the lowest per capita income country in the G20.

"Growth needs to be both inclusive as well as pro-people, and women-led growth will be critical for attaining positive outcomes.

"The challenge is to use the mature institutional democratic structure of India to realise its potential in the Amrit Kaal," the Niti Aayog vice chairman said.

He emphasised that growth must be prioritised to achieve domestic and international objectives of higher living standards and securing India's strategic and institutional economy.

Bery also said it is important to strike the right balance between facilitation and regulation at the Union and state levels to realise India's potential.

"It is important to link both the personal as well as spatial dimensions of inequality," he said and highlighted the importance of effective regional policies in this regard.

It is critical to build India's growth momentum on the basis of its natural endowments, he added.

WTT Star Contender Goa 2024 to take place in January

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The second edition of India's biggest table tennis tournament, the WTT Star Contender will be held in Goa from January 23 to 28 next year.

World Table Tennis (WTT), conceptualised by the International Table Tennis Federation in 2019, serves as the epicentre for professional men's and women's table tennis events globally.

The series encompasses a multitude of events throughout the year, with the four Grand Smashes standing out as the highest-ranked tournaments.

The tournament is a part of the six-star Contender series events where only the top-30 players are eligible to participate, with six players compulsory from the top 20 in the world rankings.

The tournament boasts of a prize pool of USD 250,000 and ranking points will be up for grabs. The event is also a qualifier for the WTT Cup Finals and WTT Champions Series.

"Playing against world-class players or watching them from close quarters always inspires the younger generation. This tournament is a great opportunity for our Indian players," Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) secretary-general Kamlesh Mehta said in a release.

The first edition of the WTT Star Contender Goa took place earlier this year and had some of the world's biggest stars on show, including world No. 1 Fan Zhendong, Japanese prodigy Tomokazu Harimoto, world No. 4 Wang Yidi, and World No. 5 Hina Hayata.

Besides, the tournament also saw the participation of 40 Indian players, which was the highest for a WTT event.

China's Liang Jingkun and Yidi had won the men's and women's singles titles respectively in the inaugural edition of the tournament.

The tournament will be co-hosted by Stupa Sports Analytics and Ultimate Table Tennis under the guidance of TTFI.

South Korea athletes pushed to attend navy boot camp

AP ■ SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA)

South Korea's Olympic committee is pushing to send hundreds of athletes to a military training centre to enhance their mental toughness for the Paris Olympics, a move that's been criticized as outdated and regressive.

The Korean Sport & Olympic Committee advised domestic associations last week to send athletes to the Korea Marine Corps camp in the southeastern port city of Pohang for three days of training this month, according to some associations.

About 320 athletes, including women, are expected at the boot camp, committee officials said on Thursday. Sports associations have previously asked their athletes to take marine-style training ahead of big sports events, but it's the first time the Olympic committee has recommended it, committee officials added. Those officials reportedly decided on the camp following the Asian Games in China in October, when South Korea finished third in the gold medal count to China and Japan.

After the Asian Games, Olympic committee head Lee Kee-Heung floated the idea of marine camp training and said athletes would be joined by top committee officials including himself, according to South Korean media reports.

Messages slamming and deriding the Olympic committee plan flooded South Korean social media and internet sites. "Are we still under the period of military rules?" read a message on X, formerly known as Twitter. Another X user said "They can just select marines with strong mental power as Olympic athletes," while others called the Olympic committee's plan "a comedy" or "out of mind."

Details of the December 18-20 camp in Pohang are still under discussion between the Olympic committee and the Korea Marine Corps. But, previous pre-Olympic marine camp training involving fencers, wrestlers and handballers included rappelling courses, and carrying 140-kilogram (310-pound) inflatable boats on their heads together.

Reached by The Associated Press, South Korea's wrestling and breakdancing associations said they won't send their athletes to the marine camp because they have competitions when the training is scheduled.

Yukyoum Kim, a physical education professor at Seoul National University, said athletes can still learn something from marine training. The programs were developed not only by marine officers but also by sports management and medicine professionals, Kim added. "It is crucial to help the athletes overcome small and big hardships for their personal and teams' growths," Kim said. "Although it has involved forceful group camps and violence in the past, marine boot camp has played a rather effective role to achieve those goals."

Simone has Inter aiming for a Serie A title

AP ■ ROME

His playing career was overshadowed by the exploits of his big brother.

His coaching career has hitherto been marked by near misses.

Now - finally - Simone Inzaghi appears destined to have his moment in the spotlight.

