

CITY 3
RP-SANJIV GOENKA GROUP
TO INVEST ₹10,000 CR IN UP**NATION 6**
AGNIVEER RECRUITMENT
THROUGH E-TEST**SPORT 8**
UAE SET TO HOST
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SC gets 5 judges as Govt keeps pledge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A day after promising the Supreme Court that the Collegium's pending recommendations for the elevation of five High Court judges to the apex court will be cleared soon, the Centre on Saturday notified the appointments. The five judges elevated to the apex court are Justices Pankaj Mishra, Sanjay Karol, PV Sanjay Kumar, Manoj Misra and Ahsanuddin Amanullah.

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju tweeted to announce the appointment of the five judges. Justices Pankaj Mishra, Sanjay Karol and PV Sanjay Kumar are Chief Justices of Rajasthan, Patna and Manipur High Courts respectively. Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah is a judge of the Patna High Court and Justice Manoj Misra is a judge of Allahabad High Court.

On Friday, the Supreme Court had expressed displeasure and pulled up the Central Government for delaying the appointments of the five judges, who were recommended by Collegium on December 15 last year. A Bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Abhay S Oka had given the Centre an ultimatum to process the appointments within ten days, after Attorney General N Venkataratnam had submitted that they would be done "soon".

When the Bench insisted for a specific timeline, the AG said that appointment warrant



will be issued on Sunday.

Justice Pankaj Mishra, currently serving as the Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court, was Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court. His parent High Court is the Allahabad High Court. Justice Sanjay Karol is currently the Chief Justice of Patna High Court and was Chief Justice of Tripura High Court. His parent High Court is the Himachal Pradesh High Court.

Justice PV Sanjay Kumar is Chief Justice of Manipur High Court and served as a judge of Punjab & Haryana High Court. His parent High Court is Telangana. Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah is presently a judge of the Patna High Court and was a judge at Andhra Pradesh High Court before being transferred back to Patna. His parent High Court is Manipur. Justice Manoj Misra has been a judge of the Allahabad High Court for the past 12 years.

Currently, the Supreme Court has 34 judges and there

are seven vacancies. With these five new judges, its strength will go up to 32, with just 2 vacancies. On January 31, the SC Collegium had recommended the names of Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Gujarat High Court Chief Justice Arvind Kumar for elevation to the Supreme Court.

Public is 'malik', nobody can give warning: Rijiju

Prayagraj: A day after the Supreme Court warned of action for any delay in clearing transfer and appointment of judges, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said, "Public is 'malik' (master) of this country and we are servants. We all are here for service and the Constitution is our guide.... The country will be governed under the guidance of the Constitution and wishes of the public. Nobody can give warning to anyone."

India's image unaffected by Adani's FPO pullout: FM

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's economic image is not affected due to Adani Group's recent decision to pull out ₹20,000 crore FPO amid allegations of financial wrongdoings, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday.

The Finance Minister said there has been an accretion of USD 8 billion to the forex reserves in the last two days alone. "Our macroeconomic fundamentals or our economy's image, none of which has been affected. Yes, FPOs (follow-on public offers) come in, and FIs (foreign institutional investors) get out," Sitharaman told reporters here.

The Minister said there are "fluctuations" in every market but the accretion over the last few days establishes the fact that the perception of both India and its inherent strengths is intact.

Answering a broader question on the allegations against Adani Group, she said the country's independent financial sector regulators will be looking into the aspect and added that capital markets watchdog Securities and Exchange Board of India has the wherewithal to ensure stability in markets.

"...For keeping the market and the markets regulated in prime condition, the Sebi is the authority. And it has the wherewithal to keep that prime condition," she said.

The FM also said that the RBI has already spoken out on the issue, referring to Friday's statement, which said the bank-



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with MoS for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary addresses a press conference in Mumbai on Saturday

PTI

ing sector is resilient and stable.

About ten days ago, US-based short seller Hindenberg Research made a series of allegations on the corporate governance front against Adani Group. The Ahmedabad-based group has denied all the allegations and termed it as a calculated attack on India. It has cancelled the FPO even after managing subscriptions to it.

Finance Secretary TV Somanathan on Saturday stood by his comment on the controversy where he called it a storm in a teacup, clarifying that this is in the context of macroeconomic terms and the stability of India's public financial institutions.

Meanwhile on the decision to convert outstanding dues into equity at Vodafone Idea, Somanathan said the transaction is being done as a package for all telcos.

He said the Government share will be held by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) where the stake will be considered as a public shareholder.

DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said the price has been taken at ₹10 despite the Vodafone Idea shares trading lower on bourses because, as per laws, preferential allotments have to happen at the face value of a share.

The Finance Ministry officials present at the meet also made it clear that the tweaks on taxation in the insurance front will not impact the policy agenda of deepening penetration and clarified that there was sufficient data to suggest that investments were masquerading as insurance premiums due to which a decision was taken to tax the same.

Steps in place to address excess volatility: Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A mid a raging controversy over a meltdown in Adani Group stocks, regulator Sebi on Saturday said it is committed to ensuring the stock market's integrity and all necessary surveillance measures are in place to address any excessive volatility in individual shares.

Without naming Adani Group specifically, the capital markets watchdog said in a statement that unusual price movement in the stocks of a business conglomerate has been observed in the past week. Officials confirmed that the statement has been issued in the wake of the Adani matter only.

"As part of its mandate, Sebi seeks to maintain orderly and efficient functioning of the market and has put in place a set of well-defined, publicly available surveillance measures (including the ASM framework) to address excessive volatility in specific stocks. This mechanism gets automatically triggered under certain conditions of price volatility in any stock," Sebi said.

BSE and NSE have put three Adani group companies under their short-term additional surveillance measure (ASM).

CAPSULE

PT USHA ALLEGES SECURITY THREAT

Thiruvananthapuram: Legendary athlete and Indian Olympic Association president PT Usha on Saturday broke down before the media alleging that illegal constructions were being carried out at her academy campus in Kozhikode district and strangers were trespassing into the property posing a security threat to the inmates.

INDIA'S 1ST TRANSMAN GETS PREGNANT



Transgender couple Zoya and Zahad at their home in Kozhikode on Saturday. Zoya and Zahad are expecting their baby in March while claiming this to be the first pregnancy case for a transman in India. PTI

BENGAL: 1 KILLED, 2 INJURED IN EXPLOSION

Kolkata: One person was killed and two others were injured when they were allegedly manufacturing crude bombs in an explosion at Basanti in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on Saturday.

SATELLITE TO BE SHIPPED TO INDIA FOR LAUNCH

Washington: A satellite meant for earth observation jointly developed by NASA and ISRO that will help study Earth's land and ice surfaces in greater detail is all set to be shipped to India later this month for a possible launch in September.

TN firm linked to vision loss, death in US told to stop making eye drops

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu-based Global Pharma Healthcare, which is facing allegations that its eye drop was linked to vision loss of five people and death of a person in the US, has been asked to stop manufacturing all ophthalmic products till the inquiry is completed in the matter, officials said on Saturday.

Officials in the Union Health Ministry said the direction came after the manufacturing plant of the Global Health Pharma was inspected by Indian drug regulatory bodies. A three-member team each from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and the State Drug Controller visited the plant in Tamil Nadu's Kancheepuram, 40 km from Chennai, on Friday after the company recalled the eye drop.

The teams have also collected samples of eye drop — Artificial Tears — which were exported. The eye drops are not



sold in India.

According to an official report, the joint investigation at the firm's manufacturing site at Thiruppur in Tamil Nadu's Kancheepuram was conducted on February 3 by the team of senior central and state drug officials, under the supervision of Tamil Nadu's Director of Drug Control and CDSCO's Assistant Drugs Controller (South Zone).

During investigation, it was found that the firm has exported two consignments of 24 batches of Artificial Tears to the USA which were manufactured in 2021 and 2022.

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Sharjeel among 11 'scapegoats' freed in Okhla violence case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A court here on Saturday discharged 11 people, including student activists Sharjeel Imam and Asif Iqbal Tanha, in the Jamia Nagar violence case, saying as the Delhi Police was unable to apprehend the actual perpetrators, it booked the accused as "scapegoats".

The court, however, ordered framing of charges against one of the accused, Mohammad Ilyas.

"Marshalling the facts as brought forth from a perusal of the chargesheet and three supplementary chargesheets, the court cannot but arrive at the conclusion that the police were unable to apprehend the actual perpetrators behind the commission of the offence, but surely managed to rope the persons herein as scapegoats," Additional Sessions Judge Arul Varma said.

An FIR was lodged in connection with the violence that



erupted after a clash between police and people protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in the Jamia Nagar area here December 2019.

The judge said there were admittedly scores of protesters at the site and some anti-social elements within the crowd could have created an environment of disruption and havoc.

"However, the moot question remains — whether the accused persons herein were even prima facie complicit in taking part in that mayhem? The answer is an unequivocal no," he added.

Continued on Page 6

Modi to open India's largest copter making unit in K'taka tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of rapid indigenisation in defence manufacturing, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday will dedicate a helicopter manufacturing factory in Karnataka. It will produce light utility helicopters designed within the country.

Giving details here on Saturday, Defence Ministry officials said Modi will dedicate the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) factory at Tumakuru. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and senior officials of the Ministry of Defence will be present on the occasion.

The Prime Minister had laid the foundation stone of the plant in 2016.

The Greenfield Helicopter Factory, spread across 615 acres, is planned with a vision to become a one-stop solution for all helicopter requirements of the country.

It is India's largest heli-



copter manufacturing facility and will initially produce Light Utility Helicopters (LUHs).

The LUH is an indigenously designed and developed 3-tonne class, single engine multipurpose utility helicopter with unique features of high maneuverability. Initially, this factory will produce around 30 helicopters per year and can be enhanced to 60 and then 90 per year in a phased manner. The first LUH has been flight tested and is ready for unveiling.

Continued on Page 6

ED seizes heroin, arms in 10 raids on Punjab border dist

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Searches by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to a Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act case on 10 different premises in different villages of Tarn Taran district in Punjab led to the recovery and seizure of 2.2 kg of heroin and other contraband items weighing about 14 kg of narcotics.

In addition, the ED also recovered documents of properties besides two rifles, three pistols and live ammunition from the premises of the suspects.

The ED had launched the search operations on Friday at 10 premises in Sheron, Nausahi Panam and Bugha villages of Tarn Taran district.

The agency searched the business and residential premises of Skattar Singh, alias Laddi, Gajjan Singh, Makhan Singh, other members of their family and some other associates under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, offi-



cials said.

"During the course of search, various incriminating evidence was recovered and seized relating to numerous immovable properties worth crores of rupees in the names of these accused persons, members of their family and their associates," the agency said in a statement.

A few packets of psychotropic substance appearing to be opium and its derivative products, including heroin, were also recovered from the residential premises of Skattar Singh and his family at Sheron village.

Continued on Page 6

Visa centre opens in city

Lucknow: Technology can help in achieving not only the goal of ease of doing business but also ease of living, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Saturday. He was speaking at the inauguration of a VFS Global Visa Application Centre here.

With the launch of this centre, the facility to complete the visa application process for 10 countries — Austria, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Estonia, Hungary, Portugal, Germany, Italy and Saudi Arabia — will be available in Lucknow. "The inauguration of the VFS centre in Lucknow a week before the Global Investors Summit is an opportunity not only for the residents of Lucknow but also for the people of Uttar Pradesh," Adityanath said.

Details on Page 2

Veteran singer Vani found dead at Chennai home

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■
CHENNAI

Vani Jairam, the versatile playback singer who strode over the South Indian film industry for more than five decades, is no more.

Jairam (77) was found dead in her residence in Chennai on Saturday morning by her maid servant, Kalaivani. Chennai Police, who rushed to her home on being informed about her death, held a preliminary inquiry and shifted the mortal remains to Government Hospital for autopsy.

A case under sections of unnatural death has been reg-



istered by the police. Last week the Government of India had honoured Vani Jairam with Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award of the country.

Continued on Page 6

'AI could help deliver personalised cancer treatment'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In good news in the cancer care segment, a team of researchers have leveraged artificial intelligence (AI) technology to identify genes critical to a cancer cell's survival, and could help deliver personalised cancer patient treatments.

They analysed different types of cancer cells to understand different gene dependencies for identifying the genes, the study said.

Researchers at the University of Sussex, UK, have done this by developing a prediction algorithm that works out which genes are essential in the cell, by analysing the genetic changes in the tumour.

The study can be used to identify actionable targets that in time could guide oncologists to personalise cancer patient

treatments, the study said.

"Our vision is to take advantage of the decreasing cost of DNA sequencing and to harness the power of AI to understand cancer cell differences and what they mean for the individual patient's treatment. "Through our research, we were able to identify cell-specific gene dependencies using only the DNA sequence and RNA levels in that cell, which are easily and cheaply obtainable from tumour biopsy samples," said Dr Frances Pearl, Senior Lecturer in Bioinformatics at the University of Sussex.

"This is an incredibly exciting step in our research which means that we can now work to improve the technology so that it can be offered to oncologists and help in the treatment pathways for their patients," said Pearl.



Cancer treatments are primarily prescribed on the basis of the location and type of cancer. Genetic differences in tumours can make standard cancer treatments ineffective. Using a personalised approach to guide treatment could improve life expectancy,

quality of life and reduce unnecessary side effects of cancer patients, the study said.

When normal cells become cancer cells, oncogenes, or genes with the potential to cause cancer, become activated and tumour suppressor genes become inactivated, causing a rewiring of the cell.

This causes the cell to become dependent on a new set of genes to survive, and this can then be exploited to kill the cancer cells. By using this new AI technology to target protein products of tumour-specific dependent genes, cancer cells can be killed, leaving the normal cells which are not dependent on these genes relatively unharmed, the study said.

Although dependencies can be determined using intensive laboratory techniques, it is costly and time consuming and would not be feasible to analyse all tumour samples in this way, the study said.

CM: India has shown its capability during COVID-19 pandemic

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said that India showed its capability in the era of humanity and added that the nation manufactured PP kits and medicines in just two months during the COVID-19 pandemic whereas these were imported earlier.

