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Act at once for peace in Manipur: Opp MPs

INDIA alliance team submits memo to Govt, slams Central, Manipur Govts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/IMPHAL

The Opposition MPs, under the banner of the INDIA coalition, accused the Central and Manipur Governments on Monday of turning a blind eye to the explosive situation on the ground. They urged the State Government to initiate immediate action to restore peace in the northeastern region.

The MPs returned to the national Capital on Sunday after a two-day visit to violence-torn Manipur. On Sunday, the delegation handed over a memorandum to Governor Anusuiya Uiquey in Imphal, urging immediate action to restore peace in the State.

While urging the Governor to restore normalcy in the State at the earliest, the delegation also criticised both the Central and State Governments for turning a blind eye to the State's "precarious" and



Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, AAP MP Sushil Gupta, TMC MP Sushmita Dev and other members of a delegation of Opposition INDIA alliance MPs submit a memorandum to Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uiquey on their observations after visiting the northeastern State, at Raj Bhavan, in Imphal on Sunday

"volatile" situation.

On Monday, before the Monsoon session of Parliament resumes after the weekend break, the delegation will present a report and discuss the situation in a meeting in the chamber of Congress president and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge. The meeting aims to strategise how to corner the Government on the same issue in both Houses of Parliament

during the following week.

Sources suggest that the delegation is also likely to hold a media briefing on Monday, along with the floor leaders of participating delegates in Parliament.

In the memorandum submitted to the Manipur Governor, the 21 signatory MPs demanded immediate rehabilitation and resettlement of the affected people to restore peace and harmony in the

state. The MPs pointed out recent incidents of shooting and arson as evidence of the state machinery's failure to control the situation.

The Opposition also highlighted the negative consequences of the three-month-long internet ban, expressing concern that it has led to the spread of unsubstantiated rumours and deepened community distrust.

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Modi launches 'Meri Mati Mera Desh' ahead of I-day

Amrit Kalash Yatra to carry soil from across India for Amrit Vatika in Delhi; PM says record 4,000 women did Haj without 'Mehram' is transformation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced the "Meri Mati Mera Desh" campaign, set to honour the brave men and women who sacrificed their lives for the country. Speaking in the 103rd edition of "Mann Ki Baat", Modi touched upon various topics, including water conservation, the return of ancient Indian artifacts, action against drug abuse, and nationwide tree planting.

The campaign, launched ahead of Independence Day, aims to resonate throughout the country in conjunction with the "Amrit Mohatsav" celebrations. Modi addressed listeners in his monthly radio-talk, expressing his intention to install special inscriptions in lakhs of village panchayats to honour these luminaries.

As part of the campaign, an "Amrit Kalash Yatra" will carry soil from every corner of India to Delhi, along with saplings from different regions, to build an "Amrit Vatika" near the National War Memorial, sym-

bolising "Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat".

The Prime Minister said over 4,000 Muslim women performing Haj this year without "mehram" was a "huge transformation" and asserted that more and more people were getting the chance to go for the annual pilgrimage with the changes made by his Government in the Haj policy over the past few years.

Over 4,000 Indian women performed Haj without "mehram" this year, the largest since the reform in 2018 which did away with the compulsion of a male companion with women on the pilgrimage.

Modi said he has received a large number of letters this time from Muslim women who have recently returned from the Haj pilgrimage.

"This journey of theirs is very special in many ways. These are the women who performed Haj without any male companion or mehram and the number is not 50 or 100, but more than 4,000 — this is a huge transformation," the Prime Minister said.



Addressing water conservation, Modi highlighted the construction of more than 60,000 Amrit Sarovars during the "Azaadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" and ongoing efforts to build an additional 50,000. He commended the people of Madhya Pradesh for transforming wells into water recharge systems, thus replenishing groundwater levels.

The Prime Minister also celebrated India's achievement of destroying over 10 lakh kg of drugs, valued at over ₹12,000 crore, and applauded the youth's active role in the anti-drug campaign.

In the realm of cultural heritage, Modi expressed gratitude to the United States for returning more than a hundred rare and ancient artefacts to India. He highlighted the significance of the artefacts, including statues from the Chola dynasty and Lord Ganesha, which were brought back to the country.

"I would like to thank the US Government for returning the precious heritage to us. Even in 2016 and 2021, when I visited America, many arte-

facts were returned to India."

Highlighting that the artefacts belonged to different regions of the country, the PM said, "Statues belonging to the Chola dynasty, the busts of Lord Murugan attached to Tamil Nadu's culture, 1000-year old Lord Ganesha's statue have been returned to India from the US.

A few days ago, there was a craze across social media, America has returned us over 100 rare and ancient artefacts. These artefacts returned to India are 250 to 2500 years old. Modi said people from all over the world are coming to India for pilgrimages. "I came to know about two such American friends who came from California for Amarnath Yatra."

Modi acknowledged the increasing global interest in Indian pilgrimages, as evidenced by visitors from all over the world, including two American friends who journeyed to Amarnath Yatra from California," he said.

Lastly, the PM lauded the preservation efforts of Uttarakhand's rare species of "Bhojpatra" leaves, which were once used to write ancient Indian texts. "Mann Ki Baat" episode emphasised the nation's progress in preserving its culture, environment, and historical heritage while promoting unity and development.

Delhi Police in Azerbaijan to nab Sachin for Moose killing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi Police team has gone to Azerbaijan in pursuit of Sachin Bishnoi, the notorious gangster allegedly linked to the murder of renowned Punjabi singer Sidhu Moose Wala. Bishnoi, believed to be one of the masterminds behind the singer's murder and the nephew of notorious criminal Lawrence Bishnoi, fled to Azerbaijan shortly after the crime, triggering a far-reaching international manhunt.

Moose Wala, a celebrated Punjabi singer and Congress politician, met a brutal end on May 29 near his village Moosa in Punjab's Mansa district. The assailants fired over 30 rounds at Moose Wala, leaving him lifeless in the driver's seat of his SUV. The murder occurred just a day after the AAP Government in Punjab had curtailed his security cover.

Bishnoi, with a long history of involvement in organised crime, has been accused in numerous cases of kidnaping, murder, and extortion, among other crimes. His latest



alleged crime has stirred an outpouring of grief from the Punjabi music industry, underscoring the gravity of the situation.

A team from the Delhi Police Special Cell, including four senior officers, is expected to arrive in Azerbaijan by tonight. Led by an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), the contingent includes two inspectors from the Counter Intelligence Unit and has a clear mandate: secure the extradition of Sachin Bishnoi, a criminal

fugitive, back to India.

Bishnoi was recently apprehended in Azerbaijan after reportedly escaping from Delhi on a fake passport and making his way to the Eurasian nation. The police officers will initiate the process of extraditing Bishnoi back to India.

Meanwhile, Goldy Brar, the alleged mastermind behind the murder, admitted to planning the crime in a Facebook post a day after the incident. Brar is now one of the 25

most wanted fugitives in Canada, and his life-sized cutout has been displayed at Toronto's Yonge-Dundas Square along with all 25 fugitives.

Another key figure in the case, Lawrence Bishnoi, is also under investigation, but he is currently attempting to change his appearance while Brar remains abroad. The police had identified six shooters involved in the killing, two of whom were killed in an inmate clash in a Punjab jail.

Fidayeen kills over 50 at Islamic party meet in Pakistan

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

A powerful blast triggered by a suicide bomber killed at least 50 people and injured nearly 150 others on Sunday at a rally of a hardline Islamic party in a restive tribal district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan.

The explosion took place at 4 pm at the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) workers' convention in Khar, the capital of Bajaur tribal district.

At least 50 people were killed and nearly 150 injured in the blast, hospital sources said.

Saad Khan, the district emergency officer in the Bajaur region, confirmed the death toll. Maulana Ziaullah Jan, JUI-F's local leader, was also killed in the blast.

Rescue workers said they feared the number of casualties would rise.



Television footage showed panic-stricken people gathering at the site following the blast as ambulances arrived to move the injured to hospitals. Over 500 people were attending the convention when the blast occurred.

DIG police Malakand Range Nasir Mehmud Satti said the initial investigation revealed it was a suicide blast.

Continued on Page 2

Sharad to confer award on Modi much to Opp chagrin

PM to be honoured with Lokmanya Tilak National Award for fostering patriotism among citizens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leaders from various Opposition parties who have come together under the banner of INDIA alliance urged NCP founder Sharad Pawar not to share the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Pune on August 1.

The Opposition parties have announced their plan to stage a protest and raise black flags during the event where Modi is set to be conferred with the prestigious Lokmanya Tilak National Award for 2023 in recognition of his leadership and efforts to foster patriotism among citizens.

The felicitation ceremony in Pune will see the presence of



Pawar and senior Congress leader Sushilkumar Shinde, who serves as a trustee of the Tilak Smarak Mandir Trust.

However, apprehensive about the implications of Pawar's participation in the event, a delegation led by socialist leader Baba Adhav is scheduled to meet with Pawar on Monday. The delegation comprises representatives from Shiv Sena (UBT), AAP, CPI(M), and members from Pawar's own faction. The meeting, initially planned for Sunday evening, had to be postponed to Monday as Pawar did not travel from Mumbai to Pune as originally intended.

The leaders of the INDIA coalition have expressed their concerns about the possible signal Pawar's presence might send regarding the ongoing tensions within the NCP and his support for his nephew, Ajit Pawar.

Prashant Jagtap, the NCP's Pune chief, confirmed the delegation's efforts, stating that their objective is to persuade Pawar to reconsider attending the event. However, despite the appeal from the Opposition, Pawar is expected to be present at the SP College ground in Pune and personally confer the award on Modi.

Adding to the chorus of concern, the Shiv Sena (UBT), a key ally of the NCP in the MVA alliance, has come out in open against Pawar's decision. Sanjay Raut, the party's spokesperson, emphasised that it is not appropriate for Pawar to felicitate Modi, especially given the strained relations between the two leaders and the impact on the NCP's image and politics after the recent vertical split within the party.

Sanjay Raut strongly conveyed the party's position, stating, "When the Prime Minister is calling the constituents of INDIA all sorts of names and when he and his party have wrecked the NCP, it does not look appropriate for the NCP chief to attend the event and bestow the honour on the Prime Minister."

CAPSULE

CHABAD HOUSE IMAGES IN ULTRA'S DEVICES

Pune: The Maharashtra ATS has recovered images of Chabad House, one of the 26/11 terror attacks sites, in south Mumbai from the electronic devices of the two terror suspects arrested earlier this month in Pune, a senior official said on Sunday. The agency also recovered an electronic circuit used in making explosives from the rented flat of the terror suspects in Pune's Kondhwa area along with 500 GB data from the devices, he said.

5 PALESTINIANS KILLED IN LEBANON CAMP

Beirut: Overnight clashes Sunday in Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp near the southern port city of Sidon left 5 dead and 6 others wounded, Palestinian officials said. The ongoing clashes are taking place as Palestinian factions in Ein el-Hilweh for years have cracked down on militant Islamist groups and fugitives seeking shelter in the camp's overcrowded neighbourhoods. **P9**

Terrorists kidnap jawan on Eid leave in Kulgam

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

An Army jawan, who was on leave to celebrate the festival of Eid in South Kashmir's Kulgam district, was kidnapped by suspected terrorists from a local market late on Saturday.

Rifleman Javed Ahmad Wani, a member of the Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment and posted in the Ladakh region, had visited the local market to purchase some eatables. However, he was forcibly taken away, leaving his family in a state of anguish. He was scheduled to resume his duty in the unit on Monday.

The family members are earnestly pleading with the kidnappers to release their son immediately and unharmed.

"I appeal to all the brothers to let him go alive. If he has troubled anyone, I apologise for that. If they want, I will get him to quit his job as well,"



expressed Mohammad Ayoub Wani, the soldier's father, during a press interaction.

"He told his brother to drop him at the airport tomorrow (Sunday). Sometime later, we got a call that his car was found abandoned with its doors ajar," the father said.

Eyewitnesses claim that there were blood marks in the car but officials did not confirm it.

According to reports, the soldier had gone out to buy meat on Saturday evening as he

was supposed to return to his place of posting on Sunday. Later, the family received a call informing them that his car was found abandoned with their doors open.

As of now, extensive searches are being conducted in the area to trace the whereabouts of the abducted Army personnel.

This incident brings back memories of similar abductions of soldiers on leave in the same region. It reminds us of 22-year-old Lt Ummer Fayaz, who was abducted and killed in 2017 while on leave for his sister's wedding, and Rifleman Aurangzeb, who met a similar fate in 2018 while on leave to celebrate Eid with his family.

These abductions have caused immense grief and sorrow to the families of the fallen soldiers, raising concerns about the safety and security of soldiers on leave in the region.



Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) PSLV-C56 carrying Singapore's DS-SAR satellite along with 6 co-passenger satellites lifts off from the launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre, in Sriharikota, on Sunday

MP BJP's leadership inefficient: Digvijaya

Digvijaya cites reason for Shah's visit to MP ahead of polls

PTI ■ INDORE

Veteran Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Sunday alleged that since the Madhya Pradesh BJP's leadership was "hopeless and inefficient", Union Home Minister Amit Shah had to visit the State and get involved in the party work ahead of the assembly elections. He also said that Shah's visit to the State proves the inefficiency of the Chief Ministers during the Bharatiya Janata Party's 20-year rule in the State.

Shah on Sunday kicked off the ruling BJP's campaign for the Madhya Pradesh assembly elections, due later this year, by addressing party workers in Indore. It was Shah's third visit to the state this month. Earlier, he reviewed the party's preparedness for the assembly elections twice in Bhopal. "The state leadership of the BJP is so lifeless, hopeless and inefficient that Shah has to come to the state (in view of the next assembly elections)," Singh said in reply to a question about the Union minister's frequent visits to the poll-



Shah, during his address to party workers in Indore, repeatedly used terms like "Mr Bantadhar" and "corruption Nath", which are viewed as swipes at Congress leaders Digvijaya Singh and Kamal Nath, respectively. Notably, the BJP had used the term "Mr Bantadhar" against the then chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Digvijaya Singh, in the campaign led by Uma Bharti during the 2003 assembly elections. Kamal Nath was termed as the corruption Nath in posters with his picture put up by unidentified people in MP last month.

The Congress's Rajya Sabha member, who was the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh between 1993 and 2003, said Shah's extensive activity in the state proves how inefficiently BJP chief ministers have run the state during the last 20 years. State Congress President Kamal Nath, however, termed Shah's visits to the state a normal occurrence during the elections. "Shah should enjoy coming (to Madhya Pradesh). It is his wish. Elections are approaching. In view of the elections, all leaders keep visiting," he said.

Manipur situation outcome of BJP's politics: CPM's Tapan

PTI ■ JAMMU

CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Tapan Sen on Sunday said the situation in Manipur is an outcome of the BJP's "politics of pitching people against each other", as he demanded the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh for allegedly "failing" to control the violence in his state. "India is full of diversity which is our strength as we are all one. However, the cheap politics of the ruling party led to the creation of a grave situation in Manipur," he said, expressing apprehensions there could be communal incidents in the country before the general elections next year.

The 'All India Convention of Contractual Workers of National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and Chenab Valley Power Projects (CVPP) was held here. It was attended by over 200 delegates from Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, northeast states and Uttarakhand.

"The situation in Manipur is very bad and is the outcome of the BJP's politics of pitching people against each other on the basis of religion, creed and castes," Sen told reporters on the sidelines of a convention here.

Asked if Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh should resign, he said, "We have been demanding that he must go as it was his responsibility to stop the violence."

"What has been happen-

ing in Manipur since May 3 cannot be compared to the incidents in West Bengal or Rajasthan. They (BJP leaders) are enacting drama by diverting attention with an eye on power. Almost three months have passed but the BJP government has failed to restore normalcy," he said.

On reports of remarks of former army chief M M Naravane hinting the involvement of foreign agencies behind the Manipur crisis, the CPI(M) leader said if there is a foreign hand, the central government must answer what it was doing there.

Senior CPI(M) leader and President of State Committee of CITU M Y Tarigami lambasted the government over the issue of job guarantees to contractual workers of various power projects.

He also castigated the J&K administration for introducing smart meters and said, "This is a direct result of privatisation of the electricity. Private companies are bound to increase the power tariff but the consumers are not in a position to pay hefty amounts, triggering protests in almost everywhere in J&K."

CITU General Secretary Jagdish Sharma said the convention unanimously decided to form a coordination committee of the power project workers, which would meet once in three months to review their demands and decide the next course of action.

Fire at hospital in Ahmedabad; 106 patients evacuated, no casualty



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A fire broke out in the basement of a 10-storey hospital building in Gujarat's Ahmedabad city on Sunday causing thick smoke in the premises, following which 106 patients were evacuated as a precautionary measure, officials said.

There was no report of any casualty in the blaze which erupted at around 4.30 am in Rajasthan Hospital, located in the city's Sahibaug area, they said.

A four-wheeler parked in the basement of the facility was partially damaged, a fire official said.

Due to the renovation work underway at the hospital, several items stored in the basement caught fire and caused massive smoke, the official said.

The state government later said all hospitals will be inspected in view of this fire.

It took about eight hours to control the blaze because of the massive smoke in two basements of the building

and difficulties faced by the fire fighters in entering one of the basements, he said.

The hospital is run by a charitable trust.

The fire broke out at around 4.30 am in the basement of Rajasthan Hospital, inspector M D Champavat from Sahibaug police station said, adding that heavy smoke emanated from the basement of the medical facility.

While Champavat had earlier informed that 125 patients were evacuated, Deputy Commissioner of Police Kanan Desai said 106 patients admitted in the multi-storeyed building were shifted to other hospitals after the fire as a precautionary measure.

"Out of these patients, seven were critical and were admitted in the ICUs. No casualty has been reported," she said.

The blaze erupted in the second basement of the 10-storey Rajasthan Hospital and a call was received at around 4.30 am, deputy chief fire officer Jayesh Khadia said.

Due to the ongoing renovation of the hospital, several items stored in the basement caught fire and caused massive smoke. Around two dozen fire fighting vehicles were rushed to the spot, he said. "It took nearly eight hours to control the fire because of massive smoke and difficulties in getting entry to the affected areas. We managed to enter the first basement after ventilating smoke mechanically, but faced massive difficulties in entering the second basement," Khadia said.

State health minister Rushikesh Patel said miscellaneous trash and scrap stored in the basement of the hospital caught fire likely due to a short circuit.

"All patients were shifted to safety. The Gujarat government will carry out inspection of all public and private hospital in view of the fire incident. The state government will again carry out inspection of all the hospitals with ICUs in multi-storeyed buildings," Patel said.

Buddha continues to be critical but stable



SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Condition of former Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee continued to be critical though he was responding to treatments, doctors attending on him said on Sunday adding he would be kept under observation for another 48 hours which was going to be crucial for him.

Bhattacharjee's oxygen saturation level had increased to satisfactory levels and his heart was in good condition though he was suffering from pneumonia in both the lungs, doctors said adding his condition had deteriorated on Saturday night and had to be put on invasive ventilation.

The former Chief Minister who succeeded Jyoti Basu as the Chief Minister in 2000 and tried to restore Bengal to its glorious industrial days before falling prey to the land movements --- at Singur and Nandigram --- led by Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee who overthrew him in 2011 was on Saturday noon rushed to a private medical facility in South Kolkata with oxygen saturation levels dropping drastically to 70.

"He was serious and was not in a conscious state ... in the night his condition slightly deteriorated and we had to put him on ventilation ... but since then he has been responding well to antibiotics and has been in a semi-conscious state responding to commands by nodding or by gesticulation," one of the 11-member-board of doctors said.

The 79-year-old Marxist patriarch suffers

from COPD and is diabetic. Presently the former Chief Minister was in a stable condition but "we cannot say that he is not critical ... we will have to wait for another 48 hours to say something like that ... but before that if he continues to improve and respond to treatments we will conduct CT Scan of his lungs tomorrow," doctors said.

Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose had visited the former Chief Minister at the hospital and wished him early recovery. Senior BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari too came to see him on Sunday noon.

"I saw him from outside a glass enclosure ... he is responding with signs ... I wish he recovers early as he has been perhaps the most honest and scrupulous politician of Bengal ... It will be difficult to find another honest politician like him in the history of Bengal ... this is my candid acknowledgment outside politics," on Sunday Adhikari said.

The ruling TMC leadership promptly picked up politics in his statement even as the party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said, "though I pray for Buddhadeb Babu's early recovery I am not ready to accord him a status of political hermit."

The CPI(M) immediately hit back saying, "it would be difficult for the TMC politicians --- most of who are sunken neck deep in the muck of scams --- to decipher honesty from corruption because they are congenitally corrupt and need treatment to develop the idea of honesty?"

Cong asks State units to mark International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples on Aug 9 as 'Adivasi Gaurav Parv'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress has asked its state units to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 9 as 'Adivasi Gaurav Parv' and express support for tribals in their fight against alleged "erosion of their rights" under the NDA government.

In a communication to all state units, AICC general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal said this event should honour the rich cultural heritage of tribal brothers and sisters as well as act as an opportunity to appreciate their role as the torchbearers of a sustainable world.

On the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 9, the Congress wishes to express its immense admiration for Adivasi communities and support them in their "fight against the consistent erosion of their rights and identity over the past 9 years", the communication said.

"We are all witness to how the present BJP regime is insulting, humiliating and harassing the tribal communities, and also depriving



them of their legitimate rights. It has been the Congress party which is consistently standing by them and raising their voice at various forums," it said.