Approaching the midpoint of Serie A, Inzaghi's Inter Milan leads the league and is the favourite to win the title.

After routing city rival AC Milan 5-1 in the derby in September, Inter drew at second-placed Juventus and put on a convincing performance in a 3-0 victory at defending champion Napoli in successive matches over the last two weeks.

"It was a show of force," Inzaghi said after the win at Stadio Diego Armando Maradona. "But, we have a lot of work ahead, and we're going to approach it in the same manner that we did over these last three-and-a-half months."

While Inzaghi played on the star-studded Lazio team that won Serie A in 2000, it was Filippo "Superpippo" Inzaghi who gained the bigger headlines by helping Juventus and Milan to a series of domestic and European titles and Italy to the 2006 World Cup trophy.

Now, Filippo is on the other end of Serie A, having recently been hired to coach last-placed Salernitana. The brothers are scheduled to meet in February.

While Simone had a successful start to his coaching career at Lazio by winning an Italian Cup and a couple of Italian Super Cups with the Roman club, he was thrust into a difficult position at Inter when Antonio Conte left unexpectedly after guiding the Nerazzurri to the 2021 Serie A title.

In his first season, Inzaghi's Inter finished two points behind Serie A champion AC Milan after a season-long duel.

Then, last season, Inter beat Milan in the Champions League semi-finals before falling to Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, albeit by a respectable 1-0 in the final.

Now, all of a sudden, Inzaghi is being compared to Inter's most successful coaches - Helenio Herrera, Giovanni Trapattoni, Roberto Mancini, Jose Mourinho and Conte - even though his biggest achievements with the Nerazzurri remain two Italian Cups and two Italian Super Cups.

The reasons behind the praise are not just the results. It's also about Inter's attacking style and flair with Inzaghi's preferred 3-5-2 formation, which has produced the most goals (33) in Serie A and the least goals conceded (7).

Lautaro Martinez leads the league with 13 goals; Marcus Thuram has added a new dimension after replacing the departed Romelu Lukaku as Martinez's strike partner; Nicolò Barella has been a force in midfield; the defence hasn't missed a beat despite injuries; and goalkeeper Yann Sommer has made Inter fans quickly forget Andre Onana's move to Manchester United.

"It's still early and anything can happen - there are so many matches this time of the year that you could have two or three injuries and it could turn everything around instantly - but Inter is a squad that plays physical, technical and rational football," said Italy coach Luciano Spalletti, who guided Napoli to the title last season and previously was in charge at Inter.

Up next for Inter is Udinese on Saturday. Then, Real Sociedad visits the San Siro on Tuesday in a game that will decide which team wins their Champions League group. Both sides have already secured passage to the knockout stages.

Two rising stars of Bundesliga meet

AP ■ DUSSELDORF (GERMANY)

Is Bayer Leverkusen's German title challenge for real? How about Stuttgart's chances?

The Bundesliga's two teams on the rise meet on Sunday when league-leading Leverkusen travels to third-placed Stuttgart.

Leverkusen's 21-game unbeaten start to the season is on the line again after a rare moment of vulnerability in a 1-1 draw with Borussia Dortmund on Sunday.

Stuttgart knocked Dortmund out of the German Cup on Wednesday and is aiming for another upset win in a season already packed with eye-catching performances.

The simple fact that Stuttgart vs. Leverkusen has become a must-watch game in Germany is a tribute to Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso and his Stuttgart counterpart Sebastian Hoeness, who both took over relegation-threatened teams partway through last season and turned them around.

Leverkusen may have to do without Florian Wirtz after the 20-year-old attacking midfielder limped off after a hard tackle to the ankle in Wednesday's 3-1 cup win over second-division Paderborn.

Leverkusen's and Stuttgart's rise has displaced two of Bayern Munich's usual challengers. Dortmund hosts Leipzig on Saturday with both teams having something to prove.

The top task for Dortmund and coach Edin Terzic is to bridge the gulf between its European successes and its domestic failures.

Dortmund qualified for the Champions League knockout stages with a game to spare - and from arguably the most difficult group too - but its recent form in Germany is dismal.

A lopsided 4-0 loss to Bayern last month was the obvious low point, but Terzic's team has just five points from its last five league games and its defence struggled to track Stuttgart players' runs in the cup loss on Wednesday.

Leipzig is fourth, a place above Dortmund, but consistency is the main problem for a young team which has had some statement games this season - including a win and a draw with Bayern - but plenty of underwhelming moments, too, namely recent losses to Wolfsburg and relegation-threatened Mainz. It hasn't helped that midfielder Dani Olmo hasn't started a game since September and is out with a shoulder injury until the new year.