On the first day of his two-day visit to city the CM while inaugurating two national seminar on 'Drug-Development and Opportunity' held in Asha Vidyalaya in Babatpur here said that India had manufactured two vaccines in just nine months during the COVID-19 pandemic and the country had not only made available 220 crore doses of vaccines to the people of the country free of cost but also made available to other countries and the world had seen a new image of the country and India became the fifth economy in the world lagging Britain behind.

The field of pharmaceutical is big and if the work in this field is done in time, India can emerge as a big centre in this field said he informing that the major markets of medicine between Patna and Varanasi are Varanasi and Gorakhpur and the medicines are supplied even to Kathmandu from Gorakhpur. He emphasised on new research in the field of pharma.



The CM speaking while inaugurating two-day seminar in a school in Varanasi on Saturday

Pioneer

Kashi has been known as spiritual and cultural capital since ancient time and it has

now established itself as a global platform with its antiquity, said the CM adding that the city does something new in each period and the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Corridor is a glaring example.

The possibilities have emerged in the country during the last a few years, he said. India is hosting the G-20 Summit which represents the

Birth anniv of Sant Ravidas today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Seer Govardhan, the birthplace of Sant Ravidas has turned into spiritual one with the recital of Amrit Bani and devotees singing the creations of this great poet of the medieval period and dancing on the devotional songs. The Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will offer prayer at Ravidas Temple on Sunday on the birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas which falls on the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima.

The devotees of Sant Ravidas have reached his birthplace, Seer Govardhan, in thousands not only from Punjab and other parts of the country but also from various countries of the world to celebrate the birth anniversary of their Guru and seek blessing of the head of Sant Ravidas Temple San Niranjan Das who arrived here on Friday. The entire area of Seer Govardhan turned into spiritual as the devotees could be seen everywhere singing poems of Sant Ravidas and dancing on the devotional songs. The Sant Ravidas Temple has been decorated with attractive fighting and the entire area echoed with the recital of the path of Amrit Bani. Langars were organised



Birthplace of Sant Ravidas flooded with devotees.

Pioneer

for the devotees. The devotees coming from abroad were also seen serving the devotees in langars. Sant Niranjan Das will sermon the religious discourse to the devotees in the morning on Sunday in a grand water-proof pandal. As the devotees of Sant Ravidas mainly belonging to the Dalit community and

so, the political leaders also visit the birthplace to celebrate the birth anniversary of this great religious leader. In this order, the chief of Shromani Akali Dal and ex Deputy CM of Punjab Sukhbir Singh Badal reached here on Saturday and worshipped at the temple and also sought the blessing of the

head of the temple. The CM Adityanath will visit the Sant Ravidas temple on Sunday. Some other political leaders are also expected to reach here to seek the blessing of Sant Ravidas. The district administration has made all the arrangements of basic amenities to facilitate the devotees.

VDA to lodge FIR against illegal occupants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi Development Authority (VDA) will lodge an FIR against those who have illegal possession in Lalpur Awasiya Yojana and also ascertain action against them. This was decided in the 128th meeting of the VDA Board which was held on Friday under the chairmanship of its Chairman and Divisional Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma. The District Magistrate S Rajalingam, VDA Vice-Chairman Abhishek Goel, Secretary Dr Sunil Verma and member of the Board Ambarish Singh Bohla were mainly present in the meeting.

The Board decided to raise the development fee by 9.97 per cent and gave its nod to the proposal to implement the development fee to be increased in future from April 1 automatically each year on the basis of cost index of the Income Tax department.

The shopkeepers of Dashashwamedh and adjoining markets be contacted for the allotment of shops in Dashashwamedh tourist plaza and the allotment process should be followed on the basis of the number of the applicants, the meeting decided, adding that the green space should be developed in Chittaranjan park and the option should be searched for the street vendors. The meeting also decided to



The DC Kaushal Raj Sharma and others in the meeting of VDA Board.

Pioneer

remove the encroachment from public places by identifying them. The meeting decided to fix lane-wise color scheme regarding the painting works on the facade of the buildings on the both sides of the main routes of the city and hold talk with the local residents and the works should be done on the basis of consensus.

The Board decided to chalk out an action plan and system to address the grievances pending at the PMO, CM office, IGRS and others

level and also at the zonal office level through help desk and camp. The Board also decided to develop integrated grievance redressal portal and open control room with toll free number to address the grievances and take action against illegal construction. The Board also gave its nod to the proposal to include 95 villages including 30, 37, 17, 9 & 2 villages of Pindra Tehsil, Rajatalab Tehsil, Chunar Tehsil of Mirzapur, Sadar Tehsil of Chandauli, Sakaldih Tehsil of Chandauli respec-

Vande Bharat Metro to run from Prayagraj to Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As expected, the city of Sangam has received a big gift. Vande Bharat Metro will run from Prayagraj to Varanasi. This train of 10 coaches will give passengers the pleasure of a smooth journey. This train running at a speed of 125-130 km will cover the distance of Prayag-Kashi within a few minutes.

Equipped with the latest technology, hi-tech facilities, fully air-conditioned and Wi-Fi, this train is a mini form of Vande Bharat. The blueprint of this train has been prepared keeping in mind the convenience of the daily commuters. In less time, people will be able to come and go for office or important work and there will be no problem of getting stuck in traffic. Those visiting Kashi Vishwanath and tourism between Prayag-Kashi will get a boost from this train.

Prayagraj has gained worldwide fame by organizing

Kumbh. In such a situation, this special train gifted to Prayagraj will be liked by foreign travellers as well. The 10-coach Vande Bharat Metro will run from Prayagraj to connect the city at a distance of 100 km. Preparations are on to cover the distance between the two cities in less than an hour. This train will also be available to many other cities of UP, in which arrangements will be made from Lucknow to Kanpur in the first phase itself.

After the general budget presented in Parliament on February 1, the status of what the North Central Railway (NCR) has got has become clear. The Pink Book has been issued by the Ministry of Railways.

NCR has got a budget of about Rs 92 billion this time. Now NCR will get various works done from this budget itself. Ten lakh rupees have been received for the flyover, station redevelopment, hanging in the balance for a long time, due to which their work will

now speed up. Among other states of the country, UP has received the maximum amount of Rs 175.07 billion, out of which Rs 91.83 billion has come to the account of NCR only. There will be extensive work on infrastructure with track doubling, third line, fourth line from this amount.

The work of road safety and construction of rail over bridge and rail under bridge will now be given double speed. While signalling, level crossing and track renewal will be kept in the primary umbrella work. Many important works have been added to the account of NCR.

It also includes redevelopment of Prayagraj Junction, Kanpur Central, Gwalior Railway Station. Similarly, 46 stations under Amrit railway station in Prayagraj, Agra, Jhansi divisions will also be redeveloped. Along with rail track renewal in all the three zones of NCR, the work of armor system will be

done from Ghaziabad to PDDU.

At the same time, under Mission Raftaar, the work of wall construction on Delhi-Howrah, Delhi-Mumbai routes and metal beam fencing on the route will also be done at a fast pace to run trains at a speed of 160 km.

On Friday, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav shared information on Pink Book and Railway Budget in video conferencing. Giving information about the allocation of funds to each state, he was seen comparing with the UPA government. Along with giving the budget to Delhi, without naming Arvind Kejriwal, he also targeted him to see how much money has been given in this budget. He also gave information on the budget given to Himachal, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir etc. In view of the upcoming elections, this time priority was given to UP in the budget.

HC Bar Association's Foundation Day celebrations conclude

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said that the laws of the British era will be completely abolished. The name of the Britishers will be removed from everywhere, its process is going on. This was said during the addressing programme organized in the concluding session of the 150th Foundation Day celebrations of High Court Bar Association Allahabad here on Saturday.

Many judges including Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and others attended the programme. Pointing to the ongoing tussle between the Supreme Court and the Central Government, he said that "No one can threaten anyone. We are public servants, we have every right to speak our mind. We talk about public interest. Court also works in public interest". He said that for the convenience of the common people, work is being done to give right to speak our mind in Hindi in the Supreme Court like the Lower Court and the



High Court.

Addressing the closing session of the 150th Foundation Day celebrations of High Court Bar Association Allahabad, Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal said that it is a matter of pride for me that the historic event took place during my tenure. This is a very big bar and a very big High Court. Advocates here Kanhaiya Lal Mishra, Shanti Bhushan, Keshari Nath Tripathi are the source of inspiration.

Justice Pritinker Diwaker observed that advocates devote a lot of time to their profession. They give less time to family. Advocates are an intellectual

society. This intellectual class gathers under one roof.

The Allahabad Bar started with four advocates and grew to 31,000. Never seen such a big bar and such unity anywhere, he added. It is a request to the Law Minister to give a hi-tech library here. Both the Bench and Bar are not guilty for pending trial in the Allahabad High Court.

Apart from Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, Supreme Court Justice Krishna Murari, Justice Vikramnath, High Court Justice Ramesh Sinha, Advocate General Ajay Mishra, Bar Association President RK Ojha, Secretary SD Singh

Jadaun are present on the stage.

It may be pointed out here that on Friday, CM Yogi Adityanath also arrived to participate in the foundation day celebrations of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association. Addressing the advocates here, he had said that "Today I have come to participate in the Advocate Kumbh. This is the city where people from all over the country reach in the hope of justice. People come to this temple of justice in Prayagraj when a person is troubled and harassed". He also praised the coordination between the Bar and the Bench in the Allahabad High Court.

Youth shot at during street brawl

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Vansh Yadav (22), was shot at and injured during a street brawl took place at Jhalwa in Dhumanganj area in Prayagraj city. When he slumped on the ground bleeding profusely, the assailant fled on a bike. Along with the police, SOG has also been deployed in search of the accused.

Roop Singh Yadav, a resident of Jhalwa village, has two markets for which he gets rent. His only son Vansh had gone to near Vishnu Bhagwan Public School (Dadapur vil-

lage), about one kilometre away from home at around eight o'clock on Friday night where he was fired upon. The bullet hit Vansh in the back above the waist.

When the people around reached, Vansh was lying in a pool of blood, while the shooter ran away. Locals said that a fight between Vansh and the shooter occurred at that place.

After getting the news, the family members of Vansh reached the spot. The police force of Dhumanganj police station also reached within no time. DCP Nagar Santosh

Kumar Meena also saw the condition of the injured Vansh.

According to the DCP, the youth who shot after the quarrel is absconding. The police team has gone to Umri village in search of him. If a named complaint is given on the basis of Vansh's statement, then arrest will be made by filing a case.

On the other hand, police forces of several police stations including Kotwali, Shahganj, Khulabad, Georgetown were called upon the arrival of a large number of people from Jhalwa in the

hospital. Meanwhile, in another incident, people informed the police after seeing a dead person living in a room on 60 Feet Road in Rajpuroor area of the city.

Corporator Mithilesh Singh also reached along with the police of Dhumanganj police station.

Police said that the exact reason for the death of the deceased 38-year-old Rajesh Shukla is yet to be ascertained. No visible injury has been seen. Postmortem will clarify the cause of death, police added.

ADM inaugurates exhibition

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Promoting the cottage industries and Khadi Gramodyog we strengthen the economy of the nation and to promote the use of village produced items was best way to contribute to the rural economy. These views were expressed by ADM (Namami Gange) Narendra Verma while he was inaugurating the exhibition of the products of Khadi and Gramodyog at BLJ ground near GIC on Friday.

The ADM expressed his contentment that it was the quality of the goods being showcased at the stalls were attracting the customers. Earlier to the inauguration the ADM condole the death of MLA Rahul Kol by observing two minutes silence at the ground. Deputy Commissioner Industry Ashok Kumar, District Information Officer

Om Prakash Upadhyay, the officials of Khadi and Gramodyog of Vindhyachal division and the others were present on the occasion. As per the information of the organisers the exhibition did the business around Rs 5 lakh till the evening.

RAHUL PRAKASH KOL CREMATED: Mirzapur, Mortal remains of MLA Rahul Prakash Kol was consigned to the flames at Ganga Ghat on Friday. The last ritual of the MLA was performed by his son Samrat (11) with full government honour amidst the presence of thousands of people. The demise of the MLA caused due to cancer who died on Thursday in a hospital at Mumbai. The prominent among those who gave the last adieu at funeral ground were Union State Minister Anupriya Patel, UP Cabinet Minister Asheesh Patel, MLC

Shyam Narain Singh, MLAs Rama Shankar Patel and Anurag Patel, chairman Zila Panchayat Raju Kanaujia and the leaders of all the political parties. Rahul Kol was elected as MLA from Chhanbey constituency of the district in 2017 for first time and at present it was his second term. The MLA was the son of Pakaudi Lal Kol who is the MP from Sonbhadra parliamentary constituency.

PENSION ADALAT: With the purpose to provide all the post retirement benefits to the employees of the division a divisional pension adalat was held at the office of divisional commissioner on Friday. Presiding over the meeting the Divisional Commissioner disposed 31 cases out of 73 and directed the officials concerned to dispose rest of the 22 cases within 15 days. The DC issued the adverse entries to the drawing disbursing officers of the

offices of DM Bhadohi and DM Sonbhadra, office of assistant director Fisheries and PWD for remaining as absent from the meeting. The DC issued the adverse entry to a clerk of CMO office Ganga Ram for inordinate delay in the disposal of the matters of the pensioners. He directed the officials concerned to dispose the matters without delay otherwise face the music. He asked the DDOs concerned to attend the next meeting with detail information about all the pending cases. He made it clear that without any substantial ground the post retirement benefits should not be withheld at all. The adalat was mainly attended by the DM Mirzapur Divya Mittal, officiating additional director Treasury Archana Tripathi, the CTOs of Sonbhadra and Bhadohi, pension pensioners Laloo Tiwari and other officials.

Agniveer recruitment through e-test

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Given the rapidly changing nature of warfare with stress on technology, the Army has decided to conduct written examination for all the aspiring Agniveers. Once they clear the examination, the candidates will have to undergo physical endurance test followed by the medical test. The Navy and the IAF are already following the process in the same order.

The new tweaking in selection by the Army will commence mid February, sources said here on Saturday. Prospective candidates will first be required to take an admission examination online.



The physical and medical examinations will take place later.

Previously, the Army would undertake a physical and medical examination first.

Only after passing the first two tests were candidates permitted to take the written examination. They said the new method will also help in easing screening process and the

logistics involved. For the first time in 2022, the Indian Army recruited soldiers under the Agniveer programme. Agniveer recruitment followed the same procedure as regular

soldier recruitment.