Hence, under the leadership of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and in solidarity with the vision of inclusivity of Rahul Gandhi, all Pradesh Congress Committees (PCCs) are requested to organise 'Adivasi Gaurav Parv' on August 9, Venugopal said in his letter.

"All the leaders and workers of the party, along with our Adivasi brothers and sisters, should also reiterate our commitment to the cause of

an equitable and just society," he said.

He asked the PCCs to plan and execute befitting events with utmost dedication at the state and assembly levels. At the state level, Venugopal called on the party to organise 'Adivasi Gaurav Mahasabha' at a place in the state that is traditionally or historically important to the Adivasis.

He called for a mega rally to be organised by the PCC to highlight the Congress' contributions to the betterment of Adivasis.

"We should also bring to the fore the BJP's inhuman atrocities and failures towards

Adivasi welfare," the communication said.

Venugopal also urged the PCC to host an Adivasi Intellectuals' Forum Conference to engage with thinkers, academicians, activists and students from Adivasi communities.

At the assembly level, he called for a ceremony to honour the contribution of Adivasi communities and leaders to the country's history and development.

"Acknowledge their resilience and invaluable role in preserving our country's cultural diversity," he said.

Venugopal also called for cultural events with local

influencers to showcase the unique traditions, music, dance and arts of Adivasi communities residing in the state.

The Congress general secretary also urged the units to organise a 'Sanrakshan Pratigya' to highlight the BJP's alleged "atrocities and failures towards tribals" and renew its commitment to the cause of equity and justice for Adivasis.

He also called on the state units to organise as a gesture of goodwill, a community dinner where party members, Adivasi leaders and community members can come together and engage in meaningful dialogue.

"All party members along with our Adivasi brethren will hold a night march to highlight the fight for Adivasi rights," Venugopal told state units.

Party leaders and members, at the culmination of the 'Mashaal Yatra', will spend the night in Adivasi homes, the communication said.

"Let us approach this event with a sense of unity and purpose to strengthen the bridge between the Adivasi community and the Congress," Venugopal said.

Fidayeen kills over 50 at Islamic party meet in...

From Page 1

However, evidence is being collected to determine the nature of the blast.

The area was sealed and a search operation has been initiated, he said. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the deadly attack, which came after a brief lull.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the blast at the JUI-F convention. He said terrorists targeted those who advocated the cause of Islam, the Holy Quran and Pakistan.

"Terrorists are enemies of Pakistan and they will be eliminated," he said in a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office.

Elements involved in the incident would be meted out with strict punishment, he said.

He also sought a report of the incident from Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

President Arif Alvi prayed for eternal peace for the departed souls and commiserated with the bereaved families. He also wished speedy recovery for the injured and emphasised the timely provision of medical assistance to them.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah vowed to bring the perpetrators of today's attack

to justice.

"The cowardly acts of terrorists cannot dampen our spirits," he posted on X, the social media platform previously known as Twitter.

The JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman demanded Prime Minister Sharif and the province's caretaker Chief Minister Azam Khan to investigate the incident. He also urged the party workers to reach the hospital and donate blood.

"JUI workers should remain peaceful and federal and provincial governments should provide the best treatment to the injured," said Fazl.

Chief Minister Khan condemned the blast and sought a report from the district administration.

Police said that the injured have been shifted to a nearby hospital.

The condition of the majority of the injured people was stated to be critical.

JUI-F leader Hafiz Hamdullah said he was supposed to attend the convention on Sunday but could not because of some personal commitments.

"I strongly condemn the blast and want to give a message to the people behind it that this is not jihad but terrorism," the JUI-F leader said, adding that it was an attack on humanity and Bajaur.

He demanded that the blast should be probed, recalling that this was not the first that the JUI-F had been targeted.

"This has happened before... Our workers have been targeted. We raised our voice over this in the Parliament but no action was taken."

Hamdullah also extended

his condolences to grieving families and urged the provincial government to provide the best medical facilities to the injured. Caretaker Information minister of the province Jamal Feroze Shah said an emergency was declared in hospitals of Peshawar and Dir district.

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terrorist attacks following the Afghan Taliban's return to power in August 2021 and called upon the interim rulers to take decisive actions against terrorists including the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) responsible for cross-border attacks.

In November last year, the TTP called off an indefinite ceasefire agreed with the federal government and ordered its militants to carry out attacks on Pakistan's security forces.

On January 30, a Pakistan Taliban suicide bomber blew himself up during the afternoon prayers in a mosque in Peshawar, killing 101 people and injuring more than 200 others.

In February, heavily-armed TTP militants stormed the Karachi Police chief's office in Pakistan's most populous city, sparking gunfire that killed three rebels and four others, including two police constables.

The TTP was set up as an umbrella group of several militant outfits in 2007.

The outfit, which is believed to be close to Al-Qaeda, has been blamed for several deadly attacks across Pakistan, including an attack on army headquarters in 2009, assaults on military bases, and the 2008 bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad.

Act at once for peace in...

From Page 1

"Both the State and Central Governments are turning a blind eye to the dire situation in Manipur. Despite grandiose promises made in Delhi and even abroad, people are struggling to obtain necessities such as food and medicine," said Congress MP and Leader of the Party in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, upon returning from Manipur.

The delegation visited relief camps at Churachandpur, Moirang, and Imphal and interacted with the victims/inmates in the relief camps.

Congress MP Phulodevi Netam, who was part of the 21-member opposition delegation, expressed concern about the living conditions in the

camp and the lack of basic facilities for the people there.

Addressing a press conference after the meeting with the Governor, Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev of the Trinamool Congress assured the people of the state that the opposition alliance stands with them and will continue to fight in the Parliament's monsoon session to "make the Prime Minister accountable" to Manipur.

RJD MP Manoj Jha emphasized the need for peace and harmony in Manipur and mentioned discussions in Parliament about sending an all-party delegation to the state.

DMK leader and delegation member Kanimozhi highlighted the continued "volatility in Manipur" and stressed the need for peace talks as the way forward.

3 students feared drowned in Yamuna, search underway

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three schoolgoing boys, who had gone to take a bath in the Yamuna River in north Delhi's Alipur area, are feared to have drowned, police said on Sunday. The search operation is underway, they said.

According to police, they received a PCR call at 7.52 pm on Saturday that three boys — Rishu, Shivam and Rupesh, all residents of Singhu village — had left their home saying they were going towards Yamuna River at 9.30 am on bicycles, but did not return.

During verification, it was found that the three children had left with their friends Shubham and Parvesh, but the two groups parted ways thereafter, a senior police officer said.

The families of all five children were called and an extensive search was made near the river with the help of a rescue team, but they were



not found. Subsequently, a case under section 363 (punishment for kidnapping) of the IPC was registered at Alipur police station on the statement of the father of one of the children, the officer said.

At 1.45 am, another call was received at Alipur police station that the five kids had gone to Yamuna River. Out of them, only two returned and three have drowned in the river near shank number-4, the officer said. Based on the information, a search was made near

the area and the bicycles of the children were found there, the officer said. The rescue and police team had made intensive searches in and around Yamuna River during the night hours, but no clue was found. Efforts are continued to trace missing children, police said.

All are students of Class VIII of an MCD school at Singhu, they said. Rishu's father Ram Singh said his son, along with four others who live nearby had gone to Yamuna River on Saturday morning but did

not return. "Rishu and four others who live in the same area had gone to take a bath in Yamuna River and left home on Saturday morning. Two children returned home around 3 pm. When Rishu and two others did not return, we started searching for them around 6 pm.

"We called the police around 7.30 pm when we could not find our kids. Later, we got to know that two more had gone with our kids. We asked them about Rishu and others. Initially, they did not say anything, but later when we asked them strictly, they told us that three had drowned in the river," Singh said.

Singh further stated that the five kids had gone to Yamuna River on three bicycles. "The search operation is still underway, but nothing has been found so far. He is my elder son. We can only pray for his well being," said Singh, who works at a paper factory.

3 cases registered for violence during Muharram processions

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three cases were registered after an unruly crowd taking part in Muharram processions clashed with police and pelted them with stones in west Delhi's Nangloi, officials said on Sunday. Twelve people, including six police personnel, were injured in the clashes, they said.

The first FIR was registered under sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act at Nangloi police station on the complaint of Nangloi SHO Prabh Dayal. The incident in this case occurred at Surajmal Stadium, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Harendra Singh said.

The second FIR was registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by Nanag Ram, the law and order inspector at Nangloi police station, for an incident at Nangloi Chowk, Singh said.

The third FIR was registered on the complaint of



Mukesh Kumar, a head constable, for an incident near the metro station at Nangloi. All three cases were registered on Sunday, he added. In the first FIR, Dayal said several 'tazia' processions were scheduled in Nangloi on Saturday. There were meetings conducted with the organisers regarding the route and other issues.

Apart from Nangloi police station of the Outer district, meetings were held with Prem Nagar and Aman Vihar police stations in Rohini district. It was decided that the processions would proceed towards

Surajmal Stadium via the metro station, take a u-turn from the Nangloi depot red light and return to their designated place, it said. From 12 pm on Saturday, various processions were approaching from different areas following the pre-decided route, the FIR stated.

Around 5 pm, some processions from the Prem Nagar and Aman Vihar areas of Rohini district crossed the Kirari Gate and reached the front of Surajmal Stadium via Rohtak Road. Upon reaching the site, instead of following the pre-decided route, some peo-

ple tried to enter the stadium and started pushing and shoving, it added. As there was no permission to enter the stadium, they were stopped. The Nangloi SHO, along with other officers and staff, tried to pacify them but they started fighting, it further said.

The procession organisers stood on rickshaws and carts and started instigating the people to go inside the stadium. Some of these people had weapons such as swords, knives, sticks and iron rods, the FIR stated. "On our refusal, the organisers and their supporters started pelting stones at the police. One of them, having a knife in his hand, attacked sub-inspector Parveen, on which Parveen grabbed the knife in order to save himself and received injury," it added.

There was heavy traffic, including buses, cars, two-wheelers and pedestrians, on Rohtak Road during this time. The stone pelting posed a danger to lives and property, according to the FIR.

Cop dies after being hit by truck in Punjabi Bagh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An inspector of the Delhi Police died early Sunday allegedly after his car was hit by a truck in west Delhi's Punjabi Bagh area, police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (west) Vichitra Veer said that in the early hours of the day, the accident took place on Rohtak Road (near Madipur Metro Station) in which a Ciaz car was hit by a truck from behind.

The car had stopped due to some mechanical problem when it was hit by the truck from behind. The car driver, who was standing outside, was also hit and died due to the accident, the DCP said. The deceased has been identified as Inspector Jagbir Singh who was posted in the security unit. The truck driver left the



A damaged truck after its collision with a car at Madipur metro station in New Delhi on Sunday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

vehicle and fled. Legal action is being taken and efforts are being made to trace him, Veer said. Police further stated that the other facts related to the incident are being checked, they said.



People visit the 27th edition of the Delhi Book Fair organised by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi on Sunday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Trader's anticipatory bail plea rejected in tax fraud case

New Delhi: A Delhi court has dismissed the anticipatory bail plea of a businessman accused of committing tax fraud by running a company through dummy persons, holding that the "corporate veil offers no refuge to tax evaders and scammers".

Special Judge Aparna Swami noted that businessman Himanshu Mongia, who is involved in trading electronic items like mobile and mobile accessories, etc., was evading summons in the case and directed him to join the inquiry. Mongia said in his application that he was issued summons a number of times by

the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence in relation to its probe involving a company, Green Globe Enterprises, regarding alleged tax evasion in import-export business. The applicant, however, could not appear before the probe agency due to prior engagements.

Mongia approached the court seeking anticipatory bail, claiming that he had nothing to do with the company. The judge said in the order passed on July 25 that it was common knowledge that persons who commit economic offences often keep others at the front to shield their identity.

Staff Reporter

'Van Mahotsav' at Asola Bhati Wildlife Sanctuary inaugurated

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday inaugurated the third 'Van Mahotsav' at the Asola Bhati Wildlife Sanctuary in south Delhi, launching an online portal for visitors to the sanctuary.

The Kejriwal government aims to plant more than 52 lakh saplings this year, and an additional 50 lakh plants and shrubs will be planted by the New Delhi Municipal Council. Free medicinal plants were also distributed to all attendees.

During the event, Rai highlighted the government's efforts to combat pollution and increase Delhi's green cover. He urged people to join the mas-

sive plantation drive and announced the distribution of free medicinal plants across all assembly constituencies. A new online portal, abwls.Eforest.Delhi.Gov.In, was launched to provide facilities for Asola Bhati Wildlife Sanctuary visitors. Also, the government has launched a Green Action Plan Portal to monitor the progress of monthly plantations.

Rai stressed the need for environmental awareness among the public and requested everyone to include tree planting in their way of life to combat pollution-related issues effectively. The Van Mahotsav celebrations will continue in various Delhi constituencies over the next four weeks.



Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai plants a sapling during a 'Van Mahotsav' organised at Asola Bhati Wildlife Sanctuary, in New Delhi on Sunday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Ensure 5% quota to divyang in edu institutes: HC to city Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the city government to ensure five per cent reservation for specially-abled candidates in all educational institutions and that the mandate of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act is followed.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma also asked Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University to reserve seats for specially-abled persons as per the law.

The court's order came on a public interest litigation which alleged that the respondent university was not providing five per cent reservation to specially-abled persons following the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. The bench, also comprising Justice Saurabh Banerjee, observed the university was providing a five per cent quota to



specially-abled persons in all courses and no further orders need to be passed.

It, however, said the Delhi government and the university "shall make all possible endeavour for filling up the seats meant for specially-abled persons by providing reservation to all categories of specially-abled persons". "The university as well as the state government are directed to ensure that in all educational institutions, the statutory

provisions governing the field under the RPWD Act are followed and 5 per cent reservation is provided to specially-abled persons," the court said in its recent order. In May, the court passed an interim order directing the university to provide reservations to specially-abled candidates for admission in the current academic session.

The petitioner -- Justice For All, an NGO -- had argued that the university, instead of providing a five per cent quota under the Act was providing only a three per cent quota to the candidates. The petitioner subsequently moved a contempt application and alleged that the interim order was not being implemented.

The court closed the proceedings after the university filed an affidavit and "categorically stated" that it was providing five per cent reservation to specially-abled persons.

Certified Corporate Investigator programme launched

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Association of Professional Detectives & Investigators (APDI) on Saturday launched the "Certified Corporate Investigator" programme for the security, legal and finance professionals to protect corporates.

"Corporate investigations are crucial in maintaining the

integrity and trust within the business ecosystem. This cutting-edge programme is designed to cultivate integrity, professionalism, and expertise in the field of corporate inquiries, with a mission to promote fair practices, transparency, and trust within the corporate world.

It will also create new job opportunities for the youth," said APDI Chairman Mr

Kunwar Vikram Singh while launching the programme at the APDI National Corporate Investigators Conclave-2023. Addressing the APDI Conclave, former Delhi Police Commissioner and ex-CBI Director, Rakesh Asthana, said with the growing cases of corporate frauds and data theft there is a dire need to have trained professionals. APDI

stands as the premier national organisation, comprising leaders in the field of investigations.

Asthana asked APDI to explore opportunity of introducing degree or certification courses for private investigators in association with the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), Gandhinagar-based central university that specialises in national and internal security. Asthana

also cautioned private investigators while dealing with data and refrain from using any dubious or unauthorised manner in its collection. "With case of insurance frauds, cyber security and data thefts increasing fast, this field has a lot of potential. But do not use fraudulent ways to procure private data. With the law on personal data protection on the anvil, it will

have severe repercussions on those breaking law," he added. Addressing the Conclave, Bhagwan Shankar, former Sikkim Additional Chief Secretary suggested that government should regulate this profession on lines of legal, chartered accountancy and chartered engineers by setting processes through an act of Parliament.

AIIMS-Delhi got ₹23 cr from Centre in 5 years for rare diseases: RTI reply

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AIIMS-Delhi received more than Rs 23 crore in funding from the Centre for treatment of rare diseases in the last five years, according to information received through RTI Act. Overall the Centre has released around Rs 90 crore in funds to several Centres of Excellence (CoE) for treatment of rare diseases since 2019, the information received under the Right to Information (RTI) Act showed.

The Delhi All India Institute of Medical Sciences, or AIIMS, one of the eight CoE for treatment of rare diseases in the country, said it received Rs 1 crore in 2019, nil in 2020, Rs 4.10 crore in 2021, Rs 7.12 crore in 2022, and Rs 10.93 crore in 2023.

The Department of Health and Family Welfare said as per records maintained in the Rare Disease Cell, the government released Rs 1.30 crore in 2019-20, Rs 10 crore in 2020-21, Rs 3.15 crore in 2021-22, Rs 34.99 crore in 2022-23, and Rs 40 crore in 2023-24 (till date). The RTI query was filed by Noida-based social activist Amit

Gupta. According to the information, AIIMS-Delhi treated 22 rare disease patients in 2021 and 12 in 2022 from the central funds.

These 34 patients were treated for rare diseases such as MPS II, Gaucher, Atypical HUS, DMD, Tyrosinemia type-1, Adrenoleukodystrophy, Larons Syndrome, Griscelli syndrome type-2, severe combined immunodeficiency syndrome, according to the information.

The rare disorders given treatment cover by the Centre are Tyrosinemia type 1, Gaucher, MPS 1, MPS 2, DMD, Atypical HUS, Adrenoleukodystrophy, Larons Syndrome, Omenn Syndrome, Severe Combined Immunodeficiency Syndrome (SCID), Griscelli Syndrome type-2, X-Linked Lymphoproliferative Disorder, Turner Syndrome, Multiple Pituitary Hormone Deficiency, Growth Hormone Resistance, Nephropathic cystinosis, Shwachman Diamond syndrome, Prader Willi Syndrome, Congenital hyperinsulinism, Pompe (IOPD), and TK2 Deficiency.

20 years after FIR, court acquits 2 charged with using fake passports

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

More than 20 years after two men were booked for allegedly possessing forged passports, visa stickers and rubber stamps of the Saudi Arabian embassy, a court here acquitted them giving them the benefit of the doubt.

Metropolitan Magistrate Ajeet Narayan was hearing a case registered against Suleman Khan and Hasibul Rehman. The Farsh Bazar police station registered an FIR against the pair in 2002. According to the prosecution, six fake passports, three visa stickers, and

five rubber stamps purported to be of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia were recovered from Khan on August 13, 2002. Rehman was Khan's accomplice and induced the victims, it said.

"I am of the considered view that the prosecution has failed to prove its case against the accused beyond a reasonable doubt, whereby entitled to the benefit of the doubt," the magistrate said in a recent judgment.

"Accordingly, the accused are hereby acquitted for the offences..." he added. The court said the prosecution was

unable to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the visa stickers and the stamps were forged, that they had been recovered from the accused and that the accused intended to use those as genuine.

The prosecution did not "conclusively prove" that visa stickers and the rubber stamps were forged as embassy official concerned was not called for providing evidence, it said.

"It is not clear from report (submitted to the court) on what basis, it (the report) has come to conclusion that visa stickers and (the) rubber stamps are forged," the court said.

Fire breaks out at shoes factory

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A fire broke out at a shoes manufacturing factory in west Delhi's Udyog Nagar area on Sunday morning, officials said.

According to the fire officials, they received information regarding the blaze at 9.36 am, following which 16 fire tenders were rushed to the spot.

The fire, which broke out in a tin shed at the third floor of the building, was brought under control at 12.50 pm and cooling operation is underway.

The building has a basement, a ground and three floors. No injury has been reported, they said.



Smoke rises from a fire that broke out at a shoes manufacturing factory in Udyog Nagar area in New Delhi on Sunday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

13.13L girls went missing from 2019 to 2021: Data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

More than 13.13 lakh girls and women went missing in the country in three years between 2019 and 2021 and most of them were from Madhya Pradesh, followed by West Bengal.

According to the Union Home Ministry data, tabled in Parliament last week, 10,61,648 women above 18 years and 2,51,430 girls below that age went missing between 2019 and 2021 across the country.

The data was compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

In Madhya Pradesh, 1,60,180 women and 38,234 girls went missing between 2019 and 2021, according to the data provided to Parliament. A total of 1,56,905 women and 36,606 girls went missing from West Bengal in the same period. In Maharashtra, 1,78,400 women and 13,033 girls went missing in the said period. In Odisha, 70,222 women and 16,649 girls



went missing in the three years while 49,116 women and 10,817 girls went missing from Chhattisgarh in the said period.

Among the Union Territories, Delhi recorded the highest number of missing girls and women. In the national capital, 61,054 women and 22,919 girls went missing between 2019 and 2021 while in Jammu and Kashmir, 8,617 women and 1,148 girls went missing in the said period. The government also informed Parliament that it has taken a

number of initiatives for the safety of women across the country, which include the enactment of The Criminal Law (Amendment), Act, 2013, for effective deterrence against sexual offences.

Further, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, was enacted to prescribe even more stringent penal provisions, including death penalty, for the rape of girls below the age of 12 years. The Act also mandates completion of investigation and filing of charge sheets in rape cases in two months and

trials to be completed in another two months. The government has launched the Emergency Response Support System which provides a pan-India, single internationally recognized number (112) based system for all emergencies, with computer-aided dispatch of field resources to the location of distress.