December is usually the most hectic month in Germany as teams frequently play twice a week before the winter break. Not so at Bayern.

The German champion goes into its game on Saturday at Eintracht Frankfurt with nine days' rest after its league game at home to Union Berlin last week was called off because of heavy snow. It won't be played until January 24.

Bayern and Frankfurt have plenty in common at the moment, not least that they both got knocked out of the German Cup by the same third-division team, Saarbruecken.

Bayern's loss was last month, meaning it didn't play in midweek, while Frankfurt's marking was a major issue in its own 2-0 loss to Saarbruecken on Wednesday.

It may be just the right time for a refreshed Bayern to play Frankfurt, which is on a four-game losing run in all competitions in its first real slump under new coach Dino Toppmöller, who was himself a Bayern assistant coach last season.

Lifter Bindyarani fails to complete her event

PTI ■ DOHA

Commonwealth Games silver medallist Bindyarani Devi put up a disappointing performance at the IWF Grand Prix II as she could not get an overall total in women's 55kg after failing to lift the weight in any of her three attempts in clean and jerk section.

Bindyarani was one of only two athletes in the 12-lifter field who did not finish (DNF) her event here on Wednesday night.

The 24-year-old could manage only two legal lifts in six attempts, both coming in the snatch section, where she logged a best effort of 81kg.

Bindyarani, who won a silver medal at the Asian Championships earlier this year in May, failed to lift 106kg in her first attempt in clean and jerk, followed by two more attempts to pick up 109kg.

While her first attempt was deemed a no lift due to bending and extending of arms, the Manipuri simply couldn't keep the barbell over her head in the following two attempts.

Palmeiras wins Brazilian league title

Santos relegated for the 1st time

AP ■ SAO PAULO

One of the most exciting seasons of the Brazilian league ended with the most stable team of the season defending its title and the club that was home to the late Pelé relegated for the first time.

Palmeiras drew 1-1 at Cruzeiro on Wednesday to be crowned Brazilian champion for the 12th time. The 18-year-old Endrick scored his 11th goal of the season to give Palmeiras an early lead and Nikao equalized in the 80th minute at the Mineirao Stadium in Belo Horizonte.

Santos' relegation following a 2-1 home loss to Fortaleza was another setback for the club at the stadium where Pelé's funeral took place in January.

This year's title went to Palmeiras with striker Endrick, set to join Real Madrid, scoring several key goals and rival Botafogo squandering a 13-point lead in the standings.

Atlético Mineiro and Flamengo, which had slim chances of winning the trophy in the lastl round, lost their matches. Those defeats allowed Luis Suárez' Gremio to finish runner-up after a 3-2 win at Fluminense, with the Uruguayan striker scoring two goals.

Palmeiras finished with 70 points, two more than Gremio. Botafogo, which led for 31 of 38 rounds, finished in fifth with 64 points. The Rio club lost 3-1 at Internacional, and ended the season with an 11-game winless streak. Santos finished with 43 points, one behind Bahia, which beat Atletico Mineiro 4-1, and two less than Vasco da Gama, the winners of another tense clash against Bragantino.

Mario Sergio opened the scoring for the visitors in the 39th minute. Messias equalized in the 58th minute to give Santos hope it could put Vasco da Gama or Bahia in a relegation position. But Fortaleza's Juan Martin Lucero scored from long distance shortly before the final whistle.

न्यायालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला दण्डाधिकारी दुर्ग जिला–दुर्ग (छ.ग.)

व्यक्तिगत उपस्थिति समन

रा.प्र.क्र. 04/ब–121/वर्ष 2023–24

प्राधिकृत अधिकारी, आई0आई0एफ0एल0होम फायनेंस लि0
शाखा–पहली मंजिल लाल गंगा, सिटी मार्ट बंजारी चौक
अपो0होटल अमित रेसिडेंसी रायपुर .....वादी