A large number of candidates are said to congregate at army recruitment rallies, which occasionally causes law and order issues. Additionally, it consumes a lot of resources.

The written examination in the first step will screen out candidates. Those who pass the written exam will be authorised to take the physical and medical exams.

The changed methodology will ensure increased focus on cognitive aspect during selection. It will have wider outreach across the country and also reduce the large crowds seen during recruitment rallies to make them more manageable and easier to conduct," sources said.

The recruiting examination will be conducted online, and students will be assigned to the appropriate test locations for the written test. The examination will last 60 minutes. Following the written test, a merit list will be made public, after which the candidates will be contacted for a physical and medical exam. Physical testing is part of the second round of the examination, while the medical is part of the third and final round.

The army recruited 40,000 Agniveers last year, and they are currently undergoing training. Around 10,000 Agniveers will be given permanent commission after four years. 40,000 Agniveers will be recruited again this year.

Public 'malik', says Rijiju

Min says after SC's strong remarks over judges' transfers



PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A day after the Supreme Court warned of action for any delay in clearing transfer and appointment of judges, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said the country will be governed according to the Constitution and wishes of the people and nobody can give warning to anyone.

"Public is 'malik' (master) of this country and we are servants. We all are here for service and the Constitution is our guide.... The country will be governed under the guidance of the Constitution and wishes of the public. Nobody can give warning to anyone," Rijiju said.

"Sometimes discussions are held in the country on some matters and in a democracy everyone has the right to express their opinion. But people sitting in responsible positions have to think before saying anything, whether it will benefit the country or not," he said, referring to reported remarks of a Supreme Court bench.

The minister was addressing an event on the 150th anniversary of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association here as the chief guest.

His remarks came a day after a bench of Justices S K Kaul and A S Oka expressed displeasure over the delay in clearing recommendations for transfer of high court judges, calling it a "very serious issue", and warned that any delay in this matter may result in both administrative and judicial actions which might not be reduced, he said.

palatable. On Saturday, the Supreme Court also questioned the government over the delay in clearing the names of five high court judges who had been recommended for elevation to the Supreme Court. The judges were elevated to the Supreme Court on Sunday.

The remarks are the latest in a tug of war between the judiciary and the executive over the process of appointment of judges of the Supreme Court and high courts.

On the pendency of cases, Minister Rijiju said, "At present, 4 crore 90 lakh cases are pending in various courts across the country. We are solving this problem." He said that in view of the huge number of pending cases, the government has made preparations to implement the Legal Information Management System so that a person will be able to get information about the status of the case in any high court on one click.

"Being the largest high court of the country, I wish that the Allahabad High Court should play a leading role in implementing the e-courts project. The government has abolished 1,486 old and outdated laws and the process of removing 65 such laws is going on in the current Parliament session," he said.

The minister also said the Arbitration Bill is in the final stages of preparation and after its passage, a parallel judicial system will be established in the country. With the system of arbitration, small cases will be settled outside the court and the burden on courts will be reduced, he said.

ED questions Rahul's aide in money laundering case against TMC functionary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has questioned and recorded the statement of Anil Kumar, a close aide of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in a money laundering case in which TMC spokesperson Saket Gokhale was recently arrested by the agency in Gujarat, officials said.

Sawal was questioned and also confronted with Gokhale in Ahmedabad over three days earlier this week, they said. A former banker, Sawal is considered to be a close aide of Rahul, a former Congress president, and is stated to be heading his research team.

The federal probe agency

summoned Sawal after he arrested 35-year-old Gokhale on January 25 while he was in the Gujarat Police's custody in connection with alleged financial irregularities in raising funds through a crowd funding platform.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), while seeking Gokhale's remand on that day, had informed a

Ahmedabad court that when he was asked about Rs 23.54 lakh deposited in his bank account in cash over a year, Gokhale had told the agency that 'this amount was given in cash by Anil Kumar Sawal of the India National Congress for social media work and other consultancy'.

India, UAE, France to speed up trilateral bid on climate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India, France and the United Arab Emirates on Saturday discussed the way to hasten up a trilateral initiative among the three countries on issues like climate change, protection of biodiversity and joint training and joint production of weapon systems.

These issues were reviewed during a telephonic conversation between the foreign ministers of the three countries on Saturday, ministry of external affairs (MEA) said here later. A joint statement was also issued.

Giving details of the initiative, MEA said on 19



September 2022, on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the Foreign Ministers of India, France and the UAE met for the first time in a trilateral format.

In acknowledgement of their shared desire to promote international stability and prosperity, and to further build upon the constructive and collaborative ties that exist between the three countries, the Foreign Ministers of India,

France and the UAE agreed to establish a formal trilateral cooperation initiative, with the aim of expanding cooperation in various fields of mutual interest. It is in this context that a phone call between the three Ministers was held on Saturday to adopt a roadmap for the implementation of this initiative.

The three sides agreed that the trilateral initiative will serve as a forum to promote the design and execution of cooperation projects in the fields of energy, with a focus on solar and nuclear energy, as well as in the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity, particularly in the Indian Ocean region.

LG seeks active involvement of NCC in anti-drugs campaigns in J&K

PTI ■ JAMMU

Lieutenant Governor (LG) Manoj Sinha on Saturday sought the active involvement of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) in the anti-drugs campaigns in Jammu & Kashmir.

He also encouraged the NCC cadets to contribute towards a successful conduct of a G20 event scheduled to take place in Srinagar.

The LG was interacting with the NCC cadets who took part in the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on January 26. He congratulated the contingent from Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh for securing the fourth position among the 17 NCC directorates.

The selection of 17 NCC cadets for the march on Kartavya Path in New Delhi, as part of a combined contingent of the NCC at the national level, and that of seven cadets for the Guard of Honour for the Guard of Honour was indeed a great feat, Sinha said.

Hosting the cadets at the Raj Bhawan here, the LG said, "Drug addiction has emerged as the biggest challenge for the society. The NCC cadets, along with the youth clubs, need to actively participate in the campaigns against the drug menace."

FROM PAGE 1

INDIA'S HELICOPTER MAKING HUB TO GIVE FILLIP TO PM'S 'AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT'

The factory will be augmented to produce other helicopters such as Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) and Multirole Helicopters (MRHs). It will also be used for Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul of LCH, LUH, Civil Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) and MRH in the future. Potential exports of ALH will also be catered to from this factory.

The HAL plants will produce more than 1,000 helicopters in the range of 3-15 tonnes, with a total business of over Rs four lakh crores over a period of 20 years. Besides generating direct and indirect employment, the Tumakuru facility will boost the development of surrounding areas through its CSR activities with large-scale, community centric programmes on which the company will spend substantial amounts. All this will result in improvement in the people's lives in the region. The proximity of the factory, with the existing HAL facilities in Bengaluru, will boost the aerospace manufacturing ecosystem in the region and support skill and infrastructure development such as schools, colleges and residential areas. Medical and health care would also reach the community residing in the various nearby Panayams.

With the establishment of facilities like Heli-Runway, Flight Hangar, Final Assembly Hangar, Structure Assembly Hangar, Air Traffic Control and various supporting service facilities, the factory is fully operational. This factory is being equipped with state-of-the-art Indian 4.0 standard tools and techniques for its operations.

This factory will enable India to meet its entire requirement of helicopters without import and giving much needed fillip to the Prime Minister's vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' in helicopter design, development, and manufacture.

ED SEIZES HEROIN, ARMS IN PUNJAB BORDER DIST RAID IN NDPS CASE

Following this, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), the lead agency for probing NDPS cases, was requested for verification and testing of the suspicious products. "As per the NCB officials, the substance recovered was suspected to be heroin weighing approximately 2.2 kg which was tested and seized by them in the presence of ED officials," the ED said in its statement.

Also, some packets of white powdery substance were recovered from the shop of Skattar Singh, Proprietor of Baba Sidana Trading Company at Naushah Panmuan village for which NCB was requested for its verification and testing. "As per the NCB officials, the same appeared to be suspected Narcotics contraband material weighing 13,980 kgs which was seized by them in the presence of ED officials," it further said. The search operation also yielded recovery of arms and ammunition, including two rifles and three pistols along with some cartridges. These included one rifle, two pistols and cartridges recovered from the residential premises of Singh. A rifle and a pistol besides some cartridges were found at the residential premises of Makhan Singh, brother of Singh.

VETERAN SINGER VANI FOUND DEAD

In a career spanning more than five decades, she has sung more than 10,000 songs in almost all Indian languages. Jairam became an overnight sensation with the songs "Bolire Pappi Hara."

and Hum Ko Mann Ki Sakhi Denaa," she recorded for the 1971 Hindi film Gudi directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee. The music for the film was composed by the maestro Vasanth Desai. Since then there was no looking back for Vani Jairam. By 1972, she started singing for Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada films. Music lovers who were accustomed to Lata Mangeshkar, P. Susheela and S. Janaki found in Vani Jairam a unique combination of diction, mellifluous and captivating voice. Starting her career as an employee of a nationalised bank, Vani Jayaram opted for a profession in music and was an instant hit with music lovers.

FIRM TOLD TO STOP MAKING EYE DROPS

No stocks of the said batches were found during the investigation, the report said. "The firm has maintained the control samples for the said batches. The samples were taken for an analysis from the 4 batches of control samples. The sample of eye drop material Carboxymethylcellulose sodium which was utilized for manufacturing of finished products was also taken for an analysis," the joint investigation report said. Also, the firm has stated that the media fill validation — a part of the validation of an aseptic manufacturing process — was carried out biannually. The records were verified for the same, according to the report.

Further, it is observed that the firm has not carried out the complete root cause analysis in respect of the above complaint and stated that it was under process, the report said. On the verification of records, it is noticed that the firm has done the stability studies — which helps understand how the quality of a drug product varies with time and environmental factors — for the representative batch of the said drugs yearly once, the report said. It said the manufacturing records of all batches, purchase invoices of raw materials, COA (certificate of analysis) of raw materials, sales bills copies and media fill validation reports were obtained under section 22(1)(CCA) of Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 and Drugs Rules 1945 for further investigation.

COURT DISCHARGES 11 IN OKHLA VIOLENCE

The court said the legal proceedings against the 11 accused were initiated in a "perfunctory and cavalier fashion" and "allowing them to undergo the rigmarole of a long-drawn trial does not augur well for the criminal justice system of the country." Furthermore, such police action is detrimental to the liberty of citizens who choose to exercise their fundamental right to peacefully assemble and protest. The liberty of the protesting citizens should not have been unduly interfered with," it said. The court said dissent is an extension of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression, subject to reasonable restrictions. Referring to a 2012 verdict of the Supreme Court, the judge said the court is duty-bound to lean towards an interpretation that protects the rights of the accused, given the ubiquitous power disparity between them and the state machinery. The court said the investigative agencies needed to discern the difference between dissent and insurrection. "The latter (insurrection) has to be quelled indisputably. However, the former (dissent) has to be given space, a forum, for dissent is perhaps reflective of something which pricks a citizen's conscience," it said. The court also said dissent has to be encouraged and not stifled, with the condition that it should be absolutely peaceful, without degenerating into violence.

Doctors welcome FM's call to increase NCCD on cigarettes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Doctors and activists have welcomed the Union Finance Minister's announcement to increase national calamity contingent duty (NCCD) on cigarettes to 16 per cent in the annual Budget of 2023-24, asserting that the move would strengthen various initiatives aimed to reduce cancer causing tobacco use in India.

However, at the same time they have urged the Government to augment these efforts increasing taxes on bidis and smokeless products that are becoming health products as well as fiscal burden in the country. The NCCD on specified cigarettes was last revised three years ago.

Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, Voluntary Health Association of India hailed the decision but felt that the percentage increase is minimal. "We hope that in future, the Finance Minister

will ensure a significant increase in taxation and decrease in the affordability of all tobacco products to match the message that has been sent so strongly in this budget."

The present GST rates on tobacco products combined with the compensation cess for all tobacco products is much lower than the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended tax burden of at least 75% of retail price of all tobacco products.

The total tax burden is currently only about 33% for cigarettes, 22% for bidis and 60% for smokeless tobacco. According to international experts, raising the price of tobacco products through tax increases is the most effective policy to reduce tobacco use. Higher tobacco prices decrease affordability, encourage quitting among users, prevent initiation among non-users, and reduce the quantity consumed among continuing users.

MP: Body of baby who died after 'hot iron' treatment exhumed

PTI ■ SHAHDOL

The body of a two-and-a-half-month-old girl has been exhumed in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district following her death after allegedly being branded with a hot iron rod more than 50 times by an exorcist, an official said on Saturday.

District Collector Vandana Vaidya said the baby's body was exhumed on Friday and a post-mortem will be conducted on Saturday.

Initial investigation has shown that she died due to pneumonia but the real reasons behind the death could be known after the post-mortem report, she said. The child's mother, a resident of Khatkhatia under Sinhpur police station limits in the tribal-dominated district, said her family first took her ailing daughter to a quack but



her condition didn't improve.

The family then approached a woman faith healer who poked the child's body with a hot iron rod 51 times in a bid to treat her, the mother said.

However, the baby's condition deteriorated and she was taken to the district hospital, which referred her to Shahdol Medical College. The baby died during treatment on Wednesday, she said.

Percentage of Adivasis declining in J'khand under Soren Govt: Shah

PNS ■ DEOGARH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday claimed that demographic change in Jharkhand has seen the percentage of the 'Adivasi' (tribal) population declining over the years.

Addressing the BJP's 'Vijay Sankalp Maha Rally' here, the senior party leader claimed that the population of Adivasis has declined from 35 per cent to 24 per cent due to massive infiltration from across the international border, which has been "encouraged" by the Hemant Soren government for vote bank politics.

He alleged that infiltrators were grabbing land in the state after marrying tribal women.

The Hemant Soren government is the most corrupt in the country. Resources are being looted using railway wagons and tractors. People will be unseated this government from power in the state as it failed to fulfil the aspirations of development for which the separate state was created," he said.

Shah said the BJP will win all 14 Lok Sabha seats in the state in the elections next year.

Referring to the killing of a class 12 student, who was burnt alive by her stalker in Dumka last year, Shah said, "Adivasi girls are being murdered while the Hemant Soren government is indulging in politics of appeasement."