Using technology to aid smart policing and safety management, Safe City Projects have been sanctioned in the first phase in eight cities — Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai.

The home ministry launched a cybercrime reporting portal on September 20, 2018, for citizens to report obscene content. The home ministry also launched the National Database on Sexual Offenders on September 20, 2018, to facilitate the investigation and tracking of sexual offenders across the country by law enforcement agencies.

'Bills passed after admission of no-trust motion legally suspect'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress MP Manish Tewari on Sunday claimed that all bills passed after the no-confidence motion was admitted in the Lok Sabha are "constitutionally suspect" and asserted that any substantive legislative business must succeed the outcome of the motion, not precede it.

The former Union minister also said the 10-day period for scheduling a discussion on the no-confidence motion tabled in the Lok Sabha can not be used to "steamroll" bills. The Lok Sabha MP's assertion comes as the bill to replace the Delhi services ordinance is set to come up in the House this week.

In an interview with PTI, Tewari said once the no-confidence motion has been tabled in the Lok Sabha, any legislation or material business brought before the House is "completely in violation of morality, propriety and parliamentary conventions". He claimed the very legality of all



the legislations which have been passed in the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha after the no-confidence motion was admitted would have to be examined by a court of law as to whether they were legally passed or not.

All legislative business transacted after the no-confidence motion was tabled is "constitutionally suspect", he claimed.

On the BJP comparing the 2018 no-confidence motion against the Narendra Modi government and the massive mandate it got in the 2019 elections with the current scenario, Tewari said, "If history repeats itself once, it is a tragedy and if it does so twice, it is a

farce." A no-confidence motion by the Congress on behalf of the opposition alliance INDIA against the government was admitted in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday amid concerted efforts by the anti-BJP bloc to force Prime Minister Narendra Modi to speak on the contentious Manipur issue in Parliament.

Asked about the numbers not adding up for the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc for the no-confidence motion, Tewari said it was not a question of numbers but of morality.

"What has happened in Manipur and what is continuing to happen there is absolutely reprehensible. There is a BJP government in the state, there is a BJP government at the Centre. Therefore, somebody needs to take responsibility," Tewari told PTI.

He said the opposition expected the prime minister to make a suo motu statement in both Houses of Parliament on the "extremely critical situation"

in Manipur and that statement would have been succeeded by a discussion. But, unfortunately, the prime minister chose to make a very "cursory remark" just before the commencement of the Monsoon session. After that, adjournment motions tabled in both Houses of Parliament repeatedly were not admitted by the presiding officers, the Congress leader said.

"Thus the joint opposition was left with no option but to bring this no-confidence motion to enforce the principle of morality, probity and accountability in public life which must be the sine qua non of any governance," he asserted.

Asked about the expectations from Prime Minister Modi's response to the no-confidence motion, Tewari said the motion states that "this house expresses want of confidence in the council of ministers" and the reason for that want of confidence has publicly been articulated "ad nauseum" for the past one week.

Mental health of AIIMS students: Niti member calls for welfare steps

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid reports of increasing mental health issues among MBBS students in the AIIMS located across the country, Niti Aayog member (Health) Dr VK Paul has underlined the importance of student welfare and urged the authorities to keep a check on their stress and workload.

At a 7th Meeting of the Central Institute Body (CIB) of AIIMS and Chintan Shivir held here, he also highlighted the importance of giving counselling to patients and their families.

Dr. Paul's concern follows various appeals from students and their parents to look into the issue empathically. The National Medical Commission too had in response to an RTI recently stated that at least 119 people in medical colleges

died due to suicide in the last five years, with ragging and being overworked major factors. Earlier at the meeting, Union Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya called upon the doctors to ensure the standard of treatment. "For a doctor, treatment is only one parameter of success. How people perceive them and their role in society is the ultimate value of success".

He also stated that every countryman looks at AIIMS as the paramount institute of medical sciences in the country and urged all dignitaries to ensure that this respect is preserved.

He urged all the AIIMS representatives to leave a legacy of growth and success for the next generation. CIB is the highest decision-making body of all AIIMS for finance, infrastructure, vacancy, recruitment, enforcement of poli-

cies, challenges and procurement. The agenda of today's CIB meeting was to review compliance of decisions taken in earlier CIB meetings.

Prof. S P Singh Baghel, Minister of State for Health urged the delegates, especially the representatives from AIIMS to work in the collective interest of the country, their patients, and their institution so that they can take the brand of AIIMS to new heights.

Delhi MP Ramesh Bhiduri noted the importance of Chintan Shivir in not only bringing in new ideas but also in encouraging each other to improve their work in the spirit of healthy competition while MP Manoj Tiwari expressed his hope that the wide-ranging discussions held in the Chintan Shivir will go a long way in making AIIMS institutes of global excellence.

Now, CoBRA getting training to combat terrorists

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The highly trained personnel of the CRPF's Combat Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), known for their expertise in jungle warfare and anti-Naxal operations, are undergoing specialised training to confront terrorists in both urban and rural environments. This training comes as they are expected to be deployed for operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

Currently deployed in Bihar, where the Naxal presence has been diminishing, the 205 CoBRA battalion members are now being equipped with skills to counter terrorists in different settings. Once their training is complete, they will be relocated to Jammu and Kashmir, as per officials. To prepare the elite CoBRA commandos for their new role, they are receiving training



from various units experienced in Jammu and Kashmir operations. Some of these specially trained commandos have already been stationed in Srinagar, serving as part of the Valley Quick Action Team (QAT) since earlier this year. Given their expertise in jungle warfare, the commandos possess a unique advantage, as no other force has such combat experience in Kashmir. Their deployment in the Valley

is expected to cover various roles, especially considering the evolving tactics and activities of terrorists. During a review meeting on Jammu and Kashmir in the Union Home Ministry, concerns were raised about the age profile of CRPF jawans operating in the Valley. To address this issue and bolster security measures, the decision to infuse fresh commandos was made, and it also aligns with the decreasing influence of Naxalism.

CoBRA, an integral part of the CRPF, consists of 10 units with a total strength of 10,000 personnel. Formed between 2008 and 2011, these units are primarily deployed in areas affected by Left-Wing Extremism, including Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Meghalaya.

MoE signs 106 MoUs on Shiksha Samagam 2023



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Education on Sunday signed 106 MoUs with various organisations and institutions on the occasion of the Akhil Bhartiya Shiksha Samagam 2023 and the 3rd anniversary of the National Education Policy which was opened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The MoUs encompass partnerships with both public and private entities to foster innovation, research, and knowledge exchange in multiple domains, ushering in a new era of collaboration in education and industry-academia linkages.

In the realm of higher education, six MoUs were established to promote the Indian Knowledge System. 14 MoUs under the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) were also signed in partnership with SkillDzire Technologies Pvt Limited, MathWorks India Private Limited, TimesPro, Google India, Gate India Electronics Private Limited, Future Minds, etc.

In a bid to bolster international collaborations, 6 MoUs have been signed, including the IIT-Madras Zanzibar campus MoU. Additionally, MoUs were also signed between IIT Tirupati and IIFCET, for offering the advanced certification and training course on "Digital Manufacturing and Automation for Foundry

Industry" for training and enriching the knowledge of diploma holders/graduate engineers employed in the industry; IIT Tirupati and M/s Siemens/Wipro for establishing Centre of Excellence on "Smart manufacturing and Electric Vehicle Technologies"; IIT Jodhpur and CU/Raj; IIT Ropar and five Central Universities of North India for academic collaboration and sharing of resources; Under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship a total of 14 MoUs were exchanged which included, MoUs of DGT with AWS India Pvt. Ltd and ETS India Pvt Ltd, MoUs of NIES-BUD with TIDES- business incubator of the IIT Roorkee, EIC-business incubator of IIML and DeAsra Foundation; MoU of IIE with IIT Guwahati etc.

As part of the school education system, under CBSE, 15 MoUs were inked, with different Institutes and Sector Skill Providers to give specific focus on the skill development and education.

These MoUs were signed in association with the Atal Innovation Mission, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, Apparel Made-Ups and Home Furnishing Sector Skill Council, Automotive Sector Skill Council, Sports, Physical Education, Fitness and Leisure Skills Council, Central Square Foundation (CSC), Educational Initiatives Pvt. Ltd, Oxford University Press India and few more establishments.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla with Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma, Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly Biswajit Daimary and other dignitaries in a group photo on the occasion of inauguration of the Assam Legislative Assembly new building in Guwahati on Sunday

Modi to be facilitated with Lokmanya Tilak Award

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Pune in Maharashtra on Tuesday during which he will perform 'pooja' at Dagdusheth Mandir, will be conferred Lokmanya Tilak National Award and will lay the foundation stone for various development projects.

Prime Minister Modi will visit Pune on August 1 and at around 11 am, he will perform 'darshan and pooja' at Dagdusheth Mandir, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. At 11.45 am, he will be conferred the Lokmanya Tilak National Award. Thereafter, at 12.45 pm, the Prime Minister will flag off metro trains and inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for various devel-

opment projects. Modi will flag off Metro trains marking inauguration of services on completed sections of the two corridors of Pune Metro Phase I. These sections are from Phugewadi station to Civil Court station and Garware College station to Ruby Hall Clinic station, it said. The foundation stone for the project was also laid by Prime Minister Modi in 2016.

The new sections will connect important places of the Pune city like Shivaji Nagar, Civil Court, Pune Municipal Corporation office, Pune RTO and Pune Railway Station. The inauguration is an important step towards realising the vision of the Prime Minister to provide the citizens with modern and environment-friendly mass rapid

urban transport systems across the country, the statement said. The design of some of the metro stations on the route draws inspiration from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, it said.

The Chhatrapati Sambhaji Udyan Metro Station and Deccan Gymkhana metro stations have a unique design resembling the headgear worn by soldiers of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj - also known as "Mavala Pagadi".

The Shivaji Nagar underground Metro station has a distinctive design which reminds of the forts built by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Another unique feature is that the Civil Court metro station is one of the deepest metro stations in the country, having the deepest point at 33.1 metres.

India's semiconductor mission aiming to meet global demands

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday stressed the importance of access to cutting-edge technology in the modern world and said that a more self-reliant India will, by definition, also be more self-reliant in semiconductor production.

Similarly, an India that is seeking to enhance both the quality and quantity of its exports and become more deeply embedded in global value chains will also necessarily focus today on the semiconductor domain, he said while addressing the ongoing SemiCon India 2023 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Pointing out that efforts to gain an edge in technology is a reality, Jaishankar said who invents, who manufactures, what are the market shares, where are the resources, who has the skills, where is the tal-



ent pool - these are increasingly the crucial questions.

The depiction of a Chip War may be somewhat overstated, but it has more than a fundamental kernel of truth. To a considerable extent, concerns in the Critical and emerging technologies field are influenced by how market shares and production dominance was leveraged in other areas, he said.

Technology trade is not just trade; it is as much about political science. The truth is that we are seeing the re-emergence of export controls as a

response to strategic assertions of economic strength. How to do business needs to be tempered with where and with whom to do it, the external affairs minister said.

Elaborating upon the relevance of critical and emerging technologies today in international relations, Jaishankar said to begin with, it is an intrinsic element of the knowledge economy that is steadily unfolding. In fact, one of its primary characteristics is how deeply it embeds technologies in a manner that profoundly influences all aspects of our lives.

If the very nature of our economic and social activities undergo a transformation as a result, it is not surprising that CET should now emerge as one of the important metrics of power, he said. On the issue of semi-conductor, Jaishankar said there have been a wide range of global interactions as well on this very subject.

Early detection holds key to combat breast cancer: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Science & Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh, has raised concerns about the high number of breast cancer-related deaths in India, primarily attributed to late diagnosis and lack of awareness.

He stressed the need to establish special breast cancer clinics across the country, drawing inspiration from the wellness centers under the central Ayushman Bharat insurance scheme.

These dedicated clinics would aim to focus on early detection and preventive measures. According to data, as many as 37.2 per cent of women succumbed to breast cancer in India in 2020, surpassing the Asian rate of 34 per cent and the global average of 30 per cent. The Minister,



however, said there is a reason for hope because breast cancer is highly preventable and highly curative; the earlier it is detected, the better are the chances of effective treatment and survival. He said, research has yielded a number of exciting developments in breast cancer diagnosis and treatment that ensure fewer complications, and fewer side effects and improve the lives of breast cancer patients for the

efforts. "Moreover, the Central Drug Research Institute in Lucknow is leading the way in developing High Value Generic drugs through non-infringing and cost-effective synthetic route, designing and synthesising of new chemical entities against clinically validated cancer drug targets, preclinical evaluation of potent anti-cancer entities, among other activities," he added.

He pointed out that unlike earlier when patients were only treated with chemotherapy and radiation apart from surgery, now there are many available treatment options. "New oral therapies have come in, such as the CDK4/6 Inhibitors which are used to treat hormone positive Metastatic Breast Cancer. Indian companies like Cipla are introducing a generic version of Palbociclib (a CDK4/6 Inhibitor) in India, which costs

less than ₹5000/ monthly, and can be accessed by a large pool of patients. This way, the introduction of more Indian generics will help impact a great number of patients," the Minister said.

He also supported the idea of special breast cancer clinics across country like wellness centres, and said that Ayushman Bharat is so far world's best health insurance scheme and credit goes to Prime Minister for having conceptualised it.

He asserted that Ayushman Bharat is the only health insurance scheme in world which offers option of seeking insurance cover even for a pre-existing disease, like for example, if today a person is detected having cancer, or even breast cancer, one can get herself insured to receive financial support for treatment.

Over 71K cancer patients treated in 5 yrs as Kashi becomes a health hub

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Over 71,000 cancer patients have been treated during the last five years as this holy city has become a health hub with the initiatives taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his parliamentary constituency since 2014. Two big specialised cancer treatment hospitals came into existence during this period apart from Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). These two hospitals are Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Cancer Centre and Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital which are being run by the Tata Memorial Centre, with the help of the Central government, are not only giving relief to the people of many states including UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, West Bengal etc but also Nepal.

Started working in the city from 2019, these two cancer dedicated hospitals have won the confidence of the patients and it was the reason why in the last five years, the number of patients in these two hospitals has increased three times in which the number of cured patients is very good. The Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital at Lahartara has been serving patients since



A view of Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Cancer Centre in Varanasi.

2018, but both the hospitals were formally inaugurated by the PM on February 19 in 2019. Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital was earlier looked after by the Indian Railways but since it has been looked after by the Tata Memorial Centre, a lot of advancements in treatment have been added there.

Earlier, most of the cancer patients from the region went to Mumbai for better treatment where they not only faced many troubles but also spent huge money in going and staying there along with the patients. After becoming the PM in 2014, Narendra Modi started the rejuvena-

Bhabha Cancer Hospital administration, in the last five years, 71,725 patients have registered here. Compared to 2018, about 25 times more cancer patients have undergone surgery in 2022. Chemotherapy has been done more than nine times and radiotherapy six times. These cancer hospitals have treatment facilities with the world's most modern equipment. According to the doctors, if the treatment of cancer is started at an early stage, more effective results can be seen.

According to the data received from these two hospitals, in 2018 the number of patients registered were 6,250 which increased to 12,292 in 2019; 12,238 in 2020; 17,894 in 2021 and 20,851 in 2022 and during these five years, the number of surgeries done were 478; 4,098; 662; 11,583 and 12,294 while chemotherapy 6,376; 25,189; 31,455; 44,908 and 56,373 and radiotherapy 532; 1,153; 2,079; 2,354 and 3,259 respectively.

tion of his parliamentary constituency and the process of development got huge acceleration after the formation of 'double engine government' with the coming of power in the state by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in 2017.

According to Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Cancer Centre and Homi

Atiq Ahmed's lawyer arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Lawyer of mafia Atiq Ahmed, Vijay Mishra, was arrested by the police late on Saturday night from a hotel in Lucknow. He was involved in the conspiracy of Umesh Pal murder case. A case had also been registered against Vijay Mishra at Atarsuiya police station in Prayagraj for extorting Rs 3 crore from a furniture businessman. The Prayagraj police is interrogating Vijay Mishra.

According to sources, Mishra was staying at a hotel in Vibhuthikhand area on Saturday and the police caught him with the help of STF. Atarsuiya inspector Vinod Kumar Yadav confirmed the detention of Vijay Mishra. He said Mishra has been detained in a case of extortion. He is being questioned.

According to STF sources, Mishra was wanted in an extortion case, besides he was among the conspirators in the Umesh Pal murder case in Dhoomanganj. He had reportedly provided a photograph of Umesh Pal to Atiq's son and had informed him about Umesh's location when he had



Vijay Mishra.

left the court to reach home. The police was looking for him.

The police sought STF's help in tracing the location and apprehending Vijay Mishra. When Mishra's location was traced, he was found in Lucknow. The Prayagraj police took him into custody from the hotel at 11 pm on Saturday. Vijay Mishra's junior advocate Himanshu Kumar said all policemen had come in plain

clothes and took him with them around 11 pm.

On May 23 this year businessman Saeed Ahmed, a resident of Dariyabad lodged an FIR at Atarsuiya police station for allegedly demanding extortion of Rs 3 crore. Wood trader Saeed Ahmed in the FIR had told the police that he had a plywood shop in Muthiganj. On January 5, 2023, Vijay Mishra had borrowed ply and other related things worth about Rs 1.20 lakh. On April 17 this year when the employee Shekhar called him and asked him to deposit the outstanding amount, he allegedly abused and threatened him.

On April 20 Mishra called up Saeed and allegedly demanded extortion of Rs 3 crore in the name of Atiq Ahmed and his henchmen. He also threatened to kill him if money was not given. Saeed had also handed over an audio of 57 seconds of Vijay Mishra to the police.

In that, Vijay is talking about Rs 3 crore. In this case, the police was looking for Vijay. Seven cases are registered against Mishra in many districts. Atiq's lawyer Khan Soulat Hanif had taken the name of

lawyer Vijay Mishra in police interrogation after Umesh's murder. It was said that he had shared the location of Umesh from the collectorate. Soulat had alleged that on the day of the murder, Vijay informed Ashraf and Asad about Umesh's departure from the court in front of him through an internet call from his phone.

DEMONSTRATION: Lawyers staged a demonstration at George Town police station to protest against alleged police inaction in Allahpur case where Vinay Kumar Gupta, an advocate and office-bearer of Yuva Kranti Adhivakta Sangh, was attacked on Saturday evening and his house was ransacked by about half a dozen musclemen.

According to the complaint lodged with the police, five to six local musclemen entered Gupta's house, attacked him and tried to destroy files and other goods in his chamber. When women came to his rescue, they too were manhandled and threatened.

The criminals reportedly asked the family of the advocate not to inform the police otherwise consequences would be dire.

Premchand Lamhi Mahotsav begins

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Premchand Lamhi Mahotsav began with an inter-school painting competition organised at Sant Atulanand Convent School (SACS), Koirajpur on the eve of Munshi Premchand Jayanti here on Sunday. The students of a total of 16 schools of the city participated in this competition which was based on the works of 'Katha Samrat' Munshi Premchand and the competition was held in two categories senior class (class 9-12) and junior class (class 5-8) in which 75 students participated.

All the participants were awarded certificates. The competition was coordinated by Principal of SACS Koirajpur Dr Neelam Singh and Dr Harendranarayan Singh, Regional Archives. Organising In-charge and Regional Culture Officer, Varanasi Region, Dr Subhash Chandra Yadav, while expressing special gratitude to all the participants, teachers and coordinators from different schools, highly appreciated the creativity of the students and wished them a bright future. Among the winners of the competition, first place in senior category was gone to Vipul Singh of Subhadra Kumari Inter College, followed by Tanya Singh (Nivedita Shiksha Sadan Girls Inter College) and Khushi Bhardwaj (SACS Koirajpur),

while consolation prizes were given to Prashant Singh (SACS Koirajpur) and Shailesh Kumar (MM Inter College). In the junior category, Divya Chaudhary of SACS Gilat Bazar stood first, while Sadvi Gupta (SS Public School) and Nilesh (Guru Nanak English School) finished second and third respectively. Shrishti Maurya (SACS Gilat Bazar) and Tejashwi Sonkar (Gurunank English School) won the consolation prizes. In organising the competition, the teachers of SACS Koirajpur along with Shaiz Khan, Manoj Kumar etc made a special contribution.

Meanwhile, various aspects of Premchand's journalism were discussed in the webinar organised by a quarterly magazine of Jaipur on the eve of Premchand Jayanti.

In the webinar, the speakers expressed their views on various aspects of journalism started through Premchand's writings in Urdu magazines and in the context of Hans, Jagran, Maryada etc. Addressing the webinar, Dr Anil Upadhyay, former professor and head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) said that Munshi Premchand, on the basis of progressive ideology, showed the light of faith to the contemporary society through his journalistic writings.

DRM conducts safety inspection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI


Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava conducted a window-trailing safety inspection on Aunrihar-Chhapra rail section of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) on Sunday. The purpose of the inspection of newly-appointed DRM was to check the safety norms of rail operations apart from seeing the development of passengers' facilities and amenities and progress of ongoing development works on this important rail section.

The DRM made a thorough inspection of the progress of the ongoing development and station beautification works under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) at Ballia railway station and directed the concerned officers to complete all the works with quality on time. As many as 15 railway stations of Varanasi Division of NER are being renovated under ABSS. Along with this, Srivastava inspected the station panel, station building, platforms, modern sheds, foot over bridge, food and vending stalls, waiting rooms, circulating area, entry and exit, cleanliness and maintenance etc. During this, he inspected the relay room, IPS room, point crossings, key transfer, maintenance register, cancellation counter and regis-

ter etc related to security and instructed the concerned personnel to strictly follow the security rules.