प्रेषित

1. श्री लेखराम यादव पिता जीवराखन यादव
2. श्रीमति चित्ररेखा यादव पति लेखराम यादव

सभी निवासी म0नं0 92 पचरी पारा दुर्ग तहसील व जिला दुर्ग .....अनावेदकगर्ण

उपरोक्त वादी द्वारा इस न्यायालय में वित्तीय आस्तियों का प्रतिभूतिकरण और पुनर्गठन और प्रतिभूतिहित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम, 2002 की धारा 14 के अन्तर्गत अनावेदकगण द्वारा आवेदक बैंक से लोन की सुरक्षा हेतु बैंक के पक्ष में रखी गई बंधक संपत्ति–ख0नं0 837/20, का एक प्लाट क्षेत्रफल 783 वर्गफीट प0ह0नं0 07 रा0नि0मं0 सिकोला मौजा उरला वार्ड नं0 58 दुर्ग तहसील जिला दुर्ग में स्थित है, को बकाया राशि की अदायगी नही करने के कारण रिक्त भौतिक आधिपत्य में प्राप्त करने हेतु प्रस्तुत आवेदन पत्र पर प्रकरण संस्थित कर प्राकृतिक न्याय सिद्वांत के अन्तर्गत अनावेदकों को इस न्यायालय द्वारा समक्ष सुनवाई का अवसर दिया जाना है।

चुँकि अनावेदकों को प्रकरण में समक्ष सुनवाई का युक्तियुक्त अवसर प्रदान किया जाना है। अतएव इस समन के जरिये अनावेदक को आदेश दिया जाता है कि आप इस मामले की आगामी पेशी दिनांक 11/12/2023 को कलेक्टर, दुर्ग के न्यायालय में व्यक्तिगत रूप से अनिवार्यतः उपस्थित होकर अपना पक्ष प्रस्तुत करें। यदि आप निर्धारित सुनवाई तिथि को अनुपस्थित पाये गये तो मामले की सुनवाई आपकी गैरहाजिरी में की जाकर आपके विरूद्व एकपक्षीय कार्यवाही की जावेगी।

संयुक्त कलेक्टर,
वास्ते–कलेक्टर दुर्ग

पृ.क्रमांक/639/प्र.क.ले/2023 दुर्ग, दिनॉक 05/12/2023

न्यायालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला दण्डाधिकारी दुर्ग जिला–दुर्ग (छ.ग.)

व्यक्तिगत उपस्थिति समन

रा.प्र.क्र. 05/ब–121/वर्ष 2023–24

प्राधिकृत अधिकारी, आई0आई0एफ0एल0होम फायनेंस लि0
शाखा–पहली मंजिल लाल गंगा, सिटी मार्ट बंजारी चौक
अपो0होटल अमित रेसिडेंसी रायपुर .....वादी

प्रेषित

1. श्री परमजीत पिता दयासिंह
2. सतवेन्द्रर कौर पति परमजीत सिंह

सभी निवासी प्लाट नं0 एल0आई0जी0 – एल0आई / 741 वार्ड नं0 16
ए.सी. जी.एच.बी कॉलोनी कुरूद भिलाई तहसील व जिला दुर्ग .....अनावेदकगण

उपरोक्त वादी द्वारा इस न्यायालय में वित्तीय आस्तियों का प्रतिभूतिकरण और पुनर्गठन और प्रतिभूतिहित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम, 2002 की धारा 14 के अन्तर्गत अनावेदकगण द्वारा आवेदक बैंक से लोन की सुरक्षा हेतु बैंक के पक्ष में रखी गई बंधक संपत्ति– प्लाट नं0 एल0 आई0जी0–एल0आई/741 क्षेत्रफल 75 वर्गमीटर वार्ड नं0 18 ए.सी.जी.एच.बी कॉलोनी कुरूद भिलाई तहसील व जिला दुर्ग में स्थित है, को बकाया राशि की अदायगी नही करने के कारण रिक्त भौतिक आधिपत्य में प्राप्त करने हेतु प्रस्तुत आवेदन पत्र पर प्रकरण संस्थित कर प्राकृतिक न्याय सिद्वांत के अन्तर्गत अनावेदकों को इस न्यायालय द्वारा समक्ष सुनवाई का अवसर दिया जाना है।

चुँकि अनावेदकों को प्रकरण में समक्ष सुनवाई का युक्तियुक्त अवसर प्रदान किया जाना है। अतएव इस समन के जरिये अनावेदक को आदेश दिया जाता है कि आप इस मामले की आगामी पेशी दिनांक 11/12/2023 को कलेक्टर, दुर्ग के न्यायालय में व्यक्तिगत रूप से अनिवार्यतः उपस्थित होकर अपना पक्ष प्रस्तुत करें। यदि आप निर्धारित सुनवाई तिथि को अनुपस्थित पाये गये तो मामले की सुनवाई आपकी गैरहाजिरी में की जाकर आपके विरूद्व एकपक्षीय कार्यवाही की जावेगी।

संयुक्त कलेक्टर,
वास्ते–कलेक्टर दुर्ग

पृ.क्रमांक/640/प्र.क.ले/2023 दुर्ग, दिनॉक 05/12/2023

न्यायालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला दण्डाधिकारी दुर्ग जिला–दुर्ग (छ.ग.)