Earlier in the day, the Cooperation Minister said the Union government has decided to provide 300 services of the Centre as well as the state governments through the Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS).

Shah said PACS would now function as Common Service Centres (CSC) and farmers can avail benefits of services including nodules, certificates, birth and death registration, and many more.

"The decision was taken on Friday. The IT Ministry has supported the Cooperative Ministry in this regard," he said, while laying the foundation stone of a Rs 450-crore IFCCO nano urea

plant in Jasidih in Deogarh district.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Friday to enable the PACS to provide services offered by Common Service Centres.

According to the agreement, more than 300 services will be made available to the rural population, including 13 crore farmer members of PACS, a statement said.



HM lays foundation stone of ₹450-cr nano urea plant in J'khand

PTI ■ DEOGARH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday laid the foundation stone of a Rs 450-crore nano urea plant and township of the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) in Jharkhand's Deogarh.

Shah said it will help in reducing the dependence on import of urea and usher in development of the eastern region, particularly the Santhal Paraganas.

"Nano urea will benefit farmers, and it is already being exported to five countries," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inaugurated the world's first nano urea plant in Gujarat last year, according to IFFCO. This will be India's fifth such plant.

PM Modi has given priority to all works related to land conservation across the country.

Many urea factories were revived by Modi, and this

small liquid urea factory built on 30 acres will manufacture about six crore bottles every year, which will make India self-sufficient by reducing imports in this sector," Shah said.

The facility will prove to be useful in increasing production not only in Jharkhand but also in Bihar, Odisha and Bengal, he said.

Nano urea improves crop productivity, soil health and nutritional quality of the produce, IFFCO said.

ARSENAL'S PREMIER LEAGUE TITLE CHARGE HALTED BY STRUGGLING EVERTON

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Mikel Arteta said Arsenal must now show the resolve of champions after a shock 1-0 defeat to Everton dented the Gunners bid to land a first Premier League title in 19 years.

Arsenal still lead Manchester City by five points at the top of the table, but blew the chance to extend that advantage as they suffered just a second league defeat of the season.

James Tarkowski headed in the winning goal for the Toffees on the hour mark as Everton made a perfect start to life under new manager Sean Dyche to climb out of the relegation zone.

"This is not going to be a rose pathway," said Arteta of Arsenal's road to the title. "This is going to be tricky and we will have to dig in and play much better than we did today."

Everton came into the game on a run of four league defeats at Goodison for the first time since 1958.

That disastrous form cost Frank Lampard his job and Dyche's appointment got the desired bounce with a first win in 11 games.

"The minimum requirement is maximum effort and we saw that today," said Dyche.

Everton's board again stayed away due to rising tensions



between the club's hierarchy and supporters.

Protests were planned for before and after the game for fans to voice their anger at the running of the club.

The Toffees were the only Premier League club to not make any signings in the January transfer window despite their perilous position in the table.

But the home side showed there is still enough talent available to Dyche to dig themselves

out of trouble if they can harness the same level of energy and intensity on a more regular basis.

GOODISON 'ROCKING'

A first victory since October was no more than Everton deserved and it was two of Dyche's former Burnley players who combined for the only goal of the game on the hour mark as Tarkowski headed in Dwight McNeil's corner.

"The fans are going to be massive for us. I have been here when it has been rocking. It was rocking today. But we have to give the fans something," added Dyche.

"Of course I'm going to drive home and think what a great start but I'm not naive. We have to keep working and improving."

Keeping Dominic Calvert-Lewin fit will be critical to Everton's survival hopes, but the

England international showed his rustiness in front of goal in a second consecutive injury-impacted season.

Amadou Onana's surging run and ball across the face of goal just needed a finishing touch that Calvert-Lewin could not stretch to make.

Moments later Abdoulaye Doucoure, who had been frozen out by Lampard, headed a glorious chance wide when unmarked inside the box.

It took Arsenal half an hour to even threaten Jordan Pickford's goal, but they should have led when Eddie Nketiah fired high and wide with just the goalkeeper to beat.

Connor Cooky then had to react quickly to turn Bukayo Saka's volley off the line as the visitors began to find their rhythm.

Arsenal were brighter at the start of the second period and Martin Odegaard will feel he should have hit the target when teed up by Nketiah.

But just as the Gunners were beginning to turn the screw, their luck at the back ran out.

Tarkowski was fundamental to Dyche overachievements in keeping Burnley in the Premier League for 13 consecutive seasons between 2016 and 2022 and the centre-back rose highest to power home.



Arsenal lacked composure in shock Everton defeat: Arteta

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Mikel Arteta admitted Premier League leaders Arsenal lacked composure in their shock 1-0 defeat at struggling Everton on Saturday.

James Tarkowski's second half header condemned Arsenal to just their second league loss this term. It was a frustrating blow for Gunners boss Arteta, who had hoped to open up an eight-point lead over second-placed Manchester City.

For the first time since losing at Manchester United in September, Arsenal tasted defeat and Arteta claimed his players weren't composed enough to cope with Everton's aggres-

sive game-plan under new boss Sean Dyche.

"We had loads of the ball but we lacked that purpose and quality in the final third. We generated many chances. But then we conceded and they slowed the game down and we struggled," Arteta said.

Everton do this to every team that is their strength with the height, the physicality is their strength, if you want to control the game against them you have to control this. We did not do that today.

"We needed more composure and to control emotionally the game better. We gave away so many unnecessary free-kicks and that's what they

want." Manchester City could close the gap on Arsenal to two points if they win at Tottenham on Sunday.

But, despite his criticism of their tepid performance at Everton, Arteta backed his players to survive the tense title race.

"Today I love them much better than the week before or a month ago. It is easy to be next to someone when they are winning well. I am still so proud of all of these players, they deserve it," he said.

"This is not going to be a rose pathway. This is going to be tricky and we will have to dig in and play much better than we did today."

Bopanna-Bhambri lose in Davis Cup



PTI ■ HILLEROD (DENMARK)

Indian duo Rohan Bopanna and Yuki Bhambri lost to world number 9 Holger Rune and Johannes Ingildsen in straight sets to hand hosts Denmark a 2-1 lead after the doubles tie in the Davis Cup World Group Play-Off on Saturday. The Danish pair made short work of the Indians winning 6-2 6-4 in just 65 minutes as Rune's presence proved to be a decisive factor.

Earlier on Friday, India's number one Sumit Nagal had erased a one-set deficit to pip August Holmgren 4-6 3-6 4 in two hours and 27 minutes. Nagal restored the parity after Bhambri had a forgettable opening singles losing 2-6 2-6 to the rising teen sensation Rune.

Bhambri has quit singles and now plays only doubles on tour. The 25-year-old Nagal, ranked 506, dropped serve in the very first game of the match but once he got hold of his nerves, he was his usual fighting self.

He got the break back but squandered the chances when Holmgren offered them.

The Danish player, ranked 484, eventually sealed the set. In the second set, it was Nagal who drew the first blood and went up 5-2. He served out the set in the ninth game to force a decider.

Nagal had a chance to get the first break when he made a deep return and Holmgren's forehead return sailed over the baseline at 30-all but the home player served well to save the chance. Nagal got another chance when Holmgren netted a forehand at deuce point in the third game but he himself made a forehand error on the break-point.

While Nagal preferred to hit from the baseline, Holmgren charged the net often to create chances for volley winners.

Holmgren handed Nagal another break chance when he tried to pick a low volley but could not keep the ball in the court and followed that up with

Zverev storms to Davis Cup win after being cleared of abuse



AFP ■ PARIS

Alexander Zverev defeated three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka in the Davis Cup on Friday as the German star returned to the courts for the first time since being cleared of domestic abuse.

The 25-year-old Zverev swept past Wawrinka 6-4, 6-1 in Tier 1 to bring Germany level with Switzerland after the opening day of their qualifier.

On Tuesday, Zverev was told by the ATP that there was

"insufficient evidence" to substantiate allegations against him of abusing a former girlfriend. Former world number two Zverev always denied the claims, describing them as "baseless".

On Friday, Wawrinka, who helped his country win the 2014 Davis Cup, was returning to the team competition for the first time in eight years. Now ranked 135 in the world, he was comfortably beaten for the fifth time in five meetings by Zverev.

a double fault, allowing the Indian to take a mini 3-2 lead.

That lead stayed with Nagal and he came out serving for the match in the 10th game. Holmgren's forehand error gave the Indian three match points and converted the first one on

home team player's unforced error.

In the opening singles, Rune broke Bhambri twice in each set. The 19-year-old converted four of the seven break chances while the Indian did not get a single chance to break his opponent.

Dipa Karmakar handed 21-month ban after failing dope test

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star gymnast Dipa Karmakar has been handed a 21-month ban for failing a dope test conducted by the International Testing Agency, contrary to claims made by Indian officials that her 'suspension' last year was not related to doping offence.

Karmakar's dope sample collected out-of-competition by the ITA, an independent organisation that manages the anti-doping programme of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG), was found to contain Higenamine, which is a prohibited substance under World Anti-Doping Agency Code.

Her ban period will, however, end on July 10 this year as it was counted from the day (October 11, 2021) the sample was collected.

"The ITA confirms that Dipa Karmakar has been suspended for a 21-month period, effective until 10 July 2023 after testing positive for higenamine (S3, Beta-2 Agonists as per the World Anti-Doping Agency prohibited list)," the ITA said in a statement late on Friday.

The positive sample was collected on behalf of the FIG in the scope of an out-of-competition control on 11 October 2021," it added.

The Switzerland based non-profit organisation works under the supervision of WADA and International Olympic Committee to implement anti-doping



programmes for various international federations. The ITA further said Karmakar's dope issue was resolved under a case resolution agreement pursuant to article 10.8.2 of the FIG Anti-Doping Rules and equivalent provision in the WADA.

"The athlete's results have been disqualified from October 11, 2021 onwards."

Karmakar, who shot to fame after finishing fourth in the 2016 Rio Olympics in the vault

event, has been struggling with injuries ever since she underwent a surgery to treat an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in 2017.

Her last FIG event was the 2019 World Cup in Baku.

The ban on Karmakar flies on her face as well as on the Gymnastic Federation of India officials who have been claiming ignorance after she was put in the 'suspended' category by the FIG in February last year.

GFI president Sudhir Mittal had then said that he had not received any communication from the FIG regarding her suspension.

Karmakar herself and her coach Bisheshwar Nandi kept quiet at that time.

Other GFI officials went to the extent of saying that the 'suspended' status could be due to other issues, like ethical or disciplinary, not related to doping violation.

Chelsea can't buy a goal in Fulham stalemate

AFP ■ LONDON

Chelsea manager Graham Potter pleaded for time to get his expensive collection of new stars after the Blues were held 0-0 at home by Fulham on Friday.

Enzo Fernandez made his Chelsea debut after becoming the most expensive player in British football history with a £107 million move (\$132 million) from Benfica on transfer deadline day.

Mykhailo Mudryk was also given his Stamford Bridge bow, while Noni Madueke and David Datro Fofana came off the bench for their Premier League debuts.

Chelsea's record investment of over £300 million in the January window took the total spend on players in their first season under new ownership to over half a billion.

Co-owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghball were in attendance, but will not have been impressed as another chance to close on the top four slipped by.

Potter's men sit ninth in the table, still nine points adrift of the Champions League places.

"New players are adapting to a new country and a new league. It's not straightforward. When the price tag is what it is questions will be asked, it's the nature of the business,"

said Potter.

"The decision we took in the terms of you can see the profile in window of age. We feel we have a very strong group of players. We have to gel and become a really good team. That's where the work is."

Fulham had secured a first victory in the west London derby since 2006 when the teams met just three weeks ago.

Marco Silva's men sit two points and three places above their local rivals in the table in their first season back in the top flight.

HAVERTZ'S HAT-TRICK OF MISSES

Fulham were seeking a first ever league double over Chelsea and came close to achieving it as Andreas Pereira forced Kepa Arrizabalaga into a flying save low to his right.

For the enormous sums spent by Chelsea's new owners, their lack of a clinical goalscorer was exposed once more.

Kai Havertz had a hat-trick of big chances to break the deadlock before half-time.

The German international failed to get enough contact on Thiago Silva's brilliant pass to divert the ball beyond Bernd Leno.

Havertz then could not stretch to turn Mason Mount's dangerous



cross on target.

But his best opening came when he hit the post with a lob over Leno from Hakim Ziyech's defence-splitting pass.

Ziyech would have been a Paris Saint-Germain player this week had Chelsea not submitted the wrong paperwork in the minutes before Tuesday's transfer deadline.

The Moroccan is just one of a wealth of wide options now available to Potter and he wasted no time in hooking Mudryk despite his price tag after a disappointing first 45 minutes.

The Ukrainian joined from Shakhtar Donetsk last month for a fee that could rise to 100 million euros (\$110 million).

Madueke was introduced in his place and Potter also threw on Raheem Sterling from the bench on the hour mark in the search for a winner.

Fernandez was inches away from the perfect debut as the Argentine World Cup winner flashed a shot wide from distance 20 minutes from goal.

Connor Gallagher came even closer as he hit side-netting from the edge of the box.

But the best chance fell to Fofana as the Ivorian rounded the stranded Leno, but failed to beat the covering Tim Ream on the line.

WE'VE PLENTY OF OPTIONS IN SPIN DEPARTMENT: CUMMINS

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Australia captain Pat Cummins on Saturday said his team is not fretting over its spin combination as it has enough options to support veteran off-spinner Nathan Lyon in the high-profile four-match Test series against India beginning in Nagpur on Thursday.

The touring Australians have named Mitchell Swepson along with finger spinner Ashton Agar to team up with Lyon.

"We've got plenty of options here (with) finger spin, wrist spin, left arm (pace) when (Mitchell) Starc comes back," Cummins told reporters in his first media interaction after arriving in India.

"We'll obviously pick the bowlers that we think are going to take 20 wickets. But how we split that up, we're not 100 per cent sure yet."

Asked if it would be a two-pronged spin attack, he said: "I wouldn't say it's a given. Obviously it's very conditions dependent. Particularly in the first test, once we get to Nagpur we will see that."

The Australians are here for a training camp before heading to

Nagpur on Monday.