During his window trailing inspection, the DRM also checked safety norms in operation, progress of development works, passenger facilities, cleanliness, availability of drinking water, compliance of temporary vigilance orders and competence of employees related to safety on different stations on Aunrihar-Chhapra rail section apart from checking the safety of the rail track, rail ballast, track screening, overhead traction, alignment, suspension order and track fittings.

He was accompanied by senior officers during his inspection and important among them were Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infra) Rahul Srivastava, Chief Project Manager (Gati Shakti) Kaushalesh Singh, Senior Divisional Engineer (Coordination) Rakesh Ranjan, Senior Divisional Engineer-I Rishi Srivastava, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Sheikh Rehman, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) Pankaj Keshwani, Senior Divisional Operations Manager Ajay Pratap Singh, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecom Engineer-I Rajat Priya, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Works)




Nation remembers
the great revolutionary and freedom fighter
Shaheed Udham Singh
on his Martyrdom Day

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State Level Programme
Chief Guest
Sh. Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana
31 July 2023, 11:00 am, Kurukshetra

“The valour of Shaheed Udham Singh remains etched in the memory of every Indian. I bow to this brave son of India on his martyrdom day.”
-Narendra Modi



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Corruption charges

Allegations of corruption against ministers in Stalin's cabinet tarnish his image

There can never be smoke without fire. This adage has come alive in Tamil Nadu as K Annamalai, the BJP's State chief, handed over a 'sensitive file' to Governor RN Ravi last Wednesday listing charges of corruption worth Rs 5,600 crore against the MK Stalin-led DMK Government. Though Annamalai remained tightlipped to media queries about the allegation details, a party office bearer said the former would meet journalists after the walkathon planned by the BJP from Rameswaram. This is the second file of corruption charges collected and submitted by Annamalai to the Governor. His first list resulted in the Enforcement Department raiding Senthil Balaji and K Ponnudi, two powerful ministers in the DMK Government. Balaji, who the ED has held, managed to stay out of jail thanks to a cardiovascular issue that cropped up immediately after his arrest. According to media reports, the ED seized incriminating documents from the offices and residences of Balaji, Ponnudi and Gowtham Sigamani MP, who is also the son of Ponnudi. If these raids are any indication, the possibility of more such gatecrashing by the ED and the I-T Department officials cannot be ruled out.



The local media is agog with allegations of corruption against many ministers in Stalin's council of ministers. The investigators from New Delhi had "called on" many premises, including those belonging to the CM's close relatives. There are many land banks in the State; their ownership is linked to the family members of Stalin, according to BJP leaders. What is significant behind the DMK Files is that they were products of painstaking investigation by Annamalai, a former Indian Police Service officer, having earned encomiums for his uprightness and probing skills. Let us leave it to the investigating agencies to find out the authenticity and veracity of the allegations. What is really surprising is the reaction from the DMK, which has launched a media blitzkrieg against Annamalai and the BJP's central leadership. A seasoned politician like Stalin should have shown a sense of restraint while reacting to such allegations. If the cupboards in the Tamil Nadu Secretariat and at the residences of the ministers are clean, why should Stalin deploy the entire publicity machinery to take on the BJP? The ideal way to handle this situation was to ignore. Throw open the doors of your palaces to the sleuths and taxmen. If the attempts of the investigating agencies come a cropper, it would be a slap on the face of the Union Government and the Dravidian chief could always have the last laugh. A statement condemning the BJP and Annamalai would have been more than sufficient for the DMK. Stalin belongs to the super league of national politics while Annamalai has just started playing. The palatial houses built by politicians in Tamil Nadu and the fleet of cars are mind boggling. These "servants of the masses" will definitely eclipse India's business barons. But one need not be surprised if the ED men come calling to Chennai soon. Wasn't it Balzac who said that 'behind every great fortune, there is a crime'?

PICTALK



Devotees take part in a procession during Kanwar yatra in the holy month of Shrawan, in Bankura

Adani, Dharavi and poverty alleviation



PRAFULL GORADIA

Human freedom alone can promote wealth and prosperity; it is an unbeatable engine of technological and economic growth

That industrialist Gautam Adani should find time to write an article on Dharavi (Mumbai) is surprisingly welcome. He is driven not solely by profit but also by social consciousness. Nevertheless, my intention in submitting this comment is to appeal to readers not to place unfair hurdles in the path of progress of such entrepreneurs in a misplaced enthusiasm for socialism or any similar ideologies. We belong to a land where most people believe that one's karma pilots life and creates the person's bhagya or destiny. That being so, the European thinking is that God made man (or woman) equal and it is society that makes him unequal. Society's leaders have to work towards bringing back equality. But society's leaders in India shouldn't be endeavouring to bring about forced equality. They cannot, as they are unable to control or even influence the karmas of people at large.

The French proclaimed liberty, equality and fraternity, but liberty and equality are a contradiction in terms. If equality is to prevail, there is no place for liberty. No one can bottle down anyone's freedom to perform excellent karma which in turn, should inevitably result in good fortune. If Adani succeeds in recreating Dharavi, how can a competitor or any Opposition party keep down the bhagya of the recreator? The poverty in many parts of our country till recently was an unbearable sight and yet except for Kerala and West Bengal, the Indian people did not get tempted by communism. They did not flirt with Fabian socialism to any significant extent and eventually gave it up. And as luck would have it the entire world virtually gave up all shades of Marxism. To a Hindu, it is proof that karma is a much superior explanation of life than the materialistic interpretation of history.

Communism and socialism are opposed to private wealth and the very idea of enterprise. But Gandhi, who rejected Marxism, had his thinking on wealth. According to his theory of trusteeship, wealthy people should consider their property as



something God has trusted them to manage as trustees for the benefit of the poor. This theory legitimizes the positions of capitalists and landlords in society, as long as they behaved as trustees.

For those wondering why one of India's top industrialists and among the world's wealthiest men should bother himself with redeveloping the world's biggest slum cluster, a look at evidence from around the world should convince us. Central America remains one of the world's most violent regions, where about 4.5 per cent of the world's homicides occur, though the region has only about 0.5 per cent of the world's population. Thanks mainly to increased security efforts by the region's governments, homicide rates are down since 2015. But increased policing and security isn't the only factor responsible for this change. During this time, economic activity also increased in the "Northern Triangle" countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Favourable economic conditions help keep future crime at bay. Consistent improvement in the standard of living is key to sustaining crime reduction. Inversely, it is also true that economic deprivation is detrimental to social and also national security.



IT IS TRUE THAT CITIES IN COUNTRIES LIKE CHINA ARE FREE OF ANY SLUMS, OF THE KIND ONE SEES IN INDIA'S CITIES, BUT DO MOST PEOPLE KNOW WHAT ENORMOUS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL COST THIS IS BROUGHT ABOUT

Businesses and business-people like Adani can address this by creating the infrastructure necessary for providing skills training and financing options to disadvantaged people and communities. Providing women with economic opportunities is another opportunity for companies to help alleviate poverty. If women are trained to be entrepreneurs, they can achieve financial stability independent of their husbands. In the event their husbands are unable to work, they can continue providing for their families, and their children's quality of life will not be compromised. The present Dharavi has all of these issues that need to be addressed soon.

Economist Robert Shiller, a Nobel Laureate in 2013, had warned that income inequality is the greatest source of financial risk for the 21st century. Many parts of the world are marked by such inequalities, while within countries, clusters like Dharavi while contributing significantly to business and activity, continue to suffer socioeconomic inequity and appalling human living conditions. Average incomes in some Indian cities have reached first-world levels, while, in others, they resemble the poverty levels of Africa. Passing on responsibility for

eradicating poverty to the government alone overlooks the role that companies can and should play in this regard. Broadly speaking, the corporate world has the task of growing the economy.

It is true that countries in countries like China are free of any slums, of the kind one sees in India's cities, but do most people know what enormous social and political cost this brought about? No Chinese resident of a rural area can visit the big cities without the permission of his/her regime, and that too for a specific period. While reams can be written on this, it is sufficient to conclude here that such stifling of social freedom is a threat to the very prosperity and even the country's integrity a regime tries so hard to enforce. Human freedom alone can promote wealth and prosperity; it is an unbeatable engine of technological and economic growth. As an example, one may look at the lives of countless entrepreneurs, Indian and overseas, who have wealth to not only pull themselves out of poverty but also improve millions of lives.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IMPACT OF MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Sir — Three months of sectarian violence in Manipur has reached Mizoram. Nagaland is not far away. Other northeastern states including Assam may be affected. There is no doubt that the incompetence of the state government there was responsible for the deterioration of the situation. But the question is what are the steps taken by the central government? The Home Minister also went to this state of civil war and gave confirmation. But the events that disgraced civilized society continued to multiply. The incident on May 4 and the video clip that went viral afterwards, embarrassed the entire nation. The police, administration and state government are clueless. The government advisor assured that the central and state governments are taking steps and the situation will be under control. He claimed that the police and the onlookers remained silent. Now the centre has handed over responsibility for the viral video case to the CBI. The CBI will go its own way, but basic questions remain. Given the sensitivity of this condition, a permanent solution must be found.

A Nawas | Kollam

'HIRE BULLDOZERS FROM YOGI'

Sir — The ire of TMC over the "Hire bulldozers from Yogi government" remark by Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay of Calcutta High Court is understandable. What has irritated and infuriated TMC is the name of Yogi Adityanath taken by the judge. Sources close to the judge say that the remark is off the record and it emanated with a sense of humour only. The anger of TMC should not deflect the seriousness of illegal construction activities. This remark, directed at Kolkata Municipal Corporation, has come while hearing a case relating to illegal construction in Kolkata. TMC leader Kunal Ghosh has cast aspersions on the judge saying that he wants publicity and fame. He has accused the judge of being anti-TMC. If this judge had been anti-TMC, he would not have once said "What West Bengal thinks today India thinks

Right to return medals!



murder of a writer, M.M Kalburgi by the vigilantes. Other similar murders, such as that of Narendra Dabholkar, were also behind the artists' rejection.

This is a frank attack on freedom of expression and an astonishing demand that artists should not be 'political'. Since the reasons for the 2015 protest were crystal clear, the committee's recommendation may suggest also that writers cannot respond to the demands of humanity and justice; calling this 'political' because the protest was against the government and is both self-serving and reductionist. The country's record is already poor for maintaining independence though. Is it like Banquo's ghost, terrifying Macbeth amid a feast of triumph? So after having exercised their control over scholarships, syllabi and thesis subjects, they have focused on national awards. These will be given only to compliant artists, who sign the no-return undertaking.

Yash pal raihan | Jalandhar

tomorrow". This observation by a judge has gone down well for TMC. Bulldozer treatment is necessary to prevent the illegal construction of buildings.

One can criticize the judgement but criticizing the judge is not fair and permissible. The Municipal Corporation Mayor Firhad Hakim says that it does not believe in bulldozer culture. If so, can it adopt persuasive diplomacy to stop or demolish the building under construction? He further says that development is the priority. Development is not possible with the mushrooming growth of illegal buildings coming up.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

NOTICE TO KARNATAKA CM

Sir — Accepting the petition of the voter in the Karnataka High Court, which issued a notice to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday, the voter is not happy with the Karnataka election result. The results have come opposite to his expectation, that's why the man has taken

such a step in a fit of rage. Had Siddaramaiah lost the election or the Congress government would not be formed, would this so-called voter still go to court saying that the 5 guarantee scheme he had promised was his corrupt practice? Was the pre-election announcement of Griha Jyoti, Griha Lakshmi, Anna Bhagya, Yuva Nidhi and Shakti schemes a crime from an election point of view? If it was a crime, then all the political parties across the country who issue manifestos before the elections are all just tricks to woo the voters. Then why doesn't the court automatically take suo-moto cognizance of all these? Madhya Pradesh elections will be held in November this year. The government there is distributing free money to women and has started giving money to the youth every month under Learn and Earn, what is that?

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Purandeshwari moves stir up the hornet's nest in Andhra

There is a speculation on who her current target is. Is she aiming for Jagan or Chandrababu? **Danny** writes to find the clues

In the realm of parliamentary representative democratic politics, caste affiliations play a significant role, and this influence is quite pronounced in Andhra Pradesh's political landscape.

In the Reddy community, a substantial majority supports the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), while a smaller section provides backing to other opposition parties, including the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Similarly, a significant portion of the Kamma community aligns with the prime opposition party, the TDP, while another small segment extends support to various other parties, including the YSRCP. The BJP strategically targeted the third major social group, the Kapus, to expand its voter base. Since the formation of the new state, the BJP's leadership position has been held by leaders from the Kapu community, namely Kanna Lakshminarayana and Somu Veerajaru.

In a recent cabinet reshuffle, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy allocated more positions to members from the Reddy and Kapu commu-



nities. However, the current Jagan cabinet lacks representation from the Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya communities, collectively referred to as 'upper Varnas'. Additionally, there is no representation for the Kamma community, which is a major agrarian caste. Considering that a large section of the Reddy community already supports Jagan, he is now focusing on attracting a significant number of voters from the Kapu community to ensure victory in the upcoming elections.

A considerable portion of the Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya communities leans towards the BJP, while the other portion aligns with various other parties. In the last elections, most of the Muslim, Christian, Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Scheduled Caste

(SC) social groups voted for YSRCP, with Jagan's Christian minority perspective playing a role in this support. Pawan Kalyan, the chief of the Jana Sena party (JSP), who had a limited impact in the last election, is gaining more support this time. He mainly appeals to the Kapu social class and repeatedly mentions that he is following the 'road map' designed by the BJP. Since assuming her new post, Purandeshwari has been targeting Chief Minister Jagan, confirming the BJP's alliance with Jana Sena, but remaining ambiguous about including TDP Chandrababu. Her criticism includes Chandrababu's mishandling of the state's reorganization Act, which has the potential to politically embarrass him.

The BJP strategists aim to mobilize the Kamma community, as Pawan Kalyan focuses on rallying the Kapu community. As part of this approach, Purandeshwari, a member of the Kamma community and daughter of late NT Rama Rao, the founder of TDP, was fielded. The strained relationship between the families of Daggubati and Chandrababu also plays a

role in her selection. Jagan has been fully supporting the BJP in both houses of the Parliament, despite winning 22 out of 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the last elections and having 12 members in the Rajya Sabha. Though the BJP makes accusations, the YSRCP response has been relatively mild. Botsa Satyanarayana, a senior leader, mentioned that despite some differences, they will stay with the BJP at the Centre. Jagan has directed his party's MPs to maintain the alliance with the BJP in the current monsoon meetings.

The BJP hopes to secure the Kapu vote bank with Pawan Kalyan's support and erode Chandrababu's influence with Purandeshwari's tactics, aiming to win 10 to 15 Lok Sabha seats in AP. Jagan's potential victories in the next parliamentary elections do not concern the BJP, as they ultimately aim to absorb his support base and become strong independently, leaving Chandrababu's vote bank vulnerable to their grasp.

(The writer is a senior journalist and a socio-political analyst. Views expressed are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

A CURIOUS MIND IS LIBERATING

The human mind views the vastness of the universe through one's own perception



RAVI VALLURI

Often, conventional thinking results in clambering the ladder. A person leading an ordinary existence is invariably complacent with the prosaic lifestyle. Those blessed with a curious mind try to refashion their personalities by re-engineering themselves. Once lived an elderly gentleman, in the winter of his life, who decided to embark on a spiritual journey to rediscover his personality. The pater enrolled himself in a monastery. Upon completing his training, armed with various nuances of Zen teachings, he departed for his town.

MIRACULOUS ESCAPE OR METAMORPHOSIS

He stepped out of the portals of the Temple of Knowledge and involuntarily slipped into a rivulet. "Oh, the old monk falls in the river!" chortled some young tutees. However, the senior gentleman emerged from an up-surfing stream. He was to declare that the re-engineering process he acquired enabled him to accommodate water into himself and not the other way around. "We are shaped by our thoughts, we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves," said Gautama Buddha. The thought process, thinking patterns, building blocks of thought, organized thinking and goal direction are the five keys to re-engineering the mind to refashion our lives.

THE STRATEGY

The human mind which becomes brim-full of ideas after re-engineering evaluates the outcome and once again rethinks and redefines problems to arrive at fresh solutions. Once during the time of Gautama Buddha an animated group of citizens were involved in an argument about the concept of divinity and various religions but none could zero in on a suitable answer.



In sheer exasperation, they fell at the feet of Lord Buddha. The compassionate one merely smiled. Buddha then asked his disciples to arrange for an elephant and for four persons to be blindfolded. And so, it happened that the first of the blindfolded persons felt the elephant's leg and exclaimed that God appeared as a pillar. The second person touched the elephant's tummy and opined that Almighty God was a wall. The third gentleman stroked the elephant's ear and made an observation that God was a piece of cloth. The fourth man grazed the tail and described God as a piece of rope. Once again, the group of four were engaged in a raging debate on the form of Almighty God. The four blindfolded individuals felt the same elephant, but provided varying answers, so what could be the correct answer? The episode just proved that no one individual or thought process is complete.

PEARLS OF WISDOM

The human mind views the vastness of the universe from the corner of the mind through one's own perception, delineated as it is by limited thinking and understanding. The four blindfolded individuals and those bestowed with vision appreciated the point made by Lord Buddha that they carry much baggage of past impressions and limited thinking that they ended up wrangling about the form of divinity when they were unable to even comprehend the form of an elephant.

TECHNIQUES FOR TRAINING

Those spiritually inclined can re-engineer their lives by undertaking the bouquet of courses offered by the Art of Living and pursuing Vipassana or Zen to transform their minds through the practice of yoga, pranayama and meditation. There are some who have a logical bent of mind and charter a different path. Such individuals need to develop a passion, or take up a sport, read inspirational literature among other things. But it is elemental to reengineer the mind and thought processes at regular intervals to live life with gusto. Thus, the requirement for a curious mind.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd and is a faculty of the Art of Living)

The conflict between 'India' and 'Bharat'

India versus Bharat debate is not just about semantics but about larger issues of national identity, sustainable development and co-existential discourse



RAGHAVENDRA P TIWARI



India, i.e., Bharat (Bha = light or gyan, rat = imbued, meaning nation imbued in knowledge creation and dissemination), is becoming privy to all-round development in all materialistic aspects of human endeavour, be it agriculture, education, health, industry, defence, energy, transportation, communication, science & technology including space technology etc. Moreover, technology is pervading almost every sphere of human life. Resultantly, life even in rural India is becoming comfortable and at places lavish. Concurrently, life is becoming mechanical as we interact more with emotionless machines and less with humans endowed with traditional wisdom and values. Man-machine interaction is likely to intensify in future as visualised by Donna Haraway in her concept of "Cyborg".

Our forefathers envisioned Bharat as a great cultural civilisation. However, presently the civilizational discourse seems to be focused on the binary of India versus Bharat. Time-tested forms of social interactions within and between families and societies and between societies and nature are getting blurred with new discourses. This is resulting in individualistic mindset and selfish and greedy conduct which is anathema to Bharatiyata. 'Collective' is on the verge of defeat from the 'individualistic'. Consequently, human decencies, sensibilities, sensitiveness, values and ethics are witnessing a fast decline. We have entered into a fierce and ugly conflict for ownership of the resources and a clash of identities and sub-identities for gaining deceptive supremacy. The development paradigm is no more nature-centric and sustainable. Our centuries-old idea of 'Less is More' has become 'More is Less' leading to a consumeristic mindset and over-exploitation of nature. The result is pollution of life-sustaining water, soil and air and loss of habitat. Coupled with climatic vagaries including temperature rise due to carbon emission, melting of ice-caps, droughts, floods and ecological imbalances, the earth's ecosystem is



NEP-2020 ALSO EMPHASIZES EDUCATION FOR INCULCATING UNIVERSAL HUMAN VALUES AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS APART FROM DEVELOPING 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL SKILL

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becoming unfit for survival resulting in an existential crisis for all creatures. Contrary to the prevailing parasitic attitude towards nature, Bharatiya tradition was based upon the belief that nature is the creation of ALMIGHTY and all biotic and abiotic entities contain HIS divine energy, thus are the extension of the SELF and are interconnected and hence should be respected and celebrated. However, contemporary developments compel us to think that India is in intense conflict with Bharat.

Bharatiya thought of preaching and practising universal brotherhood and fellow feeling, is at the crossroad now. The new normal is limitlessly negating our idea of 'Vaisudhaiv Kutumbakam', 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah' and 'Resources are to be sustainably shared by ALL'. A new thought that has become a part of our conduct is the shifting of responsibility for all our misdeeds to the government. There are many whose mental makeup is conditioned by "India Centric" mechanical terminologies, which are tethered to regressive colonial ideologies. Such people think that an individual has the right to commit anti-social, unlawful, unethical, immoral and anti-nature acts and government is duty-bound to punish the culprits. Of course, the government has to own the responsibility for atrocities on women and other segments of the society, for violence and unlawful activities owing to interpersonal, inter-community and inter-identity conflicts and all other illegal and inhuman activities, against the cultural traits of Bharat. But those who commit such acts, and not the government, are the primary accused and have to be punished. This new narrative is also supported by the political outfits for electoral conveniences.