व्यक्तिगत उपस्थिति समन

रा.प्र.क्र. 03/ब–121/वर्ष 2023–24

प्राधिकृत अधिकारी, आई0आई0एफ0एल0होम फायनेंस लि0
शाखा–पहली मंजिल लाल गंगा, सिटी मार्ट बंजारी चौक
अपो0होटल अमित रेसिडेंसी रायपुर .....वादी

प्रेषित

1. श्री जंयत कुमार चावड़ा पिता श्री रणजीत लाल चावड़ा
2. श्रीमति दिशा राठौर पति श्री दिलीप राठौर
3. श्रीमति रेखा चावड़ा पति श्री रणजीत चावड़ा
4. श्री वासुदेव चावड़ा पिता श्री रणजीत चावड़ा

सभी पता म0नं0 484 पहली मंजिल वार्ड नं0 15 अंबु किराना
स्टोर कुम्हारी तहसील भिलाई–3 जिला दुर्ग .....अनावेदकगण

उपरोक्त वादी द्वारा इस न्यायालय में वित्तीय आस्तियों का प्रतिभूतिकरण और पुनर्गठन और प्रतिभूतिहित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम, 2002 की धारा 14 के अन्तर्गत अनावेदकगण द्वारा आवेदक बैंक से लोन की सुरक्षा हेतु बैंक के पक्ष में रखी गई बंधक संपत्ति–ख0नं0 14/1, प0ह0नं0 04 रा0नि0मं0 भिलाई 3 मौजा परसदा प्लाट नं0 एल0आई0जी0 1 लोटस सिटी फेस–4 ग्राम परसदा तहसील भिलाई–3 जिला दुर्ग में स्थित है, को बकाया राशि की अदायगी नही करने के कारण रिक्त भौतिक आधिपत्य में प्राप्त करने हेतु प्रस्तुत आवेदन पत्र पर प्रकरण संस्थित कर प्राकृतिक न्याय सिद्वांत के अन्तर्गत अनावेदकों को इस न्यायालय द्वारा समक्ष सुनवाई का अवसर दिया जाना है।

चुँकि अनावेदकों को प्रकरण में समक्ष सुनवाई का युक्तियुक्त अवसर प्रदान किया जाना है। अतएव इस समन के जरिये अनावेदक को आदेश दिया जाता है कि आप इस मामले की आगामी पेशी दिनांक 11/12/2023 को कलेक्टर, दुर्ग के न्यायालय में व्यक्तिगत रूप से अनिवार्यतः उपस्थित होकर अपना पक्ष प्रस्तुत करें। यदि आप निर्धारित सुनवाई तिथि को अनुपस्थित पाये गये तो मामले की सुनवाई आपकी गैरहाजिरी में की जाकर आपके विरूद्व एकपक्षीय कार्यवाही की जावेगी।

संयुक्त कलेक्टर,
वास्ते–कलेक्टर दुर्ग

पृ.क्रमांक/639/प्र.क.ले./2023 दुर्ग, दिनॉक 05/12/2023

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER (ADMIN), HEAD OFFICE,

UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL SANSADHAN VIKASH EVAM NIRMAN NIGAM

11- MOHINI ROAD, DEHRADUN, Phone:- 2678078, 2672404, Fax:- 0135-2672337, E-Mail:- upsvnn@gmail.com

Letter No. 274/Nivida/98 Date : 07-12-2023

E-TENDER NOTICE

On behalf of **"Chairman Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam"** sealed tenders in Two Bid System on item rate contract basis (Inclusive of all material) are invited through electronic tendering system for the following work in Uttarakhand from technically and financially capable bidders registered as indicated in table below, up-to prescribed time & date on portal.

S. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost of Work (Rs.In Lakhs) (Including GST)	Amount of Bid Security (Rs. In Lakhs)	Cost of E-Tender document (in Rs.)	Completion Period (In month)	Category of Contractor
1	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Kapkot, Distt-Bageshwar	209.94	4.20	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'B' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
2	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Chorgalia & Kathgodam, Distt-Nainital	440.89	8.82	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
3	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Ukhimath & Guptkashi, Distt-Rudraprayag	408.60	8.18	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
4	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Laxmunjhula & Lansdowne, Distt-Pauri Garhwal	376.83	7.54	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
5	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Ranikhet & Dwarahat, Distt-Almora	423.27	8.47	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
6	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Khatima, Distt- Udham Singh Nagar	419.24	8.39	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
7	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Kirtinagar, Distt-Tehri Garhwal	365.83	7.32	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
8	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Muni Ki Reti, Distt- Tehri Garhwal	350.31	7.00	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
9	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Patel Nagar, Distt-Dehradun	404.17	8.08	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
10	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Clement Town, Distt-Dehradun	404.17	8.08	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
11	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Champawat, Distt-Champawat	214.00	4.28	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'B' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
12	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Tanakpur, Distt-Champawat	214.00	4.28	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'B' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
13	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Lohaghat, Distt-Champawat	217.39	4.35	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'B' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.
14	Construction Of Residence Building for Police Personnel at Bhagwanpur, Distt-Haridwar	396.63	7.94	5000.00 + 18% (GST) = 5900.00	12	'A' Class Registered Contractor in Building Works in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam & 'D' Class Registered in Electrical Work in Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam.

Name and Address of Officer Inviting the Bid :-	General Manager (Admin), Head Office, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Dehradun.
Date and Time of Availability of bid documents in the portal :-	08/12/2023 – 17.00 Hrs.
Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal :-	23/12/2023 – 17.00 Hrs.

Details of subsequent addendum/ corrigendum /cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website.
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://uktenders.gov.in"

General Manager (Admin)

GAMBHIR CALLED ME FIXER: SREESANTH

PTI ■ SURAT

Former pacer S Sreesanth on Thursday alleged that ex-India teammate Gautam Gambhir called him a "fixer" during a Legends League Cricket match here.
The two World Cup-winning players were involved in a heated exchange during an Eliminator match between Indian Capitals and Gujarat Giants here on Wednesday.
The umpires had to intervene ad separate the two players.
"He kept on calling me 'fixer fixer, you are a fixer, **** off you fixer on live television on centre wicket," Sreesanth said while going live from his Instagram handle.
"I just said 'what are you saying', I kept laughing in a sarcastic way. He spoke to the umpires in the same language when they tried to control him," he added.
Sreesanth was handed a life ban by the BCCI's disciplinary committee due to his alleged involvement in the IPL 2013 spot fixing scandal.
However, the ban was reduced to seven years in 2019 by the Supreme court of India.
"From my side, I didn't use any bad word. Please guys support the real truth. He has been doing it with a lot of people. I have no idea why he started it, it was the end of the over.
"Now his people are saying sixer sixer bola hai but unhone bola you fixer, tu fixer hai (his people are claiming he said sixer sixer but he said you are a fixer). This is not the way to talk. I'm thinking of leaving it (the incident) here but his people are trying to save him. I request you all to not fall for extra paid PR work," Sreesanth added.
An hour after Sreesanth went live. Gambhir, who is a BJP MP from East Delhi, posted on X a picture of himself in the Indian jersey smiling, captioning it "Smile when the world is all about attention!"
On Wednesday, in another Instagram live video after the game Sreesanth had called Gambhir "Mr fighter", adding that he did not even respect senior players.
"Just wanted to clear the air with what happened with Mr fighter. One who always fights with all his colleagues. For no reason whatsoever. He does not even respect his own senior players, including Viru Bahi (Virender Sehwag)
"That's exactly what happened today. Without any provocation, he just kept on calling me something which was very rude which shouldn't have been said by Mr Gautam Gambhir," Sreesanth had said.
"I am not at all at fault here. I just wanted to clear the air straight away. What Mr Gauti has done, sooner or later all of you will get to know. The words that he used and the things he said on a cricket field, live, is not acceptable.
"My family, my state, everybody has gone through so much. I fought that battle with all your support. Now people want to down me for no reason. He said things he shouldn't have said. I will surely let you know what he said," he reiterated.
This is not the first time Gambhir has been involved in an on field altercation. He has had fiery exchanges with Virat Kohli a couple of times during the IPL, including earlier this year when Royal Challengers Bangalore took on Lucknow Super Giants.