The good thing is someone like Agar was in our last team, Swepson played the last two overseas tour, so a bit of experience.

"Murphy played in the last tour. We feel that we got a lot of support in that department for Lyon."

The 29-year-old Cummins pointed out that middle-order batter Travis Head also offers off-spin option.

"Travis Head also bowls really good offspin. We have to balance things. We have got a plenty of variety there to choose from. We have not locked in any bowling line-up so far."

While there is so much talk about spin bowling, Cummins said his side should not forget about their intimidating pace bowling attack.

"I think sometimes, talking about a couple of spinners, you forget how good a lot of our fast bowlers have been in all conditions."

Even some of the SCG wickets, there haven't been a lot in them for quick bowlers, but the quick bowlers have found a way," he added.



Cummins has come a long way since he made a Test comeback after six years in Ranchi during the last tour of India in 2017.

An injury-prone Cummins then dished out a hostile spell to dismiss the star Indian trio of KL Rahul, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane en route to figures of 4/106.

"It was my first test in six years. I just wanted to reaffirm that's where I wanted to be in Test cricket. I really enjoyed that spell, you can't be worried about your body or different things. You just got to go all out. I really enjoyed that."

"Test cricket can be really, really harsh. You have got to accept that it's going to be grinding times, and you got to be out for it and embrace that challenge. Coming here to India when a lot of the talks are around, big spinning wicket, it's not always the case."

"You need to get into the grind at times. That role of the fast bowler, bowling a lot of overs for not a heap of reward but doing your job for your team. I really enjoy that aspect of the last tour. Much to play for this time," he said.

OZ can win, India more vulnerable at home this time: Greg Chappell

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Beleives Australia can win the upcoming high-profile four-match Test series as India are "vulnerable" this time with injuries to key players like Rishabh Pant and Jasprit Bumrah.

While the swashbuckling keeper-batter Pant is ruled out for most part of the year as he continues to recover from injuries sustained during a horrific car crash, Indian pace ace Bumrah (back injury) does not figure in the Indian squad for the first two Tests.

"Australia can win this series. India are more vulnerable at home than they have been for some time due to injuries to key players like Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja and Jasprit Bumrah. They will rely heavily on Virat Kohli," Chappell wrote in an opinion piece for 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

Premier spin-bowling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who recovered from a knee injury and made a comeback in the Ranji Trophy last month, is in the Indian squad for the Test series beginning in Nagpur on Thursday.

"Visiting teams are often fooled by a game that seems to be going nowhere but suddenly changes at a frenetic pace. The Indians are used to this, so Australia will need to adapt quickly with mind, bat and ball," said the former India coach.

Finger spinner Ashton Agar, who is Australia's only left-arm twirler in the squad, should be preferred to partner Nathan Lyon on turning tracks, Chappell said.

"Should the pitches favour spin, which is more likely, I expect Ashton Agar to get the nod because finger spin is con-



sidered to be more accurate," said the 74-year-old Chappell who scored 7110 runs from 87 Tests with an impressive average of 53.86 between 1970 and 1984.

"Anil Kumble who took 619 wickets in Test cricket, rarely strayed off the straight and narrow. His stock in trade were fast, flat leg breaks which were always threatening the stumps. Batters knew if they missed, they were in trouble. Jadeja's stock in trade is similarly unnerving."

"Agar has got to emulate their roles. One bowler leaking runs will be the difference in a tight contest."

Recalling his conversation with Erupalli Prasanna, he wrote the Indian legend would spin the ball hard, try to hit the batter on the pads often, get him thinking about the spinning ball, and then trap him on the crease with a straight one.

"Line, he (Prasanna) said, was optional, length was mandatory. He explained to me that he would lay the seam a bit flatter than for the traditional off-spinner and then impart a higher number of rotations on the ball that would make the ball drift like an off spinner but, once it landed on the leather, it would sink with the arm giving the

impression that it had gone 'the other way'."

"As the leader of the spin attack, Nathan Lyon will need to take pages out of his book and show the way."

Chappell, however, said that Australia will also have issues to iron out.

"David Warner is in patchy form and needs to improve his Test record in India. Usman Khawaja, Alex Carey, Travis Head and Cameron Green will be tested against better quality spin than they encountered in Pakistan and Sri Lanka."

"Marcus Labuschagne will be facing his first big test in the subcontinent; and Steve Smith's recent batting tweaks will be examined more keenly than they have been in Australia and in the BBL," he wrote.

The series will be like a 'final frontier' for the Pat Cummins-led No. 1 Test side that have been on a roll after the pacer took over from Tim Paine.

Australia had a fine run recently, winning the Ashes and then the series against Pakistan, West Indies and South Africa. They will be in search of their first series win in India in 19 years.

In their last tour of India in 2017, they began with a big win in the Pune Test but went on to lose the series 1-2. India, on the other hand, have not lost at home for more than a decade and have a record streak of winning 15 series.

"The Australians will have to summon every ounce of their talent and experience during the next month to succeed. India is no longer the mystery it once was. Tours are more regular and the IPL offers valuable exposure."

"Attrition takes a huge toll on touring teams. If India are in the contest on day five, they will win," Chappell said.

Green might have an 'outside chance' of playing Nagpur Test: McDonald

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Dashing all-rounder Cameron Green is making a quick recovery from his index finger injury and has an "outside chance" of making it to Australia's playing eleven for the opening Test against India starting in Nagpur on February 9.

The 23-year-old seam bowling all-rounder, who is recovering from a surgery on his index finger in his right hand, had a bowl at the nets in Alur.

"We haven't put a clear line through him on the team sheet. So, I wouldn't say he was in discomf from what he was bowling," McDonald told reporters here on the sidelines of their four-day training camp.

However there are still some concerns when he is batting, admitted the head coach.

"I would say one of the deliveries jarred the bottom of the bat and that can create discomfort for anyone, but there is a little bit of awareness around that finger. He has made some significant steps forward in the last couple of days, probably to



my surprise. "So, there is still an outside chance, everything going well, he might be on the team sheet," McDonald kept the options open.

Keeper Pat Cummins had earlier ruled out Green from bowling in the Test should he play, but McDonald said he has made significant progress.

Green's inclusion would provide Australia with an opportunity to include an extra specialist spinner in their bid to win their first Border-Gavaskar Trophy in India since 2004.

McDonald further said their explosive opener David Warner is fully "recharged" and looking forward to make amends for his

poor runs in some of the previous tours in the upcoming Test series.

The 36-year-old, averaging 24.25 in eight Tests in India, had complained of exhaustion and said he would have preferred the night off from the Cricket Australia awards to recover

from a busy home summer.

"I haven't noticed any fatigue in David Warner since I got here," McDonald said.

"I would probably dispel that as a bit of a myth. He has had a couple of days off... He has been there (at training) for one of the two days, and he is not there today."

"We are managing each individual coming in and their specific preparation and where they have been and there is no doubt it was a demanding summer into BBL, and it creates a challenge back into Test match cricket."

"But we feel the preparation we have him on he will be recharged and ready to go. It has been well documented he hasn't had the series that he would like. It's always challenging."

"I think the way he is applying himself in his downtime to really land on a method to take on the Indian spinners and also the quicks and to have a successful tour, I think you will see him fully invigorated and invested and fully charged for the challenge ahead."

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India batter Suresh Raina is baffled by Australian team's decision to opt for simulation training rather than play warm-up games ahead of the first Border-Gavaskar Test, starting February 9 in Nagpur.

The Australian team are currently training in Bengaluru and are practising on rampers, having summoned the well-known Baroda spinner Mahesh Phithiya, whose bowling action resembles Ravichandran Ashwin. But Raina, one of India's finest white-ball players, feels that Australia might have missed a trick.

"I have played practice matches (ahead of Tests) and

Raina surprised with Aus decision to not play warm-up games

they are really important. They (Australia) can understand the quality of pitches in India only if they play on them," Raina told PTI on the sidelines of Mission Olympics Annual Day Meet, organised by Police Families Welfare Society.

Raina is confident that India will do well in the four-Test series and Ravindra Jadeja's comeback will add fine balance to the squad. "I am happy with Jadeja's comeback after a long time," said the southpaw.



Axar Patel are doing well. Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have been in good form and I think we will get to watch an interesting series in the coming days."

While visiting teams are always welcomed on rampers during Test matches in the sub-continent, Raina would like to see a track that would hold on for five days.

He however didn't want to predict the outcome of the series.

"Let it begin first. A Test match should be five-day long."

I will only comment (on performance) after watching the first day and seeing the focus of players." Raina is very happy that there is so much competition for places in the national team across formats.

"It is an achievement (that many are worthy of a place in the Indian team). When there is such a competition we will get the best performance from the players."

He also welcomed BCCI's decision to organise the inaugural Women's Premier League (WPL).

"WPL is going to be very beneficial for women cricketers of our country. And it is great that the women (U-19 team won the World Cup."

UAE set to host Asia Cup, venue to be finalised in March



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Asian Cricket Council will decide on an alternate venue for the Asia Cup ODI tournament in March after BCCI secretary Jay Shah and PCB chairman Najam Sethi had their first formal meeting in Bahrain on Saturday.

The Asia Cup was initially allotted

to Pakistan and was scheduled in September this year but Shah, who is also the ACC chairman, had announced last October that India will not travel to Pakistan.

It is understood that United Arab Emirates with three venues -- Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah -- are favourites to host the tournament but the decision

has been withheld for the time being.

All heads of ACC member nations attended the emergency meeting which was called at the behest of PCB chairman Sethi after ACC under chairmanship of Shah released the continental body's itinerary where Pakistan wasn't named the hosts. The ACC affiliates met today and there were a lot of construc-

tive discussions. But the shift of venue has been postponed till March. But be rest assured that with India not going to Pakistan, the tournament will have to be shifted. A tournament without Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill will have the sponsors back out," a senior BCCI official privy to the development told PTI.

One ACC insider said Sethi has just taken over PCB and if he would have ceded ground on the hosting rights in the first meeting itself, then it would have led to a bad impression at home.

Pakistan is currently going through an economic crisis and inflation has hit the country very hard with the country's currency (PKR) plummeting to Rs 277 against 1 US Dollar. Organising a high profile tournament like Asia Cup, even if ACC pays a grant could burn a hole in PCB coffers. So strategically, if the tournament is held in the UAE, there is every possibility that all the member nations will also get to earn apart from the broadcast revenues.

In another decision, the ACC has decided to increase the annual budget allocated for Afghanistan Cricket Association to 15 percent from six.

The ACC has assured that it will help the Afghanistan board in all possible ways so that women's cricket can be revived in the country. Women are banned from playing sport under Taliban rule.

Carey reminds OZ of Indian pacers' reverse-swing threat

PTI ■ ALUR

Australia wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carey has reminded the Indian pacers could be with their reverse swing even as countering the threat from hosts spinners was the main focus in the build-up to their high profile four-match Test series starting on Thursday.

Australia abandoned the idea of "irrelevant" tour games in India and instead trained with SG balls on specially-prepared spinning pitches in Sydney before coming to India.

"Going to Pakistan it was a lot of spin talk and I found the reverse swinging ball difficult," Carey told reporters here on the sidelines of their four-day training camp.

He recalled their tour game in Bengaluru in 2018 when pacers were equally making impact as the spinners and Mohammed Siraj returned with a match haul of 11 wickets.

"I played a four-day game



(for Australia A against India A) in 2018 and a lot of the talk was about spin and probably forget a bit how damaging both teams' fast bowlers are with the reverse-swinging ball, with a wicket that might be a bit up and down," said the 31-year-old.

Carey also recalled their drawn Test series in Sri Lanka in July last year where the Australians had to adapt to different pitch conditions.

"We went to Galle for two Tests and they were two different wickets. So be open-minded about what we are going to come up against, what team they put on the park and what scenario I come in at," he said.

"Having the game ebb and flow between spin and fast bowling, dry grounds, periods where it will score quickly... Think that's great about this team, the experience we do have."

Carey said the visiting team understands the capability of the Indian side, and will plan accordingly.

"Well speak to the guys who have played (in India) in the past and we'll have our batters' meeting soon. We'll face a lot of different spinners throughout the next few days, our spinners (are) bowling well as well, so for everyone it's getting our feet on the ground."

"We haven't really spoken about the way we are going to play, it's the individual basis. For Travis it might be exploring that (attacking) game a bit, Renneers (Matthew Renshaw) is a bit of a different and can get to the pitch of the ball -- he has been here and succeeded -- so it's up to the individual to own their game then we back them in to do that."



THE CITY OF FLOWERS NOW AN EPICENTER OF VIOLENCE

Peshawar was a peaceful place until the early 1980s when Pakistan's then-dictator Ziaul Haq decided to become part of Washington's cold war with Moscow, joining the fight against the 1979 Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan. Write RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED

Pakistan's Peshawar was once known as "the city of flowers," surrounded by orchards of pear, quince and pomegranate trees. It was a trading city, situated at the gates of a key mountain valley connecting South and Central Asia.

But for the past four decades, it has borne the brunt of rising militancy in the region, fueled by the conflicts in neighboring Afghanistan and the geopolitical games of great powers.

On Tuesday, the city with a population of about 2 million was reeling after one of Pakistan's most devastating militant attacks in years. A day earlier, a suicide bomber unleashed a blast in a mosque inside the city's main police compound, killing at least 101 people and wounding at least 225, mostly police.

Analysts say the carnage is the legacy of decades of flawed policies by Pakistan and the United States.

"What you sow, so shall you reap," said Abdullah Khan, a senior security analyst.

Peshawar was a peaceful place, he said, until the early 1980s when Pakistan's then-dictator Ziaul Haq decided to become part of Washington's cold war with Moscow, joining the fight against the 1979 Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan.

Peshawar — less than 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the Afghan border — became the center where the American CIA and Pakistani military helped train, arm and fund the Afghan mujahedeen fighting the Soviets. The city was flooded by weapons and fighters, many of them hard-line Islamic militants, as well as with hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees.

Arab militants were also drawn there by the fight against the Soviets, including the scion of a wealthy Saudi family, Osama bin Laden. It was in Peshawar that bin Laden founded al-Qaida in the late 1980s, joining forces with veteran Egyptian militant Ayman al-Zawahri.