We blame the police and the government functionaries for the failure to punish the unethical exploiters of natural resources, murderers, thieves, adulterers, smugglers, drug traffickers, arsoners, perpetrators, etc. Such incidences are reported in the media with the narrative that the government has failed to maintain law and order. Perpetrators of crimes are rarely blamed by society and other stakeholders.

Previously, society itself used to impose sanctions on the perpetrators of crimes and anti-social elements which worked as deterrents to such acts. The public used to exclude such elements from social and religious functions and Hukka-Pani with them was used to be banned.

Contrastingly, now in India, perpetrators are advertently saved and thus encouraged to commit such acts on the consideration of caste, creed, region, religion, identity and other affiliations. We need to understand that the resources drained from the public coffers and the time, energy and efforts of the government functionaries spent in controlling such illegal and unethical activities would otherwise have been meaningfully utilised for national development. The most worrying aspect is that despite a sharp increase in literacy rate, access to quality education and gross enrolment ratio, such activities are increasing in India and Bharat's value system is under serious threat implying that the very purpose of education i.e. man-making and holistic development, is defeated.

History witnesses that social reforms in Bharat were not accomplished by legislation and government interventions. Rather, it is beset with many examples where social transformations have happened through

social movements resulting in awareness and social doctrines to be adhered to by citizens, failing which social sanctions used to be imposed for keeping a tag on the social evils.

India versus Bharat debate is not just about semantics but about the more significant questions of national identity, sustainable development and co-existential discourse. The time is ripe now for initiating a public debate on this crucial aspect that humanity is confronted with and remedies for this should emerge from within the society instead of looking helplessly towards the government. Precisely for this reason, the main motto of NEP-2020 and Education 5.0 is humanistic education. NEP-2020 also emphasizes education for inculcating universal human values and traditional knowledge systems apart from developing 21st Century global skills. We need to strike a balance and establish harmony between Artha and Kama, the pursuits of material life, and Dharma and Moksha, the pursuits of spiritual life. Suffice it to say that we ought to free ourselves from the meaning of "India" and connect with the meaning of "Bharat", which draws sustenance from Sanatana culture. This way we can become Bharatiya again for ensuring the longevity of humanity on mother earth. Implementation of transformative reforms of NEP-2020 in its entirety may help settle this debate and establish the supremacy of "Bharat" over "India." Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam-2023 held in New Delhi on 29th-30th of July 2023 under the patronage of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi is a path-breaking initiative in speedy implementation of NEP-2020.

Indo-Japan collaboration in semiconductors on anvil

The recent India-Japan bilateral meeting showed the depth of their relationship and their willingness to collaborate in strategic sectors

As geopolitical competition continues to unfold in the domain of critical technologies, semiconductors, and their significance, there is a growing focus on this issue in India's policy landscape. Enhancing India's chip supply chain resilience in collaboration with its allies becomes an essential economic and national security priority. In this context, India assumes the G20 Presidency is well-timed, given the world's current state of grappling with multiple crises. These include the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, escalating US-China technology competition, supply chain instability, the Taiwan Strait crisis, surging inflation, and climate change. Economist Adam Tooze has coined the term 'poly-crisis' to describe



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this convergence of challenges, where the combined impact of various shocks becomes more overwhelming than their individual effects. Consequently, the definition of national security is evolving. India aims to leverage its G20 Presidency to advocate for 'human-centric globalization' and act as a bridge between the North and South. In light of these crises, national security takes on a broader meaning, encompassing technology, self-reliance, and international partnerships.

Against this backdrop, the recent bilateral meeting between India and Japan in New Delhi marked a significant milestone in strengthening their strategic and global partnership. During the meeting, both nations explored potential collaborations in critical

sectors such as semiconductors and supply chains, with a particular focus on countering the disruptions caused by Russia's conflict in Ukraine. Japan expressed its commitment to invest \$35.9 billion in India by 2027, underlining its determination to fortify economic ties. The meeting covered various aspects of defence cooperation and technology, with the Foreign Ministers of both countries, S. Jaishankar and Yoshimasa Hayashi, expressing satisfaction with the progress made in their defence and security cooperation. A key highlight of the meeting was the emphasis on multilateral and plurilateral frameworks, particularly the Quad grouping, which includes the United States and Australia. The

Quad's objective is to address the challenges presented by China's assertive actions in the region while promoting a rules-based and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Both India and Japan reaffirmed their commitment to a strong partnership within this framework, which is crucial for ensuring peace and prosperity in the region and beyond. A significant stride was taken in technology cooperation through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on semiconductor development earlier this month. The MoU covered various aspects such as design, manufacturing, equipment research, talent development, and enhancing the resilience of the semiconductor supply chain. This move was seen as a crucial step in

fostering innovation and advancing technology collaboration between India and Japan.

The historical context of India-Japan relations was acknowledged, dating back to the 6th century when Buddhism was introduced to Japan. The influence of Indian culture, filtered through Buddhism, has had a lasting impact on Japanese culture and contributed to a sense of closeness between the two nations. Over the years, the relationship has grown stronger and evolved into a "Global and Strategic Partnership" in 2006 and a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" in 2014. The joint statement of "Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership

Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World" in 2015 laid the foundation for further deepening their partnership. In the realm of security and defence cooperation, a notable achievement was the signing of the "Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement" (ACSA) between Japan and India in 2020. The ACSA established a mechanism for the mutual provision of supplies and services between Japan's Self-Defense Forces and India's Armed Forces, further strengthening their defence ties. The meeting also addressed India's efforts to build a chipmaking industry as part of its self-reliance policy to secure stable supplies. Japan has been encouraging Japanese companies to invest in various

sectors. This meeting can be seen as an outreach to Japan after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to establish a domestic chipmaking industry faced a potential setback recently when electronics giant Foxconn withdrew from a \$19.5 billion semiconductor joint venture with Indian mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd. To support semiconductor and display manufacturing projects, the country is providing attractive financial incentives, offering up to 50% of project costs under a \$10 billion plan. This collaboration has led to significant growth in Japanese investment in crucial technologies such as medical equipment, electronics, and household electric appliances in India.

Pak senate drops anti-extremism Bill

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Senate's Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani on Sunday "dropped" a bill aimed at curbing violent extremism in the country following fierce opposition from lawmakers, including those from the ruling coalition. The Chairman dropped 'The Prevention of Violent Extremism Bill 2023' tabled by Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan on behalf of Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah as many parliamentarians opposed it, media reports said on Sunday.

The bill said that those calling on others to show or use force, propagating and publishing extremist material, using all kinds of media for radicalisation or manipulating people's beliefs, or provoking sectarian strife would be guilty of violent extremism.

Mohammad Humayun Mohmand, a lawmaker from Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said he did not know why the bill was being tabled on Sunday. "Is there an emergency in Pakistan that we come and do this on Sundays, on public

holidays?" If such legislation was passed by following the due procedure then it would only add to its credibility, Dawn News quoted the PTI leader as saying.

"If we do something in haste just because the government thinks little time remains, then haste makes waste," he said.

Climate Minister Sherry Rehman who tried to defend holding the session on Sunday said that in the past sessions had been called on Sundays and Saturdays.

Commenting on the statements by other parliamentarians who questioned why the bills on the agenda were not being referred to the relevant committees, she said: "Perhaps, they don't know that when the National Assembly (NA) completes its term, the bills that originate from there [...] the rule is that they become inoperative the day the assembly's term ends."

Sherry said that the Senate could also introduce amendments to bills after the assembly's term ended. "No one likes hasty legislation," she said.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui

from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party said that as a member of the ruling party, there was perhaps a "compulsion" that they would vote for the bill, adding that they would do so.

At the same time, he said that several of the bills on today's (Sunday's) agenda were "important".

Talking about the prevention of violent extremism bill, he said that it covered "vast areas" and explained that the bill had 33 articles and 100 sub-clauses which were applicable to all, including politicians and the common man.

Siddiqui pointed out that the bill did not come from the National Assembly and had come directly to the Senate.

"After coming to us directly, it is our responsibility to thoroughly look at it before sending it to the NA. We agree with its aims and objectives but we fear that if this bill is approved as it is without going to the committee [...]" then it may perhaps be difficult to escape its clutches in the future," he said.

"Is it opposed?" asked Chairman Sanjrani, to which

senators said it was. "Should I send it to the committee or take it to passage?" Sanjrani, who belongs to the Balochistan Awami Party, then asked.

Senator Kamran Murtaza of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), an Islamic party, said any such legislation required taking allied parties into confidence. "You are cutting off your own hands with this legislation. You don't realise it [...] but where fundamental rights are being curtailed and you want to do legislation in this manner, in this haste and during the holidays, then I — as a coalition senator — voice my opposition."

Murtaza said the bill would become a problem down the line for all. "So please don't do this kind of legislation which is offending the articles of the Constitution," he added.

National Party (NP) Senator Tahir Bizenjo said that unfortunately two political parties, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the PML-N, were making all the decisions.

He took issue with the PML-N and said the party had not taken anyone into confidence over the legislation car-

ried out over its tenure.

He said that the current bill was an "open attack" on democracy and that he was "strongly opposing the bill".

"If it is tabled, we will stage a token walkout," he said.

In his remarks, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Pakistan (Fazl) Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri said that their coalition partners did not realise what would happen in the future.

The JUI-F leader also questioned the need for calling a session on Sunday and voiced the party's opposition to the bill. Sanjrani then said that the bill was a "routine matter" and that the Sunday session was called because it was decided in the business advisory that the days needed to be completed and three holidays would not be counted. "I drop this bill, whether or not the government does," he said. Senator Mushtaq Ahmad said that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government was presenting a bill on violent extremism. "This is a frightening bill which will not end violent extremism but will instead increase it," he said. "Sections five and six of the

bill are draconian. This is a bill for banning the PTI," he said.

The bill says that anyone found to be guilty of committing "violent extremism" may be listed in the Second Schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 (ATA) or in the First Schedule in the case of an organisation.

The bill defines that a person would be guilty of "violent extremism" if he "supports, encourages, promotes, instigates, foments, advocates, justifies, commits or threatens to commit the show or use of force or violence or any hostile action, not permitted under the law, for resolution of any ideological belief, or any political, sectarian, social, racial, ethnic and religious issue".

"The listed persons may be barred to take part in elections at any level," it says, a key provision that could affect the electoral prospects of many PTI candidates in the general elections in the coming months.

It further says that all assets, properties and bank accounts in the name of the listed organisation shall be immediately frozen and seized.

Pakistan approves multi-billion dollar Gulf investments

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

In a major development, cash-strapped Pakistan has in principle approved 28 projects worth billions of dollars that would be offered to Gulf countries for investment with the long-term objective to reduce reliance on loans and imports. The newly established Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) — a hybrid civil-military forum — is leading the drive to fast-track economic development to address the financial woes of the country.

The list of the approved projects suggests that if all the schemes are picked up by countries, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, the quantum of investment under the SIFC banner can be greater than the USD 28 billion under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Express Tribune reported.

The approved schemes are in the food, agriculture, information technology, mines and minerals, petroleum and power sectors. They include cattle farms; the USD 10 billion Saudi Aramco refinery; explorations of copper and gold in Chagai; and the Thar Coal Rail connectivity scheme.

The initial project also includes the Diamer-Bhasha dam which has also been offered to China for investment under CPEC.

The CPEC is a collection of infrastructure and other projects under construction throughout Pakistan since 2013.

In order to give legal cover to the SIFC working, parliament already approved a host of amendments to the Pakistan Army Act and the Board of Investment (BOI) Ordinance.

Amendments to the Election Act have also been introduced to ensure the continuity of work on these schemes during the tenure of the caretaker government.

These laws will provide fast-track execution of the initially approved 28 multi-billion dollar investment projects,

besides ensuring immunity to the decision-makers from any kind of investigation by various anti-graft bodies.

Another law, the Pakistan Sovereign Wealth Fund, is also in the pipeline that will provide equity to the SIFC-approved projects for both joint ventures with foreign nations or single ownership schemes.

The assets of seven profitable state-owned entities, including blue-chip companies, are being transferred in the wealth fund for utilisation on the projects approved by the SIFC.

Pakistan has set up the SIFC for what Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif described as a move to "foster synergy between the federal and provincial governments to facilitate timely decision making; avoid duplication of efforts; enhance investor confidence, and ensure swift project implementation".

The Express Tribune quoted sources as saying that the government had identified 23 countries for pitching these projects but the main focus would be on Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain.

Pakistan will issue priority visas to the citizens of these countries in an attempt to achieve swift execution of the schemes.

However, the challenge will be at the execution stage, as even the strategic projects, including the CPEC, could not fully materialise because of a host of issues including bureaucratic snags, Pakistan's backtracking on its sovereign commitments to China, and its indecisiveness about geopolitical alignments.

Islamabad and Beijing had planned a total USD 62 billion investment under CPEC but so far, less than a sum of USD 28 billion has been materialised.

Pakistan narrowly avoided a sovereign default last month after the prime minister as well as the military establishment took economic decisions in their own hands and reached a new USD 3 billion deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Bus accident in Pak kills 5 after driver falls asleep

Lahore (PTI): At least five persons were killed and 20 others severely injured on Sunday when a bus with devotees overturned in Pakistan's Punjab province after the driver fell asleep, police said. The incident took place in the Fazilpur area of Punjab's Rajanpur district. The bus, with the devotees, was on its way back to Jacobabad from Sakhi Sarwar when it overturned after the driver lost control of the vehicle as he fell asleep, police officials were quoted as saying to The Express Tribune newspaper. Rescue teams rushed to the site of the accident immediately after receiving the news and transferred the injured to hospitals. People with severe injuries were shifted to Rajanpur district hospital, while the others were shifted to a hospital in Fazilpur.

Russian, Chinese delegates join Kim at missile parade

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was joined by senior Russian and Chinese delegates as he displayed his most powerful nuclear-capable missiles in a military parade marking a major war anniversary with a show of defiance against the United States and deepening ties with Moscow as tensions on the peninsula are at their highest point in years.

Kim attended Thursday night's parade with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chinese ruling party official Li Hongzhong from a balcony looking over a brightly illuminated Kim Il Sung Square, named after Kim's grandfather, the founder of North Korea.

Edited footage from North Korean state TV on Friday showed streets and stands packed with tens of thousands of mobilized spectators, who roared in approval as waves of goose-stepping soldiers, tanks



and huge, intercontinental ballistic missiles wheeled out on launcher trucks filled up the main road. People were brought from around the country to the capital, Pyongyang, to fill the crowd, according to state media.

The parade began with warm-up events that featured ceremonial flights of newly developed surveillance and

attack drones, which were first unveiled by state media this week as they reported on an arms exhibition attended by Kim and Shoigu.

The main event began with Kim arriving at the square in a limousine escorted by a formation of motorcycles. Kim saluted honor guards and military officials and walked down a red carpet to enter a building where

Shoigu and Li greeted him at the balcony, as troops below chanted "protect Kim Jong Un with our lives!"

Organizers broadcast messages in Russian, Chinese and Korean while introducing Kim's guests to the crowd, drawing cheers and applause.

As the parade proceeded, Kim was constantly talking and exchanging smiles with Shoigu and Li, who respectively stood to his right and left at the balcony's center. Kim and Shoigu repeatedly raised their hands to salute the parading troops. The broadcast did not show Kim making a speech.

Kim's biggest weapons were saved for the end, when his troops rolled out new ICBMs that were flight-tested in recent months and demonstrated ranges that could reach deep into the U.S. mainland, the Hwasong-17 and Hwasong-18. Some analysts say the missiles are based on Russian designs or know-how.

North Korean Defense

Minister Kang Sun Nam spoke, describing the parade as a historic celebration of the country's "great victory" against "U.S. imperialist aggression forces and groups of its satellite states."

He condemned the United States for its expanding military exercises with South Korea, which the North portrays as invasion rehearsals, and also holding new rounds of nuclear contingency planning meetings with Seoul. The allies describe their drills as defensive, and say the upgrades in training and planning are necessary to cope with the North's evolving nuclear threat.

"We solemnly declare that if they attempt military confrontation as now, the exercise of our state's armed forces will go beyond the scope of the right to defense for the United States of America and (South Korea)," Kang said, repeating previous North Korean threats of nuclear conflict.

China: US military aid won't deter Taiwan unification

AP ■ TAIPEI

China accused the United States of turning Taiwan into an "ammunition depot" after the White House announced a \$345 million military aid package for Taipei, and the self-ruled island said Sunday it tracked six Chinese navy ships in waters off its shores.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office issued a statement late Saturday opposing the military aid to Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory.

"No matter how much of the ordinary people's taxpayer money the ... Taiwanese separatist forces spend, no matter how many U.S. weapons, it will not shake our resolve to solve the Taiwan problem. Or shake our firm will to realize the reunification of our motherland," said Chen Binhua, a spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office. "Their actions



are turning Taiwan into a powder keg and ammunition depot, aggravating the threat of war in the Taiwan Strait," the statement said. China's People's Liberation Army has increased its military maneuvers in recent years aimed at Taiwan, sending fighter jets and warships to circle the island.

On Sunday, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said it tracked six Chinese navy ships near the island.

Taiwan's ruling administra-

tion, led by the Democratic Progressive Party, has stepped up its weapons purchases from the US as part of a deterrence strategy against a Chinese invasion.

China and Taiwan split amid civil war in 1949, and Taiwan has never been governed by China's ruling Communist Party.

Unlike previous military purchases, the latest batch of aid is part of a presidential authority approved by the US Congress last year to draw weapons from current US military stockpiles — so Taiwan will not have to wait for military production and sales.

While Taiwan has purchased \$19 billion worth of weaponry, much of it has yet to be delivered to Taiwan. Washington will send man-portable air defense systems, intelligence and surveillance capabilities, firearms and missiles to Taiwan.

UK doctor jailed for sexual assault

London (PTI): A doctor who claimed to have been trained in specialist massage in India for two years has been handed an 18-month prison sentence by a UK court which also placed him on the sex offenders register for 10 years after being found guilty of the sexual assault of a female patient.

Simon Abraham, 34, worked at Eastbourne District General Hospital in south-east England when he contacted the woman in October 2020 after she had been treated there for severe headaches. He was convicted of sexual assault at Chichester Crown Court after a four-day trial in May and sentenced last week to 18 months in prison - nine of which will be custodial behind bars and the remaining under licence parole conditions. "He claimed that he had had a call from a colleague who was concerned about her condition and that he had been trained in specialist

massage in India for two years," the Sussex Police said in a statement.

"The woman agreed to his visit, but during the massage he sexually assaulted her. He left when a visitor came to the house, but continued to phone her. She contacted the hospital who advised her that they would investigate, but she should also contact police," the statement noted.

Abraham will also be placed on the sex offenders' register for 10 years and is subject to a five-year restraining order to protect the victim from contact by him.

"Abraham took advantage of the victim's pain, fraudulently accessing her patient details even though he wasn't officially treating her, and then visiting her when he finished work, claiming that he could massage her headache away," said Sussex Police Detective Constable Jo Gledhill.

Palestinian factions meet amid West Bank violence

AP ■ CAIRO

Palestinian factions were meeting Sunday in Egypt to discuss reconciliation efforts as violence in the occupied West Bank surged between Israel and Palestinian militants.

The main groups, Hamas and Fatah, have been split since 2007. With repeated reconciliation attempts having failed, expectations for the one-day meeting are low. According to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, the gathering in the Egyptian city of el-Alamein on the Mediterranean Sea will discuss "ways to restore national unity and end the division."

The meeting comes amid soaring violence in the West Bank, where Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah group are based and exert limited self-rule. Israel has been staging near-nightly raids in Palestinian areas of the



territory in what it says is an attempt to stamp out militancy, especially in areas where Abbas security forces have less of a foothold.

Those raids have led to some of the worst fighting in nearly two decades in the West Bank. Palestinians also say the Israeli raids undermine their own security forces and weaken their leadership. The meeting in Egypt is chaired and initiated by Abbas, presents the aging and longtime Palestinian

leader with a chance to portray an image of control and statesmanship to both Palestinians and the international community at a time when he is deeply unpopular at home and his room for maneuver is constrained by the Israeli incursions.

The meeting is being attended by other Palestinian leaders including Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, the militant group which rules the Gaza Strip.

Will Biden's age affect his ability to win young voters?

AP ■ WASHINGTON

At 24, Alberto Rodriguez has grandparents younger than Joe Biden. But he's more interested in the 80-year-old president's accomplishments than his age.

"People as young as me, we're all focusing on our day-to-day lives and he has done things to help us through that," Rodriguez, a cook at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, said of Biden's support among young voters.

Rodriguez pointed specifically to federal COVID-19 relief payments and government spending increases on infrastructure and other social programmes.

Voters like him were a key piece of Biden's winning 2020 coalition, which included majorities of young people as



well as college graduates, women, urban and suburban voters and Black Americans.

Maintaining their support will be critical in closely contested states such as Nevada, where even small declines could prove consequential to Biden's reelection bid.

His 2024 campaign plans to emphasise messages that could especially resonate with young people in the coming weeks as the anniversary of the sweeping Inflation Reduction Act approaches in mid-August.

That legislation includes provisions that the White

House will embrace to argue that Biden has done more than any other president to combat climate change.

Such efforts, however, could collide with Biden's personal reality — like when he recalled that, while attending a St. Patrick's Day parade at age 14, he appeared in a photo with President Harry S. Truman.

"Purely by accident — I assume it was an accident — the photographer from the newspaper got a picture of me making eye contact with Harry Truman," Biden said to chuckles last week at the Truman Civil Rights Symposium in Washington.