Smith's manager debunks former Australian captain's retirement talks

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Steve Smith will not follow his teammate David Warner into Test retirement as the former Australian captain thinks he can still achieve a lot more, clarified Warren Craig, his long-time manager.
Warner had expressed his desire for a Sydney farewell after the third and final Test against Pakistan starting from January 3, 2024.
There have been talks about Smith following the suit after a below par season this year against India and England.
While the New South Welshman's overall average remains the best among contemporary batsmen - - 9320 runs from 102 Tests at an average of 58.61 with 32 hundreds -- he has struggled for big runs this season.
However, Craig did not buy into the floating rumours.
"I can debunk that (retirement) at this point in time. He's still talking about things he wants to achieve," Craig was quoted as saying by Sydney Morning Herald.
The 34-year-old top-order batter has achieved every trophy during his illustrious career, including the Ashes (thrice), ODI World Cup (2015 and 2023), T20 World Cup (2021) and the World Test Championship (2023).
But this year, he has managed only 518 runs across 17 innings at an average of 34.53. But standing very close to becoming the fourth Australian batter to score 10000 Test runs, Smith might not want to miss that chance.
Allan Border, Ricky Ponting and Steve Waugh are the Aussie players to have crossed that landmark.
Smith was also in decent form during the recently concluded ODI World Cup in India, scoring 302 runs from 10 innings at an average of 33.55 with two fifties.
However, former Australian captain Mark Taylor offered a word of caution to Smith.
"It doesn't mean they're done (in mid 30s), but normally you've seen their best by then. The early-30s would be the purple patch for most players," he told SMH.

Buttler delighted to regain form

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

England skipper Jos Buttler said he was "fed up" with his woeful run of form and that it was time to get back to being "the player that I know I am" by putting up a solid performance with the bat.
The wicketkeeper batter, who struggled with the bat all throughout the ODI World Cup, scored his first half century since September -- an unbeaten 58 off 45 balls to guide England to a series-levelling six-wicket victory over hosts West Indies in the second ODI here on Wednesday.
"I've been searching for form. I have had moments where it has been frustrating," Buttler was quoted as saying by the 'BBC'.
"I was getting fed up with it so it was time to put in a performance and get back to the player that I know I am," he added.
Ahead of the second ODI Buttler had been dismissed for five single digit scores in eight outings.
But the match-winning knock on Wednesday made him the fifth England batter to cross the 5,000-run mark in ODIs.
"Really pleasing. I've been playing for a while now so it's great when you get to those milestones after playing for a long period of time. It's been a frustrating time recently."
Buttler had taken over the reins as white-ball skipper from World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan last year.
Under his leadership, England won the T20 World Cup last year. However, defending champions England made an embarrassing early exit from the ODI World Cup last month, finishing seventh to just qualify for the 2025 Champions Trophy.

Bangladesh and New Zealand

Day 2 washed out in the 2nd cricket Test

AP ■ MIRPUR (BANGLADESH)

A day after 15 wickets tumbled, there wasn't a ball bowled on Thursday because of rain on Day 2 of the second cricket test between Bangladesh and New Zealand.
There was no sign of the rain stopping so match officials called stumps early and ruled that play would start earlier than scheduled on Friday.
Bangladesh has a 117-run lead and control of the match as it bids for a first ever Test cricket series win over New Zealand.
After skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto won the toss and opted to bat, Bangladesh was bowled out for 172 runs with Mushfiqur Rahim top-scoring on 35.
That dismissal made Mushfiqur the first Bangladeshi batter to be given out for handling the ball and obstructing the field.
Bangladesh's spinners then helped the home team hit back strongly, reducing New Zealand to 55-5. Offspinner Mehidy Hasan led the attack with 3-17 and left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, fresh from his 10-184 in the first test, took 2-29.
Bangladesh leads the two-match series after a 150-run victory in the first Test.