The Soviets finally withdrew in defeat from Afghanistan in 1989. But the legacy of militancy and armed resistance that the U.S. and Pakistan fueled against them remained.

"After the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1980s, Americans abandoned mujahedeen, Americans even abandoned us, and since then we are paying a price for it," said Mahmood Shah, a former Pakistani army brigadier and a senior security analyst.

The mujahedeen plunged Afghanistan into civil war in a bloody fight for power. Meanwhile, in Peshawar and another Pakistani city, Quetta, the Afghan Taliban began to organize, with backing from the Pakistani government. Eventually, the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, ruling until they were ousted by the 2001 American-led invasion following al-Qaida's 9/11 attacks in the U.S.

During the nearly 20-year U.S. war against the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, militant groups blossomed in the tribal regions of Pakistan along the border and around Peshawar. Like the Taliban, they found root among the ethnic Pashtuns who make up a majority in the region and in the city.

Some groups were encouraged by the Pakistani intelligence agencies. But others turned their guns against the government, angered by heavy security crackdowns and by frequent U.S. airstrikes in the border region targeting al-Qaida and other militants.

Chief among the anti-government groups was the Pakistani Taliban, or Tahrir-e-Taliban-Pakistan, or TTP. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, it waged a brutal campaign of violence around the country. Peshawar was scene of one of the bloodiest TTP attacks in 2014, on an army-run public school that killed nearly 150 people, most of them schoolboys.

Peshawar's location has for centuries made it a key juncture between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. One of the oldest cities

DURING THE NEARLY 20-YEAR U.S. WAR AGAINST THE TALIBAN INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN, MILITANT GROUPS BLOSSOMED IN THE TRIBAL REGIONS OF PAKISTAN ALONG THE BORDER AND AROUND PESHAWAR. LIKE THE TALIBAN, THEY FOUND ROOT AMONG THE ETHNIC PASHTUNS WHO MAKE UP A MAJORITY IN THE REGION AND IN THE CITY. SOME GROUPS WERE ENCOURAGED BY THE PAKISTANI INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES. BUT OTHERS TURNED THEIR GUNS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, ANGERED BY HEAVY SECURITY CRACKDOWNS AND BY FREQUENT U.S. AIRSTRIKES IN THE BORDER REGION TARGETING AL-QAIDA AND OTHER MILITANTS

in Asia, it stands at the entrance to the Khyber Pass, the main route between the two regions. That was a source of its prosperity in trade and put it on the path of armies going both directions, from Moghul emperors to British imperialists.

A heavy military offensive largely put down the TTP for several years and the government and the militants eventually reached an uneasy truce. Peshawar came under heavy security control, with checkpoints dotting the main roads, and a heavy presence of police and paramilitary troops.

TTP attacks, however, have grown once more since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in Kabul in August 2021 amid the U.S. and NATO withdrawal from that country. The Pakistani Taliban are distinct from but allied to the Afghan group, and Pakistani officials regularly accuse the Afghan Taliban of giving the TTP free rein to operate from Afghan territory.

On Wednesday, several police officers joined a peace march organized by the members of civil society groups in Peshawar, denouncing militant attacks and demanding peace in the country. Police said they made some arrest in connection with Monday's mosque bombing but did not provide details.

Ahead of Monday's suicide bombing, Peshawar had seen increasing small-scale attacks targeting police. In another spillover from Afghanistan's conflict, the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group attacked Peshawar's main Shiite mosque in March 2022, killing more than 60 people.

Shah, the former officer, warned that more TTP attacks could follow and said that Pakistan needs to engage the Afghan Taliban and pressure them to either evict the TTP or ensure it doesn't launch attacks from Afghan territory.

"If we are to have peace in Pakistan, we should talk to TTP from the position of strength with help from the Afghan Taliban," he said. "This is the best and viable solution to avoid more violence." (AP)

Pakistan reaches out to Taliban supremo

Pakistan has decided to seek the intervention of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada to control the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group, according to official sources.

During an Apex Committee meeting in Peshawar, the civil and military leadership held the banned TTP responsible for the carnage in the city this week, and decided to take up the matter with the interim Afghan government at the highest level, with a clear message that Pakistan would no longer tolerate cross-border terrorism, The Express Tribune reported.

Although the TTP has denied its involvement in Monday's suicide blast at a mosque in the Peshawar Police Lines, a briefing given to the Apex Committee suggested that the banned outfit was indeed the mastermind of the attack.

The meeting at the Governor House in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) capital was held in the wake of a deadly terrorist attack in the Police Lines in which more than 100 people, mostly policemen, were killed.

The meeting was presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The participants of the meeting included Army chief Gen Syed Asim Munir, DG ISI Lt-Gen Nadeem Anjum, Peshawar Corps Commander, DGMQ and other military officials as well as senior cabinet members, chief ministers of the four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was invited to the all-impor-



tant meeting but it did not attend.

The marathon meeting discussed how the suicide bomber managed to enter the high security zone, who the perpetrator was and how the government would respond to the renewed threat posed by the TTP.

The meeting was informed that the TTP, indeed, carried out the attack but because of fear of backlash from the Afghan Taliban, it did not own it, publicly.

Insiders told The Express Tribune that Pakistan would seek the intervention of Akhundzada to control the banned terror outfit.

The meeting noted that despite the resurgence of terrorism in the country, terrorists did not hold any specific area, therefore there was no need for a full-scale military operations.

Instead, according to Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, the intelligence-based operations would continue. (IANS)

NIP CANCER IN THE BUD

Usually, the word cancer is equated with death. However, busting the common myth, health experts say that most cancers may be cured fully if diagnosed early. Late detection is one of the highest reasons behind poor survival rates. On the World Cancer Day on February 4, THE HEALTH PIONEER sheds light on some most common types of cancer in India and the causes behind them.

TYPES OF CANCERS

* Gall Bladder Cancer

Bladder cancer risk factors include smoking, genetic mutations, and exposure to certain chemicals. Speaking on the rise in gallbladder-related illness, Dr Sushma Bhatnagar, the head of National Cancer Institute of India said, "Cases of gallbladder cases in women have been on the rise especially in the north-eastern parts of the country and settlements beside rivers."

*Cervical Cancer

Screening tests and the HPV vaccine can help prevent cervical cancer.

*Colorectal Cancer

If you are 45 years old or older, get screened. Screening tests can help prevent colorectal cancer or find it early, when treatment works best.

*Gynecologic Cancers

Five main types of cancer affect a woman's reproductive organs: breast, cervical, ovarian, uterine, vaginal, and vulvar. As a group, they are called gynecologic cancers.

*Breast Cancer

Regular mammograms are the best tests doctors have to find breast cancer early. Talk to your doctor about when to start and how often to get a screening mammogram.

*Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system. But when ovarian cancer is found early, treatment works best.

*Uterine Cancer

Uterine cancer is the most common cancer of the female reproductive system.

*Vaginal and Vulvar Cancers

Vaginal and vulvar cancers are rare, but all women are at risk for these cancers.



*Head and Neck Cancers

Cancers of the head and neck include cancers that start in several places in the head and throat, not including brain cancers or cancers of the eye.

*Kidney Cancer

To lower your risk of kidney and renal pelvis cancers, keep a healthy weight. Don't smoke, or quit if you do.

*Liver Cancer

To lower your risk for liver cancer, get vaccinated against hepatitis B, get tested for hepatitis C, and avoid drinking too much alcohol.

PREVENTABLE CANCERS

No cancer is 100% preventable. However, managing certain controllable risk factors such as your diet, physical activity and other lifestyle choices – can lower your chances of developing cancer. This is especially true for 9 specific cancer types, which include:

- *Breast cancer
- *Cervical cancer
- *Colorectal cancer
- *Head and neck cancer
- *Lung cancer
- *Ovarian cancer
- *Prostate cancer
- *Skin cancer
- *Testicular cancer

*Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the United States. To lower your risk, quit smoking, avoid secondhand smoke, and get your home tested for radon.

*Lymphoma

Lymphoma is a general term for cancers that start in the lymph system. The two main kinds are Hodgkin lymphoma and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

*Myeloma

Myeloma is a cancer of the plasma cells. In myeloma, the cells grow too much, forming a mass or tumor in the bone marrow.

*Prostate Cancer

Most prostate cancers grow slowly and don't cause any health problems. Learn more and talk to your doctor before you decide to get tested or treated for prostate cancer.

*Skin Cancer

To lower your skin cancer risk, protect your skin from the sun and avoid indoor tanning.

*Thyroid Cancer

The thyroid gland is located in front of the neck. It sends out hormones that help control many activities in the body.

MOST COMMON CAUSES FOR CANCER

TOBACCO

Tobacco use is a leading cause of cancer and of death from cancer. People who use tobacco products have an increased risk of cancer because tobacco products and secondhand smoke have many chemicals that damage DNA.

Tobacco use causes many types of cancer, including cancer of the lung, larynx (voice box), mouth, esophagus, throat, bladder, kidney, liver, stomach, pancreas, colon and rectum, and cervix, as well as acute myeloid leukemia. People who use smokeless tobacco (snuff or chewing tobacco) have increased risks of cancers of the mouth, esophagus, and pancreas.

Dr SVS Deo, Professor of Surgical Oncology at AIIMS Delhi says, "Smoking and consumption of alcohol account for 30 per cent of total cancer cases. If we can somehow curb the usage of these deadly items, cancer cases will go down."

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

Environmental pollutants like arsenic, chromium, nickel, asbestos, dioxins besides tobacco are the major cause for lung cancer and gall bladder in India.

Dr Bhatnagar said, a major chunk of cancer cases are a result of air pollution, water pollution and an unhealthy lifestyle. Air pollution has also led to an increase in the cases of cervical cancer. Delhi NCR witnessed 22000 cases of cancer last year of which 50 per cent of cases were treated at the National Cancer Institute, AIIMS."

Breast cancer Early detection key

Oncologists recommend breast self-examination every month around five days after the periods are over starting from the age of 20. According to them, for postmenopausal women, it can be done on a certain day/date of every month. Annual breast examination by a trained doctor after the age of 20 is also strongly recommended. Finally, regular mammograms after the age of 40-45 is also recommended for early detection of Breast Cancers and timely treatment.



WHO Roadmap on breast cancer launched recently recommends:

- Countries to focus on breast cancer early-detection programmes so that at least 60% of the breast cancers are diagnosed and treated as early-stage disease.
- Diagnosing breast cancer within 60 days of initial presentation can improve breast cancer outcomes. Treatment should start within three months of the first presentation.
- Managing breast cancer so that at least 80% of patients complete their recommended treatment.

OPD 10-15 minutes after the mammogram is done. We intrinsically go for ultrasound, mammogram and sometimes MRI in special situations to detect early disease. Patients with larger lumps, those having enlarged glands in the armpit or symptoms suggestive of distant organ involvement (bone pain, breathlessness, headache, enlarged liver etc.) need additional tests like PET-CT scan to rule out the spread of disease to other organs."

Dr. Ronak Vyas, Surgical Oncologist at Narayana Multi Speciality Hospital, Ahmedabad

"People need to be aware of advanced treatment and facilities available in the country now. For example, our hospital has best-in-class treatment and care for breast cancer patients. It is very disappointing for us that a large number of patients come to us at advanced stages. Early Cancer or Stages I & II are usually treated by surgeries first. Locally advanced stage III requires chemotherapy first followed by surgery and radiation. Hormone and other targeted therapy are needed in the select group of patients who have certain markers present on their tumours. Stage IV (Distant organ spread) is treated either with chemotherapy or hormone therapy or both."

DOCTORSPEAK

Dr. Bhawana Awasthy, Chief Medical & Clinical Oncology, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre

"Cancer that develops in breast glands or ducts is called breast cancer. A lump in the breast, bloody or straw-coloured nipple discharge, recent nipple inversion, ulceration or destruction of the nipple, dimpling of skin and thickening of skin to give an appearance of orange peel are some of the symptoms of breast cancer. While identifying these signs is important, regular mammography picks up cancers even before these symptoms. Meet your doctor for a breast examination and screening advice before the disease becomes apparent. Remember, breast cancer is curable if detected early."

Dr. Suman Mallik, Clinical Director - Senior Consultant & HOD Radiation Oncology, Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, Howrah

"Confirmation of diagnosis of breast cancer usually requires a needle biopsy, which can be performed at the

... Rural women caught unaware

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Even as breast self-examination (BSE) remains a feasible screening method in resource-poor settings like India, yet diagnosis in advanced stages remains a cause of concern. This is mainly because the majority of women particularly from rural India have poor awareness regarding breast cancer and poor practice of BSE.

This was found by a group of researchers while assessing the awareness of breast cancer and the practice of BSE among women in a rural area of Karnataka in South India. This speaks volumes of the awareness status among rural women across the country.

Published in the Indian Journal of Cancer, the study revealed that less than one in ten women knew that a lump in the breast is a symptom of breast cancer.

Majority 338 (81.2%) were not able to state even a single symptom of breast cancer and 365 (87.7%) not able to state even one risk factor of breast cancer.

Majority 354 (85.1%) of the women in the study had never heard of BSE. None of the women in the study performed monthly BSE. Only 40 (9.6%) of the women actually performed BSE within the last 6 months. Women with higher education and those who reported a history of a lump in the breast in self or family were significantly more likely to state at least one symptom of breast cancer and were more likely to practice BSE, noted the authors of the study led by Avita R, Department of Community Health, St. John's Medical College, Bangalore.

Awareness of at least one symptom of breast cancer was associated with an 18 fold increase in the practice of BSE,

"Evidence points out that early detection and treatment can improve breast cancer survival rates. For rural Indian women, the lack of a mammogram and breast examination by an experienced clinician makes BSE the only feasible screening method available. The poor awareness and practice of BSE could lead to delayed diagnosis and adversely affect the outcome of breast cancer. However, there are several socio-cultural barriers that continue to exist in Indian society such as negative attitude to BSE, poor health-seeking behaviour and lack of priority to the health of women as they reach the end of their child-bearing years."

study said, revealing an urgent need to focus on health awareness regarding breast cancer and BSE among rural women.

Though the study was conducted in 2016, its observation still holds true keeping in mind no let up in the breast cancer cases.

The authors have called for an urgent need to focus on health awareness regarding breast cancer and BSE among rural women by exploring various mechanisms of community engagement, including involving grassroots-level health workers.