In 2020, 61 per cent of voters under age 30 — and 55 per cent of those between 30 and 44 — supported Biden, according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of the electorate.

It's an age group with which Republicans hope to make inroads. Former President Donald Trump, who is the early front-runner in the GOP presidential primary and is only 3 1/2 years younger than Biden, said Friday, "We are hitting the young person's market like nobody's ever seen before."

Kevin Munoz, a spokesman for Biden's campaign, referred to Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement in arguing that "young people are acutely impacted by the issues front and centre in this election, driven by the extreme MAGA agenda." He said that included inaction on climate change, gun violence and student debt.

We will meet younger Americans where they are and turn their energy into action," Munoz said in a statement. That

might not defuse questions about age, though, when it comes to Biden or Trump.

"There's a frustration and exhaustion that they feel with the rematch," Terrance Woodbury, co-founder and CEO of the Democratic polling firm HIT Strategies, said of young voters.

That's more of a problem than either of those two candidates individually, is that a system can just keep reproducing," Woodbury added. "And I think a lot of people just find that untenable."

An April poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that just 25% of Democrats under 45 said they would definitely support Biden in a general election, compared with 56 per cent of older Democrats.

Power station explosions cut off power in Iraq

Baghdad (AP):

Power was cut off in large swaths of southern and central Iraq for much of Saturday during scorching summer heat and observances of the Shiite holy day of Ashoura after a fire broke out at a power station in the southern city of Basra.

The fire at the Al-Bkir substation in Basra resulted in the separation of transmission lines linking the southern and central regions, leading to a complete shutdown of the electrical system in the area, Iraq's Ministry of Electricity said in a statement. It said the fire was accidental. The power outage came as the electrical system faces other challenges, including fuel shortages and surging demands for electricity during

a major heat wave. On Saturday, temperatures reached 47 degrees Celsius (116.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

Also on Saturday, the company that handles electricity transmission in the north reported that the northern transmission line in a remote area outside the city of Haditha in western Iraq had been sabotaged. Three towers were hit by improvised explosive devices, putting the line out of service, the statement said.

It did not say who was responsible for the attack. Staff were not initially able to repair the damage on Friday due to security issues, the statement said. Islamic State cells and other armed groups are active in the remote desert area.

French embassy in Niger attacked

Protesters waving Russian flags march through capital

AP ■ NIAMEY (NIGER)

Thousands of supporters of the junta that took over Niger in a coup earlier this week marched Sunday through the streets of the capital, Niamey, waving Russian flags, chanting the name of the Russian president and forcefully denouncing former colonial power France.

The protesters marched through the city to the French Embassy, where a door was lit on fire, according to someone who was at the embassy when it happened and videos seen by The AP.

Black smoke could be seen rising from across the city. The Nigerien army broke up the crowd of the protesters.

Russian mercenary group Wagner is already operating in neighboring Mali, and Russian President Vladimir Putin would like to expand his country's influence in the region.

However, it is unclear yet whether the new junta leaders will move toward Moscow or stick with Niger's Western partners.

On Sunday at an emergency meeting in Abuja, Nigeria the West African bloc said it was suspending relations with Niger and authorized the use of force if the president was not reinstated within a week.

"In the event the authorities' demands are not met within one week, take all measures necessary to restore constitutional order in the Republic of Niger. Such measures may include the use of force.

To this effect, the chiefs of defense staff of ECOWAS are to meet immediately," Omar Aliou Touray, president of the ECOWAS commission, said after the meeting.

Days after the coup, uncertainty is mounting about Niger's future, with some calling out the junta's reasons for seizing control.

President Mohamed Bazoum was democratically elected two years ago in Niger's



first peaceful transfer of power since independence from France in 1960. The mutineers said they overthrew him because he wasn't able to secure the nation against growing jihadist violence.

But some analysts and Nigeriens say that's just a pretext for a takeover that is more about internal power struggles than securing the nation.

"Everybody is wondering: why this coup? That's because no one was expecting it. We couldn't expect a coup in Niger because there's no social, political or security situation that would justify that the military take the power," Prof. Amad Hassane Boubacar, who teaches at the University of Niamey, told The Associated Press. He said Bazoum wanted to replace the head of the presidential guard, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, who is now in charge of the country.

Tchiani, who also goes by Omar, was loyal to Bazoum's predecessor and that sparked the problems, Boubacar said. The AP cannot independently verify his assessment.

While Niger's security situation is dire, it's not as bad as neighbouring Burkina Faso or Mali, which have also been battling an Islamic insurgency linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

Last year, Niger was the only one of the three to see a

decline in violence, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

Niger had been seen as the last reliable partner for the West in efforts to battle the jihadists in Africa's Sahel region, where Russia and Western countries have vied for influence.

France has 1,500 soldiers in the country who conduct joint operations with the Nigeriens. The United States and other European countries have helped train the nation's troops.

Regional bodies, including the West African economic bloc ECOWAS, have denounced the coup. Some taking part in Sunday's rally warned them to stay away.

"I would like also to say to the European Union, African Union and ECOWAS, please, please stay out of our business," said Oumar Barou Moussa, who was at the demonstration.

"It's time for us to take our lives, to work for ourselves. It's time for us to talk about our freedom and liberty. We need to stay together, we need to work together, we need to have our true independence," he said. Conflict experts say out of all the countries in the region, Niger has the most at stake if it turns away from the West, given the millions of dollars of military assistance the international community has poured in.

Drone attack hurts one, temporarily closes airport

AP ■ MOSCOW

Three Ukrainian drones attacked Moscow in the early hours on Sunday, Russian authorities said, injuring one person and prompting a temporary closure of traffic in and out of one of four airports around the Russian capital.

It was the fourth such attempt at a strike on the capital region this month and the third this week, fuelling concerns about Moscow's vulnerability to attacks as Russia's war in Ukraine drags into its 18th month.

The Russian Defence Ministry referred to the incident as an "attempted terrorist attack by the Kyiv regime" and said three drones targeted the city. One was shot down in the surrounding Moscow region by air defense systems and two others were jammed. Those two crashed into the Moscow City business district.

Photos from the site of the crash showed the facade of a skyscraper damaged on one floor. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said the attack "insignificantly damaged" the outsides of two buildings in the Moscow City district. A security guard was injured, Russia's state news agency Tass reported, citing emergency officials.

No flights went into or out of Vnukovo airport on the southern outskirts of the city for about an hour, according to Tass, and the airspace over Moscow and the outlying regions was temporarily closed to all aircraft. Those restrictions have since been lifted.

Moscow authorities have also closed a street to traffic near the site of the crash in the Moscow City area.

Without directly acknowledging that Ukraine was behind the attack on Moscow, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian airforce said that the Russian people were seeing the consequences of

Russia's war in Ukraine.

"All of the people who think the war doesn't concern them, it's already touching them," spokesperson Yuriy Ilnat told journalists Sunday.

"There's already a certain mood in Russia: that something is flying in, and loudly," he said. "There's no discussion of peace or calm in the Russian interior any more. They got what they wanted."

Ilnat also referenced a drone attack on Russian-occupied Crimea overnight. Moscow announced Sunday that it had shot down 16 Ukrainian drones and neutralized eight more with an electronic jamming system. There were no casualties, officials said. In Ukraine, the air force reported that it had destroyed four Russian drones above the country's Kherson and Dnipropetrovsk regions. Information on the attacks could not be independently verified.

Meanwhile, two people were killed and 20 wounded by a Russian missile strike late Saturday evening on the city of Sumy in northeast Ukraine. A four-story building belonging to a vocational college was hit, the Ukrainian Interior Ministry said. Local authorities said that dormitories and teaching buildings were damaged in the blast and the fire that followed.

Russia's Defence Ministry reported shooting down a Ukrainian drone outside Moscow on Friday. Four days earlier, two drones struck the Russian capital, one of them falling in the centre of the city near the Defence Ministry's headquarters along the Moscow River about 3 km (2 miles) from the Kremlin. The other drone hit an office building in southern Moscow, gutting several upper floors.

In another attack on July 4, the Russian military said four drones were downed by air defences on the outskirts of Moscow and a fifth was jammed by electronic warfare means and forced down.

Ukraine moves official Xmas holiday to Dec 25

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday signed a law moving the official Christmas Day holiday to December 25 from January 7, the day when the Russian Orthodox Church observes it.

The explanatory note attached to the law said its goal is to "abandon the Russian heritage," including that of "imposing the celebration of Christmas" on Jan. 7. It cited Ukrainians' "relentless, successful struggle for their identity" and "the desire of all Ukrainians to live their lives with their own traditions, holidays," fueled by Russia's 17-month-old aggression against the country.

Last year, some Ukrainians already observed Christmas on Dec. 25, in a gesture that represented separation from Russia, its culture and religious traditions.

The law also moves the Day of Ukrainian Statehood to July 15 from July 28, and the Day of Defenders of Ukraine to Oct. 1 from Oct. 14.

The Russian Orthodox Church, which claims sovereignty over Orthodoxy in Ukraine, and some other Eastern Orthodox churches continue to use the ancient Julian calendar. Christmas falls 13 days later on that calendar, or Jan. 7, than it does on the Gregorian calendar used by most church and secular groups.

The Catholic Church first adopted the modern, more astronomically precise Gregorian calendar in the 16th century. Protestants and some Orthodox churches have since aligned their own calendars for the purpose of calculating Christmas and Easter.

Ukraine's religious landscape has fractured for years. There are two branches of Orthodox Christianity in the country, one aligned with the Russian church, even as it enjoys broad autonomy, the other completely independent of it. The Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the branch that is separate from the Russian

Putin downplays skipping South Africa summit

Moscow (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday appeared to downplay not attending an economic summit in Johannesburg next month amid a controversy over an arrest warrant issued against him by the International Criminal Court, saying he doesn't think his presence there is "more important than my presence here, in Russia".

Putin's remarks come more than a week after South African authorities said he will not attend the Aug 22-24 gathering, which brings together a bloc of developing economies known as BRICS, because of the warrant, even though he was initially invited. The Kremlin said the Russian president will take part in the summit via video link, but didn't provide a reason for the decision and didn't say whether Putin had ever intended to attend in person.

Asked about his reasons for not going, Putin told

Russian journalists Saturday that he's "in contact with all colleagues", referring to the leaders of Brazil, India, China and South Africa, which together with Russia constitute the BRICS bloc, and that he doesn't "think my presence at the BRICS summit is more important than my presence here, in Russia, right now".

"That's it," Putin said, adding he will take part via video link and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will travel to the summit. Moscow has showcased the BRICS alliance as an alternative to the West's global dominance, but this year's meeting has proved awkward for Putin following the ICC's move in March to indict him for war crimes relating to the abduction of children from Ukraine. South Africa is a signatory to the Rome treaty that formed the International Criminal Court and therefore has the obligation to arrest the Russian leader if he sets foot on South African territory.

church, announced earlier this year that it was switching to the Revised Julian calendar, which marks Christmas on Dec. 25. Its leadership last year allowed believers to celebrate the holiday on Dec. 25.

Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti reported on Saturday that the rival Orthodox Church, which is aligned with the Russian Orthodox Church, vowed to continue observing Christmas on Jan. 7.

Russian President Vladimir Putin told reporters Saturday that the move "is a sign of something that has been happening for centuries" and that "has to do with the relations between the Catholic church and the Orthodox one."

Zelenskyy on Saturday traveled to the war-torn Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine, which Russia has illegally annexed, but only

partially occupies, and met with members of the country's Special Operation Forces. Zelenskyy noted in an online statement that Saturday marks their official day of recognition and also the anniversary of the deadly attack on the Olenivka prison in the Russian-held part of the region in which dozens of prisoners of war were killed.

Russia and Ukraine accused each other of the attack, with both sides saying that the assault was premeditated in a bid to cover up atrocities. A United Nations fact-finding mission requested by Russia and Ukraine was sent to investigate the killings, but the team was disbanded in January 2023 due to security concerns.

Zelenskyy described the attack as one of Russia's "most vile and cruel crimes" in a video statement Saturday.

Blinken: US economic aid for Niger at risk

Canberra (AP): Political instability in Niger resulting from a military takeover that deposed the president this week threatens the economic support provided by Washington to the African nation, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said Saturday.

Members of the Niger military announced on Wednesday they had deposed democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum and on Friday named Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani as the country's new leader, adding Niger to a growing list of military regimes in West Africa's Sahel region.

Blinken, who is in Australia as part of a Pacific tour, said the continued security and economic arrangements that Niger has with the U.S. hinged on the release of Bazoum and "the immediate restoration of the democratic order in Niger."

"Our economic and security partnership with Niger — which is significant, hundreds of millions of dollars — depends on the continuation of the democratic governance and

constitutional order that has been disrupted by the actions in the last few days," Blinken said. "So that assistance, that support, is in clear jeopardy as a result of these actions, which is another reason why they need to be immediately reversed."

Blinken stopped short of calling the military actions in Niger a coup, a designation that could result in the African country losing millions of dollars of military aid and assistance. Speaking in Brisbane, Blinken said he had spoken with President Bazoum on Saturday but did not provide details. He cited the support of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other regional entities in trying to bring an end to the unrest.

"The very significant assistance that we have in place that's making a material difference in the lives of the people of Niger is clearly in jeopardy and we've communicated that as clearly as we possibly can to those responsible for disrupting the constitutional order

and Niger's democracy," Blinken said.

Blinken said the US Embassy in Niger had accounted for the safety of all staff members and their families, while issuing a security alert advising U.S. citizens in the country to limit unnecessary movements and avoid areas impacted by the coup. The military group that conducted the coup, calling itself the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Country, said its members remained committed to engaging with the international and national community. "This is as a result of the continuing degradation of the security situation, the bad economic and social governance," air force Col Major Amadou Abdramane said in the video released by the coup leaders Wednesday. He said aerial and land borders were closed and a curfew was in place until the situation stabilized.

Bazoum was elected two years ago in Niger's first peaceful, democratic transfer of power since independence from France.

5 killed in clashes in crowded Lebanon's refugee camp

AP ■ BEIRUT

Overnight clashes Sunday in Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp near the southern port city of Sidon left 5 dead and 6 others wounded, Palestinian officials said.

The ongoing clashes are taking place as Palestinian factions in Ein el-Hilweh for years have cracked down on militant Islamist groups and fugitives seeking shelter in the camp's overcrowded neighbourhoods.

In 2017, Palestinian factions engaged in almost a week of fierce clashes with a militant organization affiliated with the extremist Islamic State group.

The Palestinian officials, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said the clashes broke out after an unknown gunman tried to assassinate Islamist militant Mahmoud Khalil, killing a companion of his instead.

Factions used assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers in the overcrowded camp, as ambulances zoomed through its narrow streets to



take the wounded to the hospital. Several residents fled the crossfire to nearby neighbourhoods in the camp.

According to Lebanon's state-run National News Agency, six people were wounded in the overnight clashes, including two children. The clashes stopped for several hours in the morning, though state media said there was still sporadic sniper fire.

Clashes renewed after

Islamist militants assassinated a Palestinian military general from the Fatah group and three escorts, another Palestinian official told the AP. Ein el-Hilweh is notorious for its lawlessness and clashes are not uncommon. The UN says it is home to some 55,000 people.

It was established in 1948 to host Palestinians displaced by Israeli forces during the establishment of Israel.

Explosion at fireworks warehouse in Thailand kills at least 10 people

AP ■ BANGKOK

A large explosion at a fireworks warehouse in southern Thailand killed at least ten people and wounded dozens, officials said.

The Narathiwat province's Public Relations Department also said that at least 118 people were hurt, and that residents of more than 200 households were affected in the explosion that occurred on Saturday.

It said that officials believe there are still a number of people trapped under the debris waiting to be rescued.

Videos posted on social media from the site show a huge plume of smoke over the area and many damaged structures, cars and motorcycles, as well as streets covered with debris. Many of the houses and other buildings have collapsed roofs and walls.

The local public relations agency reported that the explosion caused damages in a radius of about 500 metres (1,640 feet). About 100 resi-



dences in the area were damaged, according to the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation.

Sanan Pongakorn, the provincial governor, told public broadcaster Thai PBS that the blast was likely ignited by construction work that was taking place in the warehouse, with sparks from metal welding causing the fireworks stored inside to catch fire and explode.

Saudi Arabia to host peace summit organised by Ukrainian in August

Dubai (AP): Saudi Arabia will host a Ukrainian-organized peace summit in early August seeking to find a way to start negotiations over Russia's war on the country, an official said.

The kingdom and Kyiv did not immediately acknowledge the planned talks. The summit will be held in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as no authorization had been given to publicly discuss the summit. Those taking part in the summit will include Ukraine, as well as Brazil, India, South Africa and several other countries, the official said. A high-level official from US President Joe Biden's administration also is expect-

ed to attend, the official said. Planning for the event is being overseen by Kyiv and Russia is expected not to attend, the official said. Details regarding the summit, however, remain in flux and the official did not offer dates for the talks. The Wall Street Journal, which first reported on the summit, said the talks would take place August 5 and 6 with some 30 countries attending, citing "diplomats involved in the discussion."

Saudi officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press, nor did Ukraine's Embassy in Riyadh. News of the summit comes after US national security

adviser Jake Sullivan visited the kingdom on Thursday.

The official who spoke to the AP said the summit would be the next step after talks that took place in Copenhagen in June. Saudi Arabia's hosting of the talks come as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in May attended an Arab League summit in Jeddah to press those nations to back Kyiv. Arab nations largely have remained neutral since Russia launched the war on Ukraine in February 2022, in part over their military and economic ties to Moscow.

Saudi Arabia also has maintained a close relationship with Russia as part of the OPEC+ group.

Lata's classic melodies ring out in London

PTI ■ LONDON

After a gap of nearly 49 years since the music legend Lata Mangeshkar performed a rare live concert at Royal Albert Hall in London, some of her most popular songs rang out at the iconic venue once again for a special tribute concert.

'Lata Mangeshkar: Bollywood Legend' formed part of the BBC's annual summer season of orchestral music known as the Proms, usually devoted to western classical music with some recent attempts at widening its appeal to the Indian diaspora.

Prom 18 on Friday night included many of the renditions from the award-winning late playback singer's own live renditions at the Royal Albert Hall back in March 1974, including 'Aye Mere Watan Ke Logo' and 'Aage Aane Wala' from the 1949 film 'Mahal', accompanied by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO).

"This is an extremely special moment for me, to be paying tribute to such a legend of Indian music, adored the world over," said singer Palak Muchhal, who performed a string of melodies.

Muchhal, a prolific playback singer and philanthropist, opened the show with a rendition of the title track from the 1978 film 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram' followed by tracks from Bollywood classics such as 'Mughal-e-Azam' and 'Kabhi Kabhie' to more modern-day numbers from 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge', 'Mohabbatein' and 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham'.

"A single evening can offer only a snapshot of a career that spanned nearly seven decades, one in which she sang around 50,000 songs in countless films. Not only did she have a beautiful voice, but she used it to evoke a wide range of emotions in 36 different languages, earning her the title 'The Nightingale of India,'" the BBC Proms



noted in a statement. The song selection for the concert included several medleys to span over more than half a century of Indian music. Some of the numbers were also accompanied by dancers from the Bollywood Co. London, who presented dance

sequences inspired by the cinematic originals.

Arranged for a live orchestra by musicians Tim Pottier, Saurabh Shivakumar, Nathen Durasamy and Michael Seal, the CBSO artists combined a range of instruments from violins, cellos, clarinets and tabla, dholak and dhol for the show packed with thousands who sang and danced along. It marked the first Bollywood celebration for over a decade at the annual Proms, formally named the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts, which are presented live and aired by the BBC over eight weeks. "The Proms celebrates genres and artists from around the world. This year we bring Portuguese fado and Northern Soul to the Proms for the first time, as well as a tribute to Bollywood playback singer Lata Mangeshkar," added David Pickard, Director of BBC Proms. Mangeshkar died aged 92 in February last year and received a state funeral in Mumbai.

RBI may maintain status-quo on interest rate, say experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank is likely to maintain status-quo on the key interest rates for the third time in a row in its upcoming bi-monthly policy review despite the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank hiking benchmark rates, as domestic inflation is within the RBI's comfort zone, say experts.

The borrowing cost which started rising in May last year has stabilised with RBI keeping the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February when it was raised from 6.25 per cent. In the previous two bi-monthly policy reviews in April and June the benchmark rate was retained.

The RBI Governor-headed six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled on August 8-10. The policy decision would be announced on August 10 by Governor Shaktikanta Das.

"We do expect the RBI to hold on to a status quo position on both rates and stance. The reason is that while inflation is presently running at less than 5 per cent there would be some upside risk to this number in the



coming months with prices of vegetables and pulses going up sharply. Therefore, an extended pause is expected," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

In fact, he added that with the RBI having a forecast of inflation of 5.4 per cent for the third quarter, it looks unlikely that the repo rate or stance may be changed till the beginning of the next calendar year.

Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist, Kotak Mahindra Bank said: "On the policy stance, since the liquidity conditions have turned favourable post the announcement of the withdrawal of the Rs 2,000 note, we expect the RBI to continue to hold on to the current stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation'".

All eyes will be on how domestic inflation plays out and

the global cues that are suggesting a greater probability of a peak out of the US Fed's monetary tightening cycle, thus easing, Bhardwaj added.