We should have varied pace more, fielded better: Patil

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Young off-spinner Shreyanka Patil feels India should have varied the pace more while bowling and also fielded better in their 38-run defeat against England in the opening Women's T20I here.
Renuka Singh Thakur (3/27) got two wickets in the first over, but India squandered the advantage to help England post a massive 197 for 6 on Wednesday. The home team batters then cut a sorry figure on a placid wicket to be restricted to 159 for 6 in the opening T20I of the three-match series.
"We could have varied the pace little more, the wicket was not that great for bowlers, it was completely in favour of the batters. I could bowled better but bowling in the death overs is not at all easy," Patil (2/44) told reporters at the Wankhede Stadium.
Patil, who made her T20 debut on Wednesday, admitted that fielding was one area in which the Indian team needs immediate attention as it looks to bounce back in the second match to be played at the same venue on Saturday.
"The wicket was amazing to bat on, it was not easy (to bowl), but I think we did a pretty decent job. We will have a discussion as to what can be improved. Fielding could have been better, but we will bounce back stronger," she said.
The 21-year-old said it was difficult for her to get sleep after knowing that she would make her debut against England.
"I was very happy that I got the cap. I was a bit excited as well as nervous, I did not get any sleep (the previous night) but after one or two balls I was fine. (It felt like) I belong here," she said.
Patil said the inaugural Women's Premier League has helped her learn the tricks of playing under lights with the white ball.
"It (WPL) did help me personally playing against Harry di (Harmanpreet Kaur), Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah (Rodrigues)," she said.
"I think that was the start for me and to carry the momentum here was a good achievement. It did help me to adjust under lights, bowling under pressure… Now I feel like this is where I belong and I am enjoying it."
Patil said she did scenario-based practice before the series in Bangaluru which proved beneficial for her.
"Yes, I did a lot of scenario-based practice in Bangaluru with my coach (Arjun Dev) because once you start playing high-level cricket you need to be more accurate as to what should be doing so that performance comes out well.
"The execution part is still in the learning phase, but I would say planning is very important and execution will happen with experience," she said.
England batter Danni Wyatt scored a fluent 47-ball 75 with eight fours and two sixes to help the tourists post the total.
Her 138-run third wicket stand with Nat Sciver-Brunt (77) is now England's highest partnership against India in T20Is.
"Nat is just so calm, we don't really talk much out there. We have played with each other a lot. I have batted a lot with Nat. She is a quality player, she scores runs for fun, especially out here in Mumbai and (is) familiar with the conditions," Wyatt said.
Not been selected in the WPL last year was disappointing for the right-handed batter but Wyatt said she would be looking forward to being a part of the upcoming edition of the league, the auction for which will be held on December 9.
"Not while I was batting, not when I was walking out to bat but it crossed my mind a few times, people spoke about it," Wyatt replied when asked if WPL auction was on her mind while batting.
"I was pretty disappointed last year but I have completely changed my mindset now. I've done hard work and I kind of had a good summer. I would love to be a part of the next WPL," she said.

England beats West Indies by 6 wickets to level series

AP ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Will Jacks scored 73 and Sam Curran took 3-33 as England found form to beat the West Indies by six wickets in the second one-day cricket international, leveling the three-match series at 1-1.
Jacks' second ODI half century helped England to a winning total of 206-4 in the 33rd over in a match which was low-scoring compared with the series-opener in which 651 runs were scored.
England sent the West Indies in at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium and bowled out the home team for 202 in 40 overs. Shai Hope top-scored with 68 after his match-winning 109 not out in the first match which the West Indies won by four wickets.
The West Indies slumped to 23-4 after seven overs before Hope restored the innings in a 129-run partnership with Sherfane Rutherford, who scored 63.
Hope reached his 25th ODI half century from 44 balls and scored his 68 runs at a run a ball, trying to give impetus to an innings which flagged a little in the middle stages. Rutherford's maiden half century came from 71 balls.
Jacks gave the England innings a solid foundation. He shared a 50-run partnership with Phil Salt (21) for the fourth wicket and reached his half century from 43 balls. His was the fourth England wicket to fall with the total 116 in the 20th over.
While Zac Crawley and Ben Duckett both were out for 3, Henry Brook and Jos Buttler took charge and carried England to victory with 17.1 overs to spare.
Buttler finished 58 not out, Brook 43 not out and the unbroken partnership was worth 90.
At 36, Buttler reached 5,000 career runs in one-day internationals, following West Indies captain Shai Hope who reached the 5,000 run milestone in the first ODI. Hope reached 5,000 runs in 114 innings, Buttler in 153.
Buttler registered his 26th ODI half century from 43 balls just before the end, reaching the mark with a six off the bowling of Oshane Thomas.
"It was a must-win game today and we put in a brilliant performance," Buttler said. "I've been searching for some form and it was great to spend some time in the middle. There's no substitute for that. "Being not out at the end to get your side over the line is a great feeling."
The West Indies began poorly when Alick Athanaze was out in the fourth over, caught by Buttler off a sharp delivery from Gus Livingstone. Curran then made a timely return to form by dismissing Keary Carty (0) and Brandon King (17) to leave the West Indies innings teetering at 23-4. It was Curran's first haul of three wickets or more in nine ODIs since March.
His 0-98 in the first match was the most expensive ODI spell ever by an England fast bowler.
"It was a tough day the other day but you've got to keep trying to move forward and bounce back," Curran said. "We lost that game the other day but bounced back and we're really pleased."
Hope and Rutherford stayed together until the 30th over when Rutherford was caught by Salt from Livingstone's bowling. Hope fell four overs later, bowled by Livingstone and the rest of the West Indies order offered little resistance.
"We put pressure on ourselves by the way we batted," Hope said. "We didn't play situations smart enough and that's what caused the downfall in the batting.