The study tool used was the Breast Cancer Awareness Measure (BSE-CAM), developed by Cancer Research UK, King's College London and University College London in 2009, and it records awareness of symptoms and risk factors of breast cancer as well as attitudes towards BSE. It was translated into the local language Kannada for use in rural areas for study purposes.

CANCER: Close the care gap

On World Cancer Day, WHO is calling for intensified action across the South-East Asia Region to strengthen health systems to prevent and detect cancers early, to provide prompt treatment referral, to enhance access to palliative care, and to close the gap in access to quality cancer services – the theme of this year's commemoration.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally, accounting for an estimated 9.9 million deaths in 2020. Between 2010 and 2019, global cancer incidence increased by 26%, alongside a 21% increase in cancer deaths. An estimated one-third of cancer deaths globally are due to tobacco use, high body mass index, alcohol use, low fruit and vegetable intake, and lack of physical activity.

In the WHO South-East Asia Region, an estimated 2.3 million people developed cancer in 2020, and 1.4 million died of the disease. Cancer is estimated to account for more than 20% of premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the Region, which stand at around 4.7 million deaths every year. In 2020, cancer of the lungs, breast and cervix accounted for 400 000 of the total number of cancer-related deaths in the Region, and almost two-thirds of people

diagnosed with cancer succumbed to the disease, highlighting the urgent need for improved early diagnosis and treatment.

Since 2014, the Region has accelerated action to prevent, detect, treat and control cancer, with increased focus on eliminating cancer as a public health problem. Eight countries of the Region now have in place population-based cancer registries (PBCRs), and three countries – Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka – are focus countries for addressing childhood cancer. Ten of the Region's 11 Member States provide tertiary care services for cancer diagnosis and treatment – including surgical and chemotherapy services – and nine also offer radiotherapy services.

WHO continues to support countries of the Region to implement its new Regional Action Plan on Oral Health 2022–2030, including oral cancers, which in 2020 were among the top five most common cancers, accounting for 7.4% of new cancers. Five countries of the Region – Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand – now have in place national cancer control plans, which Maldives and Nepal are in the process of finalizing. The Region is currently on track to achieve the WHO NCD Global Action Plan target



DR POONAM KHETRAPAL SINGH
WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia

get of a 30% relative reduction in tobacco use prevalence between 2010 and 2025.

On cervical cancer, the Region is achieving rapid, life-saving progress. Five Member States – Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand – have introduced nation-wide HPV vaccination, which Bangladesh, India and Timor-Leste are set to also introduce. Indonesia has introduced HPV vaccination in several provinces, covering tens of millions of girls. New evidence shows that a single dose of HPV vaccine delivers protection comparable to the 2-dose schedule, which alongside additional cost reductions, should enable countries to reach every woman and girl.

To accelerate progress and close the care gap, the Region has several priorities. First, introducing and/or expanding HPV vaccination in routine immunization to prevent cervical cancer, covering at least 90% of adolescent girls. At the same time, the Region must continue to facilitate healthy lifestyles, including by not just legislating but enforcing key tobacco control measures such as health warnings and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, as well as by raising taxes on tobacco products.

Second, increasing capacity at the primary health care (PHC) level to detect cancers early, with a focus on intensified health workforce training, improved infrastructure and resources, and streamlined referral pathways for prompt initiation of treatment. In all countries, PHC physicians and nurses must be equipped to provide palliative and end-of-life care close to patients' homes and families, within the community.

Third, rapidly – and systematically – advancing the capacity of cancer care facilities to provide comprehensive diagnostic and treatment services, which is critical to reduce cancer mortality. Interventions should be aimed at

high-burden cancers with high potential for cure. They must be accessible to all. Existing PBCRs should be improved, and where appropriate, new registries established, ensuring that policy makers can access good quality information to plan, monitor and evaluate interventions, and adjust accordingly.

Fourth, including cancer services in risk pooling or pre-payment schemes and health benefit packages. For this, national health budgets should enhance the quality and accessibility of public sector services and strengthen financial protection, with a focus on ending catastrophic health expenditure.

Action cannot and must not wait. In the last two decades, the world has made significant progress in the science of cancer control. However, much more work is needed to close the care gap, improve cancer survival, and accelerate towards the NCD 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals targets 2030. On World Cancer Day, WHO reiterates its commitment to support all countries of the Region to prevent, detect, treat and control cancer, ensuring equitable access to quality cancer services for everyone, everywhere.

Yemenis' wait for war crimes justice lingers

The Yemen crisis continues. It has completed eight years. The country's internal political factions and Saudi-led military intervention have spawned the catastrophe. The intractable civil war initially has gradually transformed into a full-blown tragedy leading to the deaths of millions, especially children and women. And it has added more numbers to the international refugee crisis.

The real tragedy lies in blatant violation of all universal norms set by the UN and prescribed by the international humanitarian laws. The rules and principles of the global humanitarian framework provide full protection to all civilians and others who are not participating in the war. In fact, all sets of international humanitarian law demands and normally ensures from the conflicting groups the greatest possible measures to reduce human suffering during the conduct of fighting. Therefore, these laws clearly distinguish between military objectives and civilian objectives. The final objective is to minimise harm to civil society. What has been observed in Yemen is flouting all humanitarian restrictions while pursuing military objectives. It has led to disproportionate attacks over civilian targets. Thus, many civil society organisations and global human right agencies are claiming that indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks carried out by the warring parties in Yemen are akin to war crimes.

As long as there have been conflicts and wars, attempts have been made by international jurists and other experts to define 'war crimes'. However, only by the 20th century, the very concept of war crime was defined in the legal sense of the term. According to the UN, a war crime is a serious breach of international law committed against civilians or enemy combatants during an international or domestic armed conflict. So to have a war crime, there must be an armed conflict. An armed conflict, international or non-international or



Assault rifles and missiles seized by the French Navy lay on the deck of a ship at an undisclosed location on Wednesday. French naval forces in January seized thousands of assault rifles, machine guns and anti-tank missiles in the Gulf of Oman coming from Iran heading to Yemen's Houthi rebels, officials said on Thursday, the latest such interdiction amid West Asian nation's long-running war.

involving an armed international group is a prerequisite to war crimes and grave breaches (Gary D Solis 2018). In contrast to genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes have to take place in the context of armed conflict.

Further the meaning of war crimes is clarified in four Geneva Conventions of 1949. Article 147 of the fourth Geneva Convention defines war crimes as 'wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including... wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement of a protected person... taking of hostages and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly'. So the war crime as per this land-

mark article has been recorded in many corners of the world. The International Criminal Court established by the Rome Statute is the first international criminal court when it first started in the year 2002 with 123 member nations. This court has the authority to prosecute individuals — heads of state, military members and others — under three broad frameworks of international criminal acts: crime against humanity, war crimes and genocide. Again, the three main pillars of humanitarian law are the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. And if any one of these is violated, it could be established that a war crime has been committed.

Now the reality in Yemen is grim. In the year 2019, the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) released a devastating

report on Yemen. The report was prepared by a panel of independent experts empowered by the UNHRC to find out violations of human rights in Yemen during this war. The report clearly established the fact that though it was ostensibly a civil war, the outside powers are both direct and indirect belligerents and are responsible for war crimes. And here the main lead is taken by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The report found a litany of crimes committed by the Saudi-led coalition that has targeted civilian sites a number of times. The report strongly suggested that Saudi Arabia's western backers, including the US, the UK and France, bear responsibility for war crimes. These global powers are consistently supplying arms and ammunition to Saudi Arabia for carrying out the war

in Yemen. However, the US has also offered technical assistance to Saudi Arabian forces while conducting massive bombing raids over enemy targets all across Yemen.

Yemen, a small nation located in the Arabian Peninsula has become a permanent war theatre today. The country has turned out to be a grievous site of human suffering particularly of children, women and ageing population. All global governance institutions, including the UN, except delivering peace sermons and urges, have simply become mere spectators, failing to stop the human carnage. And sadly, it is led indirectly by the world's most powerful nation, the US, on one side and the Islamic Republic of Iran by supporting Houthi Rebels on the other side. Who will be stopping them? Probably, no one until they withdraw on their own from the war field. And Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, popularly known as MBS globally, simply wants to showcase his prowess by demolishing the Iran-backed rebels which are unstoppable for now. At home, MBS remains popular for his innovative strategies to recast the regimes economic and techno visions, but internationally he has been unable to shake off the veil of suspicion for his alleged role in the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey in the year 2018. He is finding it too difficult either to withdraw or to outrightly declare his country as the winner of the Yemen War.

It is well known that the Saudis did not start the conflict. It is the Houthis who did it by marching to the historic capital city of Sanaa and overthrow the legitimate Yemeni Government in late 2014. Nevertheless, the conflict has its roots in the Arab Spring of 2011. Then an uprising of the public forced the country's long-time authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh to hand over power to his Deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. The transition, as expected by interna-

tional political analysts, was supposed to bring peace and stability to Yemen, one of the poorest nations in the West Asian region.

However, unfortunately Hadi had to subsequently hand over military, Islamic jihadists, military officers having continued loyalty to former President Saleh and most importantly an economic downturn propelled by massive corruption charges.

When the Houthi Shi rebels took over the capital city of Sanaa, President Hadi had to flee and the real existential crisis of the legitimate government of Iran began. Again, the conflict took a turn of a regional war in March 2015, when Saudi Arabia and eight other, mostly Sunni Arab nations, backed by the US, France, and the UK began strikes against the Houthis to restore the Hadi Government in Yemen. This has given the war an international angle too and the Islamic Republic of Iran openly supported the Houthi rebels. In fact, the Saudis are seriously concerned about the continued success and rampage of the Houthi militants as it would open a stronghold for its rival Iran in its southern backyard for future.

Truly, there has been disaster for everyone whoseever has been involved in the war. But for the most part, it is no other than Yemen's impoverished and malnourished population who have become the central target of the war. The Yemenis are killing the Yemenis by taking global support for arms and ammunition from warmongering nations. And at the same time, the regional warring parties like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the rival Iran are bleeding their own coffers simply to re-establish their superiority in West Asia. And the final sufferers are no other than the ordinary Yemenis. It's time to stop this war crime. Enough is enough.

(The writer is the Head of the Department of Arts and Humanities at Geeta University, Panipat)

The Yemenis are killing the Yemenis by taking global support for arms and ammunition from warmongering nations. And at the same time, the regional warring parties like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the rival Iran are bleeding their own coffers simply to re-establish their superiority in West Asia



MAKHAN SAINI

PERSPECTIVE

Budget ensures economy's fundamentals remain solid | Budget ignores 90% of India's population

The 2023-24 Budget has proved all pundits wrong as they had predicted it to be a political Budget before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The last full-fledged Budget before the general elections is not populist on any parameter. It takes confidence and commitment to stick to the fundamentals of prudent fiscal management, when it makes complete sense to go all-out political. This attribute which was also visible during the handling of the Covid-19 crisis will keep the economy resilient.

The highlight of the Budget has to be the increased allocation for capital expenditure, which was hiked by 33 per cent to Rs 10 lakh crore and the total capex is expected to be around 13 lakh crore. After two consecutive years of blistering growth in Government capex, there was an expectation that the Centre would step off the accelerator and make more direct cash transfers under various social sector schemes. The increase in capex under this context is indeed a pleasant surprise.

The Budget continues to focus on the smooth functioning of the economy. Capital allocation for collateral-free lending to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector has been increased to Rs 9,000 crore. This will lead to an incremental lending of Rs 2 lakh crore to this sector. Customs duties have been reduced on a number of commodities to make manufacturing in India more competitive with raw material availability at lower costs. These steps, together with the continued work on the ease-of-doing-business, will help the micro, small and medium enterprise sector in a major way.

Relief in personal income tax was widely demanded and the Budget has lived up to the expectation of the taxpayers. An individual can now earn up to Rs 7 lakh per annum and not pay any income tax. This is a 40 per cent increase over the current exemption limit of Rs 5 lakh per annum and has led to considerable rejoicing in the middle class. The relief has also been extended with people with very high levels of income. The surcharge on income above Rs 5 crore per annum has also been reduced and the highest marginal rate of taxation will come down from 42.75 per cent to 39 per cent. The Government has thus shown that it is not afraid to provide relief even to the rich if it believed that the rate was too high and political considerations did not come in the way.

This year's Budget is also a document for the future. The Government has listed seven priorities that will guide policy making on the road to 2047. These have elements of green growth and energy transition while not losing sight of inclusive development and reaching the last mile. The focus and commitment to sustainable growth can be seen from schemes like Mishti, for Mangrove plantation, along the coastline and Amrit Dharohar, for preserving biodiversity in wetlands. Scrapping of old vehicles also finds a detailed mention in the Budget. Establishing a centre of excellence for Artificial Intelligence (AI) shows that the Budget has ambition. The Skill India scheme will, henceforth, include AI, robotics, 3D printing and so on. The Government plans to set up 100 labs for the development of

5G services.

The Government's support to the agricultural sector and its commitment to the rural economy are evident from the setting up of the Agriculture Accelerator Fund and the millet development programme. Schemes such as GORAdhan yojana and facilitating natural farming are a case in point. The target for credit to the agriculture sector has been fixed at Rs 20 lakh crore. It will ensure that the agriculture sector continues to grow at a healthy rate.

A major achievement has been the management of fiscal affairs. Several challenges on the macroeconomic front that stemmed from external factors, and were unseen at the time of the presentation of the Budget last year, unfolded as the year rolled by. The actual expenditure on food and fertiliser subsidy for the current year is much more than what was initially budgeted, while the excise tax collected dipped due to excise duty cut on petrol and diesel by the Central Government. Despite this, the Narendra Modi Government has managed to achieve the budgeted target of 6.4 per cent for fiscal deficit for the year 2022-23. The fiscal deficit target for the coming financial year has been put at 5.9 per cent of GDP. Thus, the march on the path of fiscal consolidation continues and while there is an absence of a glide path, the Government has committed to bringing it down to the range of 4.5 per cent by the year 2025-26.

A Budget that is not swayed by considerations of politics shows the maturity of the Government and the confidence it has in the ability of Indian voters' judgement to reward performance over

Point-counterpoint



rhetoric. This Budget is, therefore, a historic document and shows the nature of changing politics unleashed by the Modi Government. This Budget will ensure that the fundamentals of the economy remain solid and the next Government will be able to build upon it.