Last week, the US Federal Reserve increased interest rate by 25 basis points to 5.25-5.5 per cent, taking it to a multi-year high.

The European Central Bank on Thursday announced a new rate increase of a quarter percentage point, bringing its main rate to 3.75 per cent.

The European Central Bank too has increased its main rate by a quarter percentage point.

India's retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to a three-month high of 4.81 per cent in June, mainly on account of hardening prices of food. The inflation, however, remains within

the RBI's comfort level of below 6 per cent.

The government has tasked the central bank to ensure retail inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. The central bank mainly factors in the CPI to arrive at its bi-monthly monetary policy decision.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, Head Research and Outreach, ICRA said that the surge in vegetable prices is likely to push the CPI or retail inflation above 6 per cent in July 2023. Moreover, the average for this quarter would exceed the latest estimate for the second quarter that the MPC released in June 2023.

"As a result, we expect the MPC's commentary to be fairly hawkish, amid a continued pause on the repo rate and stance in the upcoming policy review," she said.

On expectations from the upcoming RBI Policy, V Swaminathan, Executive Chairman, Andromeda Sales said the central bank will maintain the status quo and opt for hawkish stance in view of the recent rate hikes announced by the Federal Reserve and European Central Bank.

Govt should consider lowering TCS on overseas tour packages, cites report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government should consider lowering TCS on overseas tour packages and allow foreign cruise vessels to operate on Indian waters besides other steps to increase outbound tourism, a report said on Sunday.

The report titled "Unlock the Potential: A Look into Outbound Tourism", drafted by Nangia Andersen LLP in collaboration with FICCI said that India's outbound tourism market is projected to rise by 11.4 per cent CAGR between 2023 and 2032.

The growth in the Indian travel and tourism industry is driven by a combination of rising income levels and changing lifestyles, development of diverse tourism offerings and policy and regulatory support by the government authorities, it added.

The report suggested a few measures that the government may implement to support this expanding sector, including rolling back TCS (Tax Collected at Source), enhancing opportunities for partnership with foreign countries, collaboration with airlines, and allowing foreign cruise vessels to operate on Indian waters.

It said although the government has withdrawn the increase of TCS on overseas tour packages from 5 per cent to 20 per cent on amounts up to Rs 7 lakh per annum and for above Rs 7 lakh the tax increase has been deferred till October.

However, the long-standing demand of industry bodies for reducing the TCS percentage to 2.5 per cent remains unmet.

Govt-appointed panel likely to look at regulatory regime aspects for startups

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A government-appointed panel is likely to discuss whether there is a need for a stricter regulatory regime for startups against the backdrop of instances of corporate governance concerns at some of the entities, according to an official.

Startups are generally small and there needs to be a balancing when it comes to regulations for them, the official said and added that ease of doing business as well as a compliance-oriented regulatory regime should be ensured.

The Company Law Committee (CLC), which was set up by the corporate affairs ministry back in September 2019, is likely to look into various aspects of the regulatory regime for startups, the official told PTI recently.

The standing panel, which is headed by the corporate affairs secretary, has government officials, representatives from the industry and experts, among others as members. It broadly looks at the effective implementation of the Companies Act, 2013 and the Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act, 2008 as well as facilitating and promoting greater ease of doing business.

The ministry has not made its view on whether there is a need for a more rigorous regulatory framework for startups, the official said and noted that there should not be too much regulatory compliance burden on such entities.



Both companies law and the LLP Act are implemented by the ministry.

Under the companies law, a startup is defined as a private company incorporated under it and recognised as a startup in accordance with the notification issued by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.

Startups have been provided various relaxations, including certain exemptions from procedural compliance requirements.

Among others, a private company, which is considered as a startup for a period of five years from the date of its incorporation, is allowed to accept deposits from members without any restriction on the amount.

Recently, the ministry ordered an inspection of the books of edtech major BYJU'S.

Biocube expects over 66% growth in business to USD 40 mn by 2025

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Biometrics-based multi-factor authentication startup Biocube expects revenue to grow by over 66 per cent to USD 40 million by 2025.

The company began commercial operations in September last year and commenced full-scale operation this year from which it expects to gain revenue of USD 24 million.

"... The first contract also went full scale this year only. We have contracts which will give revenue of USD 24 million in 2024 and USD 40 million in 2025," Biocube Founder and CEO Subodh Narain Agrawal told PTI.

The London-based company has most of its team members in India.

"Currently, we have close to 80 employees, most of whom are based out of the development centre in India. With the expansion of its operations across international borders, Biocube will soon increase its workforce and local presence across vari-



ous geographies," Agrawal said.

A serial entrepreneur, Agrawal further said that he became a victim of cyber fraud when he was working on solving the visa verification process as his money was stolen from his bank account while he was on a flight.

"During the investigation, I learnt several gaps that exist in the authentication of customers and the way technology is evolving there can be many. That is when I started deeply working on biometrics-based verification technology. We worked on finding answers to counter new technologies that can evolve to bypass authentication process such as voice, iris etc," he said.

Sebi bans Excel Realty N Infra, 4 others from securities mkt for 2 yrs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has barred five entities, including Excel Realty N Infra and its promoters, from the securities market for up to two years and levied a fine totalling Rs 1.75 crore on them for being involved in a fraudulent scheme of misrepresenting the company's financial statements.

The barred entities are promoters of listed entity Excel Realty N Infra (Excel) -- Lakhmendra Chamanlal Khurana (Chairman & MD of Excel), Ranjana Khurana Lakhmendra and Arpit Lakhmendra Khurana -- and Pramod Yeshwant Kokate who was chief financial officer of Excel.

On the basis of a complaint received by Sebi, the markets watchdog conducted a detailed examination into the affairs of



Excel Realty N Infra for the period from April 2016 to March 2021.

In its examination, Sebi found that the transactions executed by Excel with 24 seller parties amounting to around Rs 119 crore constituting approximately 66 per cent of the total assets of Excel from FY 2016-17 to 2020-21, were misrepresented in the balance sheet of the firm for the said period.

The regulator observed that Lakhmendra Chamanlal Khurana and Managing Director of Excel during the period FY 2016-17 to 2020-21 and both management and financial decisions were taken by him on behalf of Excel.

Go First RP approaches NCLT seeking permission for refund of cancelled tickets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Go First has approached the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) seeking permission to refund money to passengers who had booked their tickets for travel on and after May 3, the day when the cash-strapped airline suspended operations.

The Resolution professional of Go First has filed a

new application before the Delhi bench of NCLT, requesting "to permit the applicant/CD to make payment of refund to passengers of the CD whose airline tickets have been cancelled since May 3, 2023."

Applicant here refers to resolution professional and CD refers to corporate debtor or Go First.

The application is sched-

uled to be heard by an NCLT bench comprising Mahendra Khandelwal and Rahul P Bhatnagar on Monday.

If permitted by the insolvency tribunal, this would be a significant relief for those air passengers, whose money is stuck with the Go First after the initiation of the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against the air carrier.

NCCF sells 560 tons tomatoes in last 15 days at subsidised rate

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Cooperative NCCF on Sunday said it has sold 560 tonnes of tomatoes at a subsidised rate in the last 15 days in Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, and the discount sale continues as retail prices are still ruling high amid heavy rains in key producing states.

National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF) had begun tomato sale at a subsidised rate of Rs 90 per kg on July 14, and later reduced the price to Rs 70 per kg. Since last one week, NCCF has been selling tomatoes at Rs 70 per kg in all three states.

NCCF is selling tomatoes on behalf of the central government in order to provide relief to consumers from high prices. Even NAFED is also undertaking sale of the key kitchen staple in Bihar and other consuming states.

"We have sold around 560 tonnes of tomatoes till July 28 in Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The sale is continuing in all three states," NCCF Managing Director Anice Joseph Chandra told PTI.

NCCF is selling tomatoes through mobile vans, select retail outlets of Kendriya Bhandar and government-backed Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) in Delhi and National Capital Region.

As many as 5.83 cr ITRs filed for 2022-23 fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 5.83 crore tax returns have been filed for income earned in 2022-23 fiscal, thus crossing the number of ITRs filed till July 31 last year.

The last date for filing income tax returns for the previous year by salaried class and those who do not have to get their accounts audited is July 31.

"5.83 crore ITRs have been filed till 1 pm today (30th July) crossing the number of ITRs filed till 31st July, last year," the I-T department tweeted.

Giving statistics of the tax return filing, the department said more than 46 lakh successful logins on the e-filing portal were seen till 1 pm today. On Saturday, there were more than 1.78 crore successful e-filing logins.

"10.39 lakh ITRs have been filed upto 1 pm today & 3.04 lakh ITRs have been filed in the last 1 hour," the I-T department tweeted at 1403 hrs.

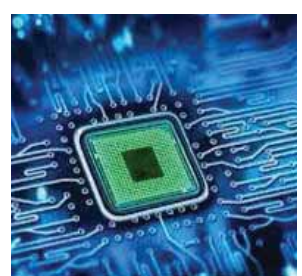
Positive about India's semiconductor approach; its talent, chip incentives in right direction: Applied Materials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

US semiconductor toolmaker Applied Materials is "positive" about India's semiconductor approach, as it sees multiple elements of domestic consumption, strategic thinking, and enabling policies come together, according to a senior company executive.

The semiconductor equipment maker is "eager and excited" about the prospects of large-scale chip manufacturing units coming up in the country, and is committed to enabling them with its support ecosystem and service capabilities in times to come, Srinivas Satya, Country President at Applied Materials India, told PTI.

The comment assumes significance as India is wooing semiconductor and display manufacturers with USD 10 billion incentive scheme, making a determined push to position itself as a global power-



house for electronics production.

Sophisticated chips are part of everyday life, used in mobile phones to refrigerators and cars to high-tech industries, so fostering local industry with carefully-crafted schemes and policy sweeteners can catapult India to the global league in semiconductor manufacturing.

On Friday, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, on the sidelines of Semicon India 2023, had said that India's global semiconductor ambition is getting a "huge response" on every

part of the value chain and had expressed confidence that the country will have at least 5 fabrication units (fabs) over the next 5-7 years, attracting multi-billion dollars in investments.

With over USD 25.7 billion in global revenue, Santa Clara, California-headquartered Applied Materials is a leading global semiconductor fabrication equipment supplier.

Applied Materials' Satya said that a combination of factors such as domestic consumption, strategic thinking, and enabling policies have come together to position India as an exciting market.

Last month, the semiconductor equipment maker announced its plans to invest USD 400 million over the next four years to build a collaborative engineering centre in Bengaluru. The centre will focus on the development and commercialisation of technologies for semiconductor manufacturing equipment.

Per capita income seen growing nearly 70% to USD 4,000 by FY30

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's per capita income is likely to grow by close to 70 per cent to USD 4,000 by fiscal 2030 from USD 2,450 in fiscal 2023, helping it become a middle-income economy with USD 6-trillion GDP, more than half of which will be coming in from household consumption, says a research report.

Per capita income/GDP has risen from USD 460 in fiscal 2001 to USD 1,413 in fiscal 2011 and further to USD 2,150 in fiscal 2021.

The biggest growth driver will be external trade which may nearly double to USD 2.1 trillion by 2030 from USD 1.2 trillion in fiscal 2023 when the GDP printed in at USD 3.5 trillion, Standard Chartered Bank said in a weekend report which assumes a 10 per cent nominal GDP growth annually from now on.

According to the report, the second biggest growth driver will be household consumption which is seen jumping to USD 3.4 trillion by fiscal 2030-which as big as the current size of the GDP-from USD 2.1 trillion in fiscal 2023. Household consumption is as much as 57 per cent of GDP now.

Go for alternative crops if paddy re-transplantation not possible: Experts

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

As the recent flood wreaked havoc in many parts of Punjab, leading to extensive damage to the paddy crop, experts have suggested farmers grow alternative crops like maize, pearl millet, vegetables and moong if re-sowing of the Kharif crop is not possible by the first week of August. Many areas in Punjab were hit after heavy downpours lashed the state from July 9 to 11, flooding vast expanses of agricultural fields besides paralyzing everyday life.

More than six lakh acres of fields were flooded and of which paddy needs to be

resown over two lakh acres, said a senior official of the Punjab Agriculture department.

Maximum area under paddy was hit in Patiala, Sangrur, Mohali, Rupnagar, Jalandhar and Fatehgarh Sahib districts.

Overall 19 districts of Punjab were hit by floodwaters.

Farmers whose paddy crop was hit by floodwaters have been asked to resow the summer crop by the first week of August with experts saying otherwise the harvesting will get delayed and will also eventually impact the wheat crop sowing in November.

Macrotech Developers invests ₹1K cr on construction in Apr-Jun

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Macrotech Developers invested Rs 1,000 crore during the April-June period on the construction of various projects and will pump in Rs 3,500 crore more by March next year as part of its strategy to ramp up execution capabilities.

Macrotech Developers, which sells its properties under the Lodha brand, has a major presence in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune. It has entered into Bengaluru market as well.



In an interview with PTI, Macrotech Developers MD and CEO Abhishek Lodha expressed satisfaction over the operational performance of the company during the first quarter of this fiscal and was confident of

achieving the targeted 20 per cent growth in sales bookings to Rs 14,500 crore.

He said the housing demand has been very strong for the last two years on pent up demand post the COVID pandemic and people's aspiration to own better and bigger homes from branded developers.

To encash this demand, Macrotech Developers plans to launch 22 new projects by March next year across MMR, Pune and Bengaluru, covering a 9.4 million square feet area with an estimated sales revenue potential of Rs 12,560 crore.

BUSINESS BRIEF

BYPL AND ISGF JOIN FORCES FOR A GREENER AND SMARTER ENERGY LANDSCAPE

BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) and India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF) have signed a far-reaching MoU that seeks to create a greener and more efficient energy ecosystem. It was signed between Brajesh Kumar, Head Business of BYPL and Reji Kumar Pillai, President of ISGF in the presence of BYPL's CEO, Amarjeet Singh and Pareekshit Bhardwaj, Head Network Operations.

This collaboration aims to accelerate the transformation in the power sector by deploying new technologies and fostering the development of fresh business avenues.

INDIA TO HOST 9TH N2024

India will host the 9th International Nitrogen Conference (N2024) to address various aspects of balancing global environmental change with sustainable nitrogen management, announced Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIU) and Sustainable India Trust in New Delhi today. They launched the website of this triennial conference of the International Nitrogen Initiative (INI) to be held between Feb 5-8 2024 in GGSIU, New Delhi. This is the first public announcement of this conference calling for registration of delegates from India and abroad. "Nitrogen (N) is not just the new carbon but much worse, as its reactive forms go beyond climate change and impact all the sustainable development goals", said Prof. Nandula

Jindal Stainless seeks govt intervention to check surging steel imports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Stainless steel maker Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL) has sought the government's intervention to check increasing imports of steel products from a select group of countries including China.

Select few countries including China are flooding the domestic market with their products, Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL) Managing Director Abhyuday Jindal said.

"We urge the government to take some steps to check these

imports. The government can put anti-dumping duty (ADD) and countervailing duty (CVD) on the import of the items," he said. According to official data, the Share of China, Japan, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Nepal and the USA increased in total steel imports of India in June 2023 as compared to June 2022. India's steel imports rose 7.6 per cent to 4.84 lakh metric tonne during June 2023, over the same month last year. In June 2022, the import from China was 26.1 per cent and Vietnam was 1 per cent.

However, in June 2023, the import from China contributed 37.1 per cent and Vietnam's share was 4.8 per cent in India's steel import basket.

When asked about having a separate policy structure for the stainless steel sector, the industrialist said "it is a long standing demand of the industry. The rules and policies made for the steel sector impacts us despite our situation." The Indian stainless steel industry is operating well below its capacity, it needs government support for level-playing field.

JTL Industries Q1 net profit more than doubles to Rs 25 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Steel pipes maker JTL Industries Ltd's consolidated net profit has more than doubled to Rs 25.37 crore during June quarter, on account of higher revenues.

It had clocked a net profit of Rs 12.08 crore during the April-June period of the preceding 2022-23 fiscal, the company said in a regulatory filing on Saturday.

The company's revenues from operations also rose by 37

per cent to Rs 504.80 crore, from Rs 368.03 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Expenses were at Rs 471.66 crore, as against Rs 354.46 crore.

JTL Industries Ltd (formerly known as JTL Infra Ltd) is the largest producer of electric resistance welded (ERW) steel pipes in India, with a capacity to produce more than 6 lakh metric tons per annum.

The company also exports its products to various offshore markets.

Barca and the woodwork defeat Real in Texas 'Clasico'

AFP ■ ARLINGTON (UNITED STATES)

Barcelona beat Real Madrid 3-0 in a fiercely contested friendly match on Saturday with an early strike from Ousmane Dembele and late goals from Fermin Lopez and Ferran Torres.

The result was harsh on Carlo Ancelotti's team, who struck the woodwork five times and created plenty of opportunities. But Spanish champions Barcelona's more clinical finishing proved to be the difference.

A packed AT&T Stadium, home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, witnessed a game which had all the passion and commitment of a real derby despite being a pre-season warm-up.

The crowd were soon on their feet when Oriol Romeu rattled the Real cross-bar with a thundering drive in the fourth minute but Barca soon had their fans celebrating.

A cleverly worked free-kick saw Pedri slide a diagonal pass into the path of Dembele, who expertly drilled the ball into the far corner.

Real had a great chance to get level just five minutes later when Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo handled in the box but Vinicius Junior blasted the penalty against the bar.

The action was non-stop as



Rodrygo then forced Barcelona keeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen into a fine, full-length save with a free-kick that was flying towards the top corner.

The woodwork denied Real again when Vinicius struck the bar and although Jude Bellingham outjumped ter Stegen, the midfielder's header hit the post.

At the other end, Dembele

had a chance for a second after a mistake from Ferland Mendy allowed him to break through on goal, but the French forward's soft shot was easily dealt with by Thibaut Courtois.

Tempers flared after a sliding challenge from behind from Frenkie de Jong on Eder Militao, with players from both teams scuffling on the half-way line and half-time likely came as a

relief for American referee Allen Chapman.

Real's bad luck continued after the break with Aurelien Tchouameni blasting against the bar while Vinicius continued to torment from the left, poking a shot from a tight angle just wide.

There was no let-up from either side, despite multiple substitutions, but Barcelona's finish-

ing proved to be the difference with substitute Fermin Lopez making it 2-0 with a brilliant blast from outside the box in the 85th minute after being set up by Sergi Roberto.

Incredibly, Vinicius, after a jinking run in from the left, struck the bar again with his drive from a tight angle and Barca wrapped up the win in stoppage time.

Ferran Torres, ran on to a lofted ball from Lopez, lifted the ball over the advancing Courtois and showed good awareness and balance to turn and slot the ball into the empty net.

COULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez admitted the scoreline flattered his team.

"The result could have been different, the result is a bit misleading, Madrid also had many chances and we shouldn't be overconfident," he said.

"The result is very favorable but it doesn't mean we played a super match. There are many things to improve. It was a very even match in which Madrid also had many chances," he said.

Xavi also questioned whether he had enough depth for the upcoming season.

"I think Madrid have a much bigger squad than us. At the end of the game they were taking players out and they have many players in the midfield, physical, technical, they have a wide range of possibilities," he said.

"We tried to play and impose our game and in many moments we succeeded. I am satisfied with the way we competed and in many moments we looked like what we want to be," he said.



Man Utd agree deal to sign Hojlund: reports

AFP ■ LONDON

Manchester United have reportedly agreed a deal worth an initial £64 million to sign Atalanta striker Rasmus Hojlund.

The Denmark international is the third major arrival at Old Trafford during the summer transfer window after the signings of Chelsea midfielder Mason Mount and Inter Milan goalkeeper Andre Onana.

United are understood to have agreed a fee of £64 million (\$82 million) for Hojlund, with a further £8 million in add-ons. The 20-year-old is reported

to have agreed terms on a five-year deal with the option of a further season.

United manager Erik ten Hag is keen to boost his striking options after a season in which his side lacked a cutting edge.

The Red Devils finished third in the Premier League but scored just 58 goals -- 36 fewer than champions Manchester City.

Hojlund joined Atalanta in August 2022 and scored 10 goals in 34 appearances last season.

United face Wolves at home in their opening Premier League fixture on August 14.



Van Dijk says becoming Liverpool captain would be 'an honour'

AFP ■ SINGAPORE

Virgil van Dijk said Saturday he was confident that Liverpool's players will step up to fill the void left by Jordan Henderson and said it would be "an honour" to succeed him as captain.

England midfielder Henderson moved to the Saudi Pro League this week and Dutch defender Van Dijk, who has worn the arm band before, is widely tipped to take over as skipper.

"Obviously he's going to be a big miss for us as a player and definitely as a leader and a captain, someone who's so important for us and successful at the club over the last years," Van Dijk said in Singapore, where Liverpool face Leicester City on Sunday.

Henderson, James Milner and Roberto Firmino have all departed this summer, but Van Dijk says others in the squad will make up for it when it comes to leadership.

"Definitely we have a lot of players who can take that responsibility and have to take that responsibility, so I am confident that will happen," Van Dijk, 32, added.

While he didn't want to

say too much about Henderson's replacement as captain, Van Dijk was clear about what it would mean to him if he was asked to take the arm band permanently.

"Obviously I have captained the side multiple times over the last couple of years and it's always a proud moment to do that. We'll see what the future brings but it would be a huge honour to captain the side."