(The writer is a Supreme Court advocate)



SAMBRANT KRISHNA

The last full Budget before the 2024 general elections is not only an exercise in futurity but is also one-deaf to the realities of the society and India's neighbourhood. Like always, the Government cheerleaders claim that the Budget is historic, but if one looks beyond the surfeit of terms like Amrit kaal, Shri Anna, Karmayogi, etc, one finds that it is neither for the masses nor for long-term growth potential of the economy.

The biggest failure is the refusal of the Government to increase defence expenditure in any meaningful manner. For the first time in decades India's defence allocations have dropped below two per cent of the nominal GDP. The growth in defence expenditure has even failed to keep pace with the rise in nominal GDP. The capital expenditure for defence has seen a very small increase from Rs 1,50,000 crore (RE) in 2022-23 to Rs 1,62,000 (BE) for 2023-24. For a Government

that loves to claim its nationalist credentials at the drop of a hat, it is not surprising at all that the subject of defence was not mentioned in the Budget speech of the Finance Minister at all. The UPA Government under the Congress devoted more than 2 per cent of the GDP to defence and the BJP at that time used to shout that the allocation was not adequate and it will increase defence allocation when it came to power.

It must also be reminded that the India-China border was largely peaceful during that period and now that the possibility of a border clash between the two countries is a real possibility, the defence sector has been given a short shrift. It is also very likely that the subject of defence was not mentioned in the Budget so that it does not antagonise China and if that's the case then it's indeed shameful.

A lot of noise is being made by the Government on its target to reduce the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of GDP next year. If one looks beyond the headlines, one can easily see that the fertilizer subsidy in the coming year will come down drastically as the global prices, which had spiked after the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, have cooled down. Moreover, the Government has also stopped the free food grain distribution that it had started in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic and therefore the food subsidy will also come down. The planned reduction on the fiscal deficit therefore is not a result of sound fiscal management by the Government but is a result of factors beyond its control.

Another aspect of the Budget is that the numbers pre-

sented are not honest. While the budgeted increase in capital expenditure is hogging the limelight, revenue expenditure has not been subjected to the scrutiny it deserves. The budget for 2023-24 has projected only a marginal increase in revenue expenditure over the revised estimate for the current year. In fact, if the interest payment is subtracted from the revenue expenditure, the amount is lower than revised estimates for the current year. This is clearly unrealistic and it is very likely that the actual revenue expenditure will exceed the Budget estimates. Moreover, it does not take much to puncture the claim of the Government on achieving very high Central Government capital expenditure as a percentage of GDP. The Government in its last 10 year period has raided the retained earnings of the public sector enterprises as a result of which the capital expenditure by PSUs has come down.

The Government's only objective seems to win praise from business newspapers and industry bodies. These people dominate any post budget discussion and the concerns of rural and the poor masses are always relegated to the background. The allocation to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme (MGNREGA) has been reduced dramatically and the overall allocation to rural areas has come down. The Government likes to pretend that the country has fully recovered from the economic effects of Covid-19 but that is far from the truth. There is still widespread suffering in the rural areas and the Budget should have made increased allocation for the rural sector.

Unemployment is the biggest challenge facing our country but the Budget has nothing substantial for it. It seems that the youth will have no future to look forward to under the Modi Government. There was a lot of discussion on tourism in the Budget. It was projected as a magic pill to address the issue of unemployment in the country. However if one looks at the total allocation to the sector, it remains unchanged from what was allocated to it in the 2022-23 at Rs 2,300 crore.

The Budget is an all-round failure because it fails to prioritise its spending to areas that deserve urgent and continued attention of the Government. It criminally ignores 90 per cent of India's population and Indian voters will pay back in the coming State elections and the general election in the coming year.

(The writer is spokesperson, Uttarakhand Congress Committee)



DEEPAK BALUTIA


**YOUR
WEEK
AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA

**ARIES** March 21-April 19

Your anxiety is evident in all your efforts. When it comes to your health, trust your instincts. Get a second opinion if a diagnosis doesn't feel right. Individuals who consume alcohol or drugs should avoid or take a break from intoxication at this time. You need to be a more caring and generous person at work. People turn to you for assistance; your buddy or colleague may want financial assistance from you. This is the moment to make long-term investments. Your generosity and kindness will make you a good name. There is anguish and grief in the connection. For the relationship to survive, both sides will be willing to work on and discuss it. This is the time to reflect and contemplate.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Wednesday

**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

It will be beneficial if you pay attention to your health this week. The week begins with creative energy that makes you feel lively, nimble, and joyful. However, as the week develops, various health concerns may arise that require your quick treatment. There is a cure for everything. Be optimistic; everything will work out. Professionally, if you are not committed to your work, you may have to pay for it. People are observing you and providing up-to-the-minute information to higher authorities. You may be questioned about your irregularities in tasks and funds. This is a very emotional phase in your relationship. Things can rapidly turn sour and awkward. Take a rest if necessary. Pick your battles wisely, and always treat your partner as a friend.

Lucky number 17
Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Friday

**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week will be difficult for you in terms of your health. Panicking at this point will just make matters worse. Every crisis is followed by the promise of a good time. It all relies on what you do about it. Be upbeat about it and seek assistance from others. Meditation will be quite beneficial. Things may not be going so well in your job. You are nearing the end of a project or assignment when you are confronted with another problem or task at work. You must be resilient and not be frightened by those who want to bring you down. On the personal front, you will have disagreements with people. You must recognize that honest communication with your partner may help you settle all of your disagreements.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Tuesday

**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week, your health and vitality should be excellent. If you need to change your behaviors to safeguard your health, now is an excellent moment to do so. Starting with minor objectives, such as a daily walk, might lead to a healthier and stronger you. Spend time balancing your body, mind, and soul. On the job front, there might be a monetary loss or a condition of unemployment. Your anxieties, addictions, and other unpleasant impulses may be causing a negative atmosphere around you. You are depressed and have a negative outlook on life. Be optimistic; now is the time to learn from your blunders. On the personal front, your situation is favorable, particularly in light of an ongoing romance. Your relationship will enter a lighter, more balanced phase in which you will respect each other as equals.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Pastel Blue
Lucky day Thursday

**VRIGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, focus on health and follow-up workouts for people with serious illnesses. You could finally find it within yourself to give up certain unhealthy behaviors that you are aware are harmful. Take care of yourself first; only then will you be able to properly care for others. This week, you may receive some excellent news at work. You could get a call about a job with a better viewpoint, benefits, and facilities. Those who are waiting for posting may be able to travel to their selected location. This week brings monetary rewards for businesspeople. Relationships are not going as well as you imagined. You must work hard. Put your thoughts and opinions to your loved ones in a way that they will be easily accepted; else, they will be rejected.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Mauve
Lucky day Monday

**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week has some excellent news for you. Even if you are dealing with major health issues, a cheerful attitude may do miracles. If you believe something is amiss with your physical being, make sure you have access to medical care. Believe your intuition. On the job front, there is joy and celebration. You are going to see the fruits of your labor and efforts. If you are seeking for work, you'll find something greater than you could have imagined. Your contributions are recognized and respected. In terms of your relationship, your spouse's attitude may irritate you, and you may feel unhappy and lonely. You may have a sense of isolation. Try to broaden your horizons and think optimistically.

Lucky number 2
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Friday

**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

Despite the strain and stress this week, you stay calm and composed. Your support system is your boundless energy and stamina. You must channel your enthusiasm into something productive. Your health is still fine, and you have control over your sensory delights. On the professional front, your dedication and willpower will help you reach your goals; otherwise, you will face several obstacles and delays in your job. In times of crisis, your tough decisions will give you the strength to proceed and set out the plan. Follow the advice of a senior person who understands your boundaries and is close to you. This week, you may confront pushback from close friends and family members. Family rifts and disagreements are probable. Be a little softer and more kind.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Off-white
Lucky day Monday

**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, you are constrained in terms of your health. Fear, worry, and negative thoughts are interfering with your ability to live a normal life. You must strike a balance between your body, mind, and soul. When one's thoughts are negative or filled with anxiety, one's health suffers. If you meditate and listen to your body's voice, 50% of your issues will solve themselves. On the job front, you may experience an unexpected setback or unfairness. The post you have been eyeing may be filled by another candidate of comparable caliber. The dilemma of whether to stay in the current one or join the new one will prevail. On the relationship front, make an effort to stay connected in order to keep the flame alive.

Lucky number 31
Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Wednesday

**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week, your health may make you feel good. You should be full of energy and optimism for the future. Consider your regular frame of thought, and keep in mind that your attitude impacts your health. Maintain an optimistic mindset. You are now able to mentor others and share your spiritual insights. On the professional front, you are approaching the point where professional achievement and recognition are firmly within your reach. Make every effort to be orderly and productive. This will compensate you. Now is not the time to gamble or take chances. On the personal front, good fortune will accompany you in matters of the heart. If you are already in a relationship, it could deepen and improve. You are emotionally satisfied.

Lucky number 1
Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Friday

**CANCER** June 21-July 22

You are feeling down and gloomy this week since things aren't going your way. There are several additional health conditions that have you concerned. Do not be too tense; this is only a passing phase. All tests will pass. The strain is the most serious sickness. You are likely to advance professionally. There will be money, status, and honor on the line. Business owners may make a lot of money. You schedule time for healing and massage therapy. This has been a decent emotional week. Romance is on the cards for the new love. Married partners must be concerned about and comprehend one other's sentiments. There is a communication gap that must be addressed since it is the primary cause of distance and isolation.

Lucky number 9
Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Saturday

**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, your health is likely to be good. You will be full of energy and excitement. However, exercises should be done with caution because minor sprains or injuries can occur. If you've been slacking on your health, it's time to get back on track. On the job, you may come across a man of influence and leadership abilities who would like to mentor you. His presence is required to point you in the proper route. If you've been dealing with difficulties, now is the moment to take command of the issue. You will be incredibly goal-oriented and visionary. This week will be spectacular in terms of relationships. This is a moment to follow your intuition.

Lucky number 3
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Saturday

**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This week, your health difficulties will be resolved. You are probably aware that health is extremely essential and requires special care and attention. The phrase "prevention is better than cure" applies to you well. You attend healing therapy sessions and seminars and put them into practice in your life. On the professional front, you must break free from the self-imposed constraints that are impeding your career advancement. In some situations, you must be fluent and quick-witted, yet your mental confusion and dualism prevent you from doing so. Reduce your spending. Keep your eyes and ears open for chances that come your way. On the personal front, commitments are not made to be broken; if you do, you may suffer in terms of relationships.

Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday

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**ASTROTURF**

BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

On Saraswati puja day last week, a visitor asked: "Vedanta, the founding stone of Indian philosophy hypothesises a singular formless and attribute-less Primordial-Source where from the creation chain took off. But at the same time we worship various form-gods, seeking boons for fulfillment of desires. Are the two concepts not in conflict?"

Well, there is none. Vedanta talks of eternal reality to which the whole manifest world is rooted. The form-God concept, on the other hand, has a purposeful contextual relevance. They carry valuable educative import, each identified with a particular attribute, vital to orderly human conduct. Goddess Saraswati in this sense offers lessons on how to pursue the learning process to acquire wisdom. These imageries were accorded the status of a deity to draw immediate attention of the seekers.

Complex dynamics of man and the universe call for necessary awareness. That alone would help us relate well with the world around individually and collectively. But our egotistical mind, bound by its preconditioning and habit tendencies, restricts our scope of vision,

making it difficult to holistically understand the dynamics of life. That makes it incumbent upon us to expand our vision to explore existential truths with an open mind. Meditation on the imagery of Mother Goddess Saraswati is the way forward.

First the words: "Saraswati". It is made from the root-syllable, "Sara", which means spontaneous flow. Saraswati, thus, offers lessons in how ensure smooth run of life. She is visualised clad in spotless white apparel, also mounted on white Swan. Transparent white is the colour of purity, Buddhi (discriminate intelligence) and Space. It hints out at the pure, unsullied, truths, as laid down in nature. Only pure-minds, free from any preconditioning whatsoever, could explore such truths. Otherwise, with our minds driven by a sense of relative perception, it will be difficult to identify the thin dividing line between truth and untruth. It is something like milk diluted with water, which looks no different from its pure form. However, when served to a Swan, it consumes the pure milk, leaving aside the adulterated water, and hence the relevance of Her mount.



The Mother is armed with Veena (a stringed musical instrument). We are all aware that pleasing sound emanating from the musical instrument comes into

effect through harmony and symphony of varied sound notes excited by different strings. In an implied sense, She remains the beholder of all Sabdas—the

spoken as well as written words carrying meaning. And the word carries meaning only when the letters are placed in an orderly fashion. It also points to the fact that pleasing mannerism alone could help relate well and be in harmony with all and sundry, for a smooth run of life.

Veena, the musical instrument of Mother thus metaphorically symbolises the beholder of words. The mother is shown holding a book (the Veda) in one of her hands, meaning that scriptures provide us with the right lead. She is shown having a rosary in another hand. It implies that repeated reflection over knowledge acquired would be needed for realisation of the true import underlying the writup. She is shown moving freely in a water body, having beautiful Lotus flower around, growing out of the mud lying in its womb. This is in acknowledgment of the fact that the earthly matter acquired its form-existence when aided by water element, and which acquired its dynamism out of the Sakti provided by the consciousness element, contextually symbolised by Mother. The Lotus flower here symbolises both creativity and lustre evident with knowl-

edge. Though born in muddy water, not even a drop of water or mud particle can stick to the lotus flower leaves, thus implying a sense of detachment. So, true wisdom can be acquired only when explored with a sense of detachment.

A peacock is also shown around the Mother, which she uses as a carrier while moving up above in the sky. We cannot afford to lose sight of the forces routed through the infinite, inaccessible and indestructible space either. And, obviously tracking down the information laid down there is no easy task. It needs to be noted that the prized feed of a peacock is poisonous snake. When the peacock digests the snake's poison, it leads to a change in its body chemistry, which results in the beautiful colour its plumage reflects. Similarly, knowledge acquisition cannot be an easy task. It implies that only those who take on the pains associated with learning process kindly, would be able to acquire the knowledge and wisdom.

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