Van Dijk is expected to lead Jurgen Klopp's team against Leicester, but Klopp was giving little away beyond that.

"I know my decision already but I have to tell it first to the players... before I speak in public about it," said the German.

"It's an important decision but more important is the general leadership group we create. It's a big change for us."

Klopp remained optimistic despite the changes.

"Things have to change at some point, that's clear as you can't expect things to go on without any changes or developments," he said.

"I can see a lot of positive signs in training and the games as well. The boys understand the situation and I'm really happy about that."

Colombia stun Germany at World Cup but New Zealand out in tears

AFP ■ AUCKLAND

Colombia scored a 97th-minute winner to stun Germany 2-1 on a night of Women's World Cup drama Sunday which also saw Norway and Switzerland into the last 16 but co-hosts New Zealand dumped out in tears.

Germany smashed Morocco 6-0 in their opener to underline why they were among the pre-tournament favourites, along with Spain and England, to snatch away the United States' crown.

But they came crashing back down to earth at the hands of a Colombia side inspired by 18-year-old Linda Caicedo and roared on by the majority of a rowdy 40,000 crowd in Sydney.

The Real Madrid attacker scored one of the goals of the tournament so far, darting past two Germany defenders before curling the ball into the top corner to open the scoring.

Germany thought they had salvaged a point in the 89th minute when skipper Alexandra Popp defied the whistles to score from the penalty spot.



But with a pulsating game deep into stoppage time and appeared destined for a draw, Manuela Vanegas popped up to head home from close range and put Colombia on the verge of the last 16.

Going into the last round of group matches, Colombia are top of Group H on six points, Germany and Morocco have three and South Korea have zero.

Germany's fate is still in their own hands when they face the Koreans next, with Colombia against Morocco.

Morocco won a Women's World Cup match for the first time after Ibtissam Jraidi struck early to give them a 1-0 victory over South Korea.

"I would like to dedicate this victory to Morocco and all the Arab nations at large," said Jraidi.

As well as capturing a first Morocco victory at the tournament, the team made another piece of history when defender Nouhaila Benzina became the first to play in a hijab at the Women's World Cup.

Morocco's Benzina makes history with hijab

AFP ■ ADELAIDE (AUSTRALIA)

Nouhaila Benzina became the first player to wear a hijab during a Women's World Cup game when she sported the Muslim headscarf in Morocco's match against South Korea on Sunday.

World governing body FIFA lifted its ban on footballers wearing the hijab nearly a decade ago, after previous concerns over player safety.

The 25-year-old defender Benzina, who plays her club football in Morocco, ran out against South Korea in Adelaide to write her name in the history books.

NORWAY THROUGH, NEW ZEALAND OUT

Norway and Switzerland both emerged out of an excruciatingly tight Group A.

Benzina shared social media posts in the lead-up to the World Cup about wearing a hijab, but has not spoken to the media in Australia and New Zealand about it.

She told broadcaster Al Jazeera recently it would be a proud moment.

"Lots of work was done over many years, and thank God it had a positive result," she said.

"We hope to play at a high level and honour Moroccans."

Several other sports have lifted hijab bans in recent years including basketball, but it is still not allowed during official football matches in France.

Former champions Norway thrashed the Philippines 6-0 in Auckland to squeeze into the last 16 on goal difference from New Zealand.

Rapinoe to become WC super sub

AFP ■ AUCKLAND

Megan Rapinoe admitted Sunday to some frustration over her limited playing time for the United States at the Women's World Cup but believes she can still change games off the bench for the holders.

The veteran was a regular starter in the US teams that won the 2015 and 2019 World Cups, but at the age of 38 she is no longer a first pick in a side now coached by Vlatko Andonovski.

After getting half an hour as a substitute in the opening 3-0 win over Vietnam, Rapinoe did not get on as the defending champions battled back to draw 1-1 with the Netherlands in their last game. Speaking in Auckland, she opened up on some frustration at not playing more of a role on the field, but also hopes her experience off the pitch can help the Americans' 14 World Cup newcomers. "You still have a lot to offer both on and off the field. Maybe you are not going to be a starter, playing the 90 minutes, but sometimes as a bench player that is not what you need," said Rapinoe.

Kerr decision down to the wire for must-win Canada clash

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Australia will only decide whether Sam Kerr plays in their seismic Women's World Cup showdown against Canada just before kick-off, coach Tony Gustavsson said Sunday amid concern around rushing the star striker back too early.

The Chelsea forward missed Australia's opening two games with a calf injury, but has declared herself available for their crunch clash in Melbourne on Monday that they must win

to guarantee a place in the round of 16.

Gustavsson said he would meet with medical staff later Sunday ahead of further tests on Kerr scheduled for Monday.

"Everyone involved in sport knows that with calf injuries it's one thing that you're available, but there's also risk when you come back from a muscle injury," he said.

"So we need to balance how many minutes she is available, what are the risks if we go through to the playoffs."



"So a lot on the table to discuss and we probably won't

know how we are going to use that until we are coming into the stadium tomorrow."

The Matildas battled past Ireland 1-0 before a stunning 3-2 upset at the hands of Nigeria, meaning they need to beat Tokyo Olympic champions Canada to make sure they stay alive and Kerr's return would be a massive boost.

Her replacement in their opener against the Irish, Mary Fowler, also missed the Nigeria defeat with a concussion and a

decision on her will similarly be left until late.

"Mary trained fully today, but we need to reassess tonight how she feels, because it's a head injury," said the coach. "Obviously I hope it's a thumbs up." Canada, who played out a sluggish goalless draw with Nigeria in their opening match then rallied from behind to beat Ireland 2-1, will power into the last 16 with a win or draw in the high-stakes Group B clash.

MOVE ON

Canadian coach Bev Priestman called on her team to be brave against Australia and put any noise around Kerr aside.

"There's a lot around about what might come up in front of us, but ultimately I know this team and if we turn up, we can go and get three points," she said. "The focus is to be brave and bring what we bring and bring it well." While Kerr's fate has dominated headlines in Australia, Priestman insisted it had not affected Canada's preparations.

Verstappen wins wet, wild sprint race at Belgian Grand Prix

AFP ■ SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS (BELGIUM)

Max Verstappen increased his lead by a further eight points in the world championship with a calculated and convincing victory ahead of Australian rookie Oscar Piastri in Saturday's rain-delayed sprint race at the Belgian Grand Prix.

Red Bull's double defending world champion rode his luck when McLaren's Piastri snatched the lead by making an early pit-stop to switch from wet to intermediate tyres, to storm back and win by 6.6 seconds.

Verstappen's win extended Red Bull's record this year to 14

wins from 14 races -- 11 grands prix and three sprints.

He said he agreed with Red Bull's strategy decision, which cost him the early lead, but ensured he was able to go on and win.

"I think it was just a safer call," he said. "I could come in first, but then I might be blocked by other cars. There might be a Safety Car and then you lose out massively, so I didn't mind to stay out."

"I mean we lost one position, but we know we are quick and you could see that when we put the 'inter' tyres on we were flying so it was ok."

Looking ahead to Sunday's

Grand Prix, when he will start sixth after taking a five-place penalty, Verstappen said his chief concern was not only the possible change of conditions, but also the risk of a collision at La Source, the hairpin first corner.

"I need to pass a few cars so I think the biggest risk is just lap one, especially Turn One. It's always very tricky there so, as long as we stay out of trouble, I think we will have a quick car."

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc will start Sunday's main event from pole.

Piastri came home a strong second ahead of Pierre Gasly, who gave the beleaguered



Alpine team something to celebrate, with Carlos Sainz and his Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc finishing fourth and fifth.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton came fourth on track for Mercedes, but was demoted to seventh behind Lando Norris, in the sec-

ond McLaren, after taking a five-second penalty for a clash with Red Bull's Sergio Perez. George Russell was eighth in the second Mercedes ahead of Esteban Ocon in the second Alpine and Daniel Ricciardo, enjoying his second weekend with Alpha Tauri. "I am very happy," said Piastri. "We tried out best and led for a few laps, but we were no match for Max. But it's nice to be up there in P2. All credit to the team."

The race began 35 minutes late, after delays caused by heavy rain, with all 20 cars on full-wet tyres for the start behind the safety car.

The race distance was reduced to 12 laps, but it was obvious that in the improving conditions all 20 cars would dive into the pits for intermediates as the race was reduced to 11 laps.

Finally, the safety car came in and Verstappen accelerated into Pouhon while Piastri, Sainz, Perez, Gasly and Hamilton all dived in immediately for intermediates leaving Verstappen leading Leclerc at the front.

'SUFFERING'

"We need to box this lap," said Verstappen, who then pitted, emerging second behind Piastri with Gasly, Perez and Hamilton behind him, all three gaining from their instant pit-

stop decisions. By lap three, the Australian was eight-tenths ahead, his wet-set-up car resisting the Red Bull, which had superior straight-line speed, before Fernando Alonso spun out at the exit of Pouhon.

He was unhurt, but he had his first non-finish of the season to mark his 42nd birthday.

The safety car was deployed while Red Bull told Verstappen Piastri's left-hand tyres were "suffering".

"I'm not surprised, he's drifting everywhere," said the Dutchman who picked his moment after the re-start, with five laps to go, to blast past Piastri down Kemmel Straight.

INDIA'S WC BATTING ASPIRANTS FLOP BIG TIME AS WI LEVEL SERIES



PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN

The batting audition of India's World Cup aspirants didn't go as per plan on a bouncy track as West Indies levelled the three-match ODI series with a comfortable six-wicket victory, riding on superb bowling efforts from Romario Shepherd and Gudakesh Motie.

Indian team management's decision to rest skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli badly backfired as none of the middle-order batters could cope with pace, bounce and turn, getting all-out for 181 in 40.5 overs in the rain-marred second ODI, here on Saturday.

In reply, West Indies survived a lively spell from Shardul Thakur (3/42 in 8 overs) before skipper Shai Hope (63 not out, 80 balls) and young Keacy Carty (48 not out, 65 balls) added 91 runs for the unbroken fifth wicket to close the game in 36.4 overs and break a chain of nine successive bilateral defeats since December, 2019.

However it was an inept batting effort that became India's undoing.

Losing five wickets for 23 runs in just 7.2 overs after opening stand of 90 between Ishan Kishan (55 off 55 balls) and Shubman Gill (34 off 49 balls) hurt India's cause after the West Indies skipper Shai Hope opted to bowl.

The rationale behind Rohit and Kohli's forced break with only 10 months left before the big event, didn't make much sense. Not to forget that the failures left more questions than answers.

There were two rain delays but the West Indies bowlers never let

their intensity drop in an impressive display.

While Kishan, who will not open during World Cup, consolidated his case for selection as second wicket-keeper (provided KL Rahul gets fit for World Cup) with a second successive half-century, the same couldn't be said about Sanju Samson (9 off 19 balls) and Axar Patel (1 off 8 balls).

Promoted as Nos 3 and 4 to keep the left-right combination going, both players struggled not only against short-ball tactic employed by Jayden Seales (1/28 in 6 overs), Alzarri Joseph (2/35 from 7 overs) and Shepherd (3/37 in 8 overs) but also the grip, turn and bounce that spinners Motie (3/36 in 9.3 overs) and Yannic Cariah (1/25 in 5 overs) generated.

Just like the first game, the Kensington Oval pitch had a lot of spice and West Indies bowlers were steady save a brief period when Kishan and Gill did score runs at a brisk pace.

Kishan gave Motie the charge and got a six while Gill's on-drive was a treat for the eyes even though he never looked completely in rhythm.

Once Motie gave the ball more air, a desperate Gill tried to loft him but was holed at long-off boundary.

Kishan, who had by then completed his 50, tried to square cut Shepherd when the ball bounced a tad more and the width wasn't big enough but Alick Athanaze took a fine diving catch at point.

Stand-in skipper Hardik Pandya (7 off 14 balls) was peppered with short balls and finally his patience gave off as he tried to pull Seals and Brandon King had an easy catch at mid-wicket. Seals and Joseph had

pried on the Pandya's patience for a fair duration.

Axar Patel (1), who is now more of a batter in white ball cricket than a bowler, was sent in at No. 4, a slot which India haven't yet got a hang since they are waiting for Shreyas Iyer to get fit. He got an unplayable one from Shepherd and it brushed his gloves before landing safely into Shai Hope's gloves.

Samson, who has a good chance of missing out on the final 15 berth, never looked in sync, having last played a competitive match on May 19 in the IPL.

He has never read leg-spinners well in his career (case in point Wanindu Hasaranga in Sri Lanka in 2021) and never looked comfortable against Cariah's leg-breaks. When he got out, it was a leg-break and extra bounce and Samson couldn't remove his bat from the line of the ball.

However playing him at No. 3 where he won't get a chance in World Cup didn't do his cause any good. Rather checking him at No. 4 where he could replace Iyer or No. 5 as a keeper-batter in case Rahul doesn't make it in the end would have been a better move.

As far as Suryakumar Yadav (24 of 25 balls) is concerned, his die-hard fans will tear their hair in frustration after three boundaries, including a crunchy pull-shot, raised hopes of revival.

The dismissal was a meek one when Motie bowled one wide off-stump and it had turn and bounce enticing him to play the cut which landed into fielder's hands at backward point. With Surya's departure, India's hopes of crossing 200 evaporated.



I'm a turtle right now not rabbit: Hardik

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN

India ODI stand-in captain Hardik Pandya has admitted that he is right now "a turtle not rabbit", but is keen to increase his bowling workload to prepare himself for the World Cup at home in October-November.

Pandya has been used sparingly as a bowler in international matches in recent times due to a spate of injuries -- shoulder and back to be precise. He bowled three overs in the first match and took one wicket giving away 17 runs.

He, however, went wicketless in the second ODI here on Saturday, conceding 38 runs from 6.4 overs.

Plagued by injuries, Pandya, who last played Tests for India in September 2018, has limited himself to only playing white-ball cricket.

"My body is fine. I have to bowl more overs and get my workload up for the World Cup. I'm a turtle right now not the rabbit and hoping everything goes right as the World Cup comes on," Pandya said after India's disappointing six-wicket defeat in a rain-marred second ODI here.

The Indian team management's decision to rest

regular skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli badly backfired as the visitors were bowled out for 181 in 40.5 overs. The home team chased the target with 80 balls to spare with captain Shai Hope top-scoring with an unbeaten 63.

But Pandya said going into the third and final game on Tuesday, with the series tied at 1-1, would be more challenging and exciting.

"To be honest, you want to be going 1-1 to the third game as it'll be more challenging and exciting. They will be tested, we will be tested now that the series stands 1-1. The next game will be exciting for the viewers as well as the players," he said.

None of the India middle-order batters could cope with pace, bounce and turn at the Kensington Oval pitch with Romario Shepherd (3/37) and Gudakesh Motie (3/36) tormenting the visitors.

"We didn't bat the way we were supposed to. The wicket was better than it was in the first game. Everyone barring Shubman (Gill) hit fielders and got out. Disappointing but many things to learn," said Pandya, who himself got out for 7 off 14 balls.

Not worried about every single game or single series: Dravid

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN

India head coach Rahul Dravid said that the team was "not worried about every single game and single series" and will have to try out other players ahead of the World Cup, as he defended his decision to rest Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in the second ODI against West Indies.

The Indian team management's decision to rest regular skipper Rohit and star batter Virat Kohli badly backfired as the visitors were bowled out for 181 in 40.5 overs. The home team chased down the target with 80 balls to spare for an easy six-wicket victory to level the three-match ODI series 1-1.

"We will always look at the bigger picture. At this stage in the cycle, the Asia Cup and World Cup coming up we have to look at the bigger picture because of some of the injuries we have. We can't get worried about every single game. Every single series, if we do that it will be a mistake," Dravid said after the match.

"To give people chances, Virat and Rohit sat out. We have to take those risks, we might have to take those chances in situations like that looking at big events. We want to give them (young players) as many chances we possibly can."

Dravid said with some players injured and recovering at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru, it was imperative for the management to give chances to other team members ahead of the Asia Cup (August 30-September 17) and the World Cup (October-November).

"Honestly, this was our last chance to try out some of our



players. We have got few of our players injured who are in NCA. With a month to go until Asia Cup, we are running out of time in a lot of ways. We are hopeful that some of them (injured players) will be fit for Asia Cup and World Cup, but we can't take those chances.

"With the injuries we have and some uncertainty surrounding them, we have to try out other people and give them chances so in a worst-case scenario, so that at least they have game time behind them and so if required they can play. It gives us an opportunity to make some decisions on players."

The former India batting stalwart said the move to rest Rohit and Kohli was to create enough bench strength which can be used in necessity.

"We just felt that in a series like this with two, three matches to go for the Asia Cup, playing Virat and Rohit would not have given us too many answers."

"We need to build some of the players, we need get some

answers for specific positions considering some of the situations we are in," said Dravid. He said he is least bothered about criticism and opinions of people outside.

"We are not too much worried about the opinion of people. It's just that these are the talented boys we have in the country. They have all performed and it's up to them to take the opportunities."

Dravid believes the pitch was not easy for batting and they were 50-60 runs short of what could have been a winning score in the second ODI.

"We are little disappointed, we knew it was a tricky wicket, not an easy wicket to bat on. We needed to get somewhere near to 230-240, that would have been a very good and competitive score."

"But we kept losing wickets in bunches. We got a really good start, Shubman (Gill) and Ishan (Kishan) really batted well to give us a good start but we needed somebody to carry on, some-

body to bat till the end. We lost wickets in the middle and probably we are 50-60 runs short."

Dravid feels Suryakumar Yadav must be disappointed with his performances in ODI cricket, given the standard he has set in T20 format.

"Surya is a really good player there is no doubt about it, his performances have shown that in T20 cricket and even in domestic cricket in white ball. He would be the first one to admit his ODI numbers probably haven't been up to his high standards or the standard that he has set in T20."

"He is learning about ODI cricket. He is learning how to bat through the middle overs. He is a talent, a really good player so we want to give as many opportunities we can. It's really up to him now to take those opportunities. In the kind of set up we are we would like to give people as many chances we can," he said.

Dravid is mighty impressed with Shubman and Ishan's performances and termed the former as an vital cog of the team in all three formats of the game.

"I won't worry so much about Shubman. He is batting really well, he looks really good. It can happen, you can't criticise people after every single game. These things can happen, it's not easy batting conditions. We needed to grind and fight it out there. Shubman is an important part of all the three formats now," he said.

"Ishan has done really well. This is third fifty in a row now counting the Test matches. He is taking the opportunities when he is given the chance. That's all we ask from young players."

Jasprit Bumrah Fully Fit For Ireland Tour

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who has been away from competitive cricket for nearly a year is now fit and ready to make his much-awaited return to International cricket. He is set to return in action with the upcoming Ireland tour.

The pacer last played competitive cricket in September 2022 during T20Is against Australia, before a recurrence of a back injury meant he has been out of action since then. He has been undergoing rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in



Bengaluru since undergoing back surgery in New Zealand in March this year.

BCCI had said in a medical update that Bumrah was bowling with full intensity in the

nets. Now as per a report from Times of India, Bumrah bowled 10 overs in two spells to young Mumbai batters during a practice match.

This is a great indication of his fitness, Bumrah seems ready to make his return to International cricket and this is a great news for Team India ahead of the Asia Cup and ODI World Cup 2023.

Jay Shah Confirms Jasprit Bumrah On Ireland Tour

BOARD of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary, Jay Shah, on Thursday, confirmed that Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is fully fit and might go for India's

tour of Ireland, which will begin in August.

The squad for the series is likely to be announced this week. The three T20Is will take place on August 18, 20 and 23 this year. The pacer underwent a successful back surgery back in March and has not played competitive cricket since a T20I match at home against Australia in September.

The tour of Ireland will be Bumrah's second visit to the country, with the first one coming in 2018 which saw him fracturing his thumb in the first match. This injury caused him to miss the first half of the England tour held that year.

Rinku credits IPL performance for Asian Games selection

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Crediting the "special IPL innings" for changing his life, Uttar Pradesh batter Rinku Singh said he was left emotional when he received his maiden India call up for the Asian Games.

Despite a stellar IPL campaign with the Kolkata Knight Riders, Rinku was not included in the squad for the upcoming five-match T20s series against West Indies. He finished as the top run-getter for KKR with 474 runs at an average of 59.25 and 149-plus strike rate.

However, the 25-year-old has made the cut for the Hangzhou Asian Games scheduled from September 23 to October 8.

"When I saw my name I was very emotional, I have been working for this and now I have got it," Rinku Singh said in a video posted by BCCI.



"Everyone at home wanted me to play for India and when I got selected everyone danced. Everyone was happy. I am excited to play for India, if given a chance I'd like to do well and our team will win and bring home the gold."

Rinku made headlines after hitting fives sixes in a row against Gujarat Titans in the IPL earlier this year and since then

the middle-order batter's life has changed.

KKR needed 28 off 5 deliveries as Rinku clobbered five successive sixes to seal a memorable win.

"After those five sixes life changed a lot. People knew me at the time but I was not that popular after that a lot of people came to know about me," Rinku said.

Rahane pulls out of county stint with Leicestershire

PTI ■ LONDON

Senior India batter Ajinkya Rahane will not join English county side Leicestershire as planned earlier as he wants a break from cricket after hectic international engagements, the club said.

The 35-year-old Rahane was to join the county club in June but his arrival was pushed back due to increased international commitments. He flew straight to England after the IPL for the World Test Championship final, before heading on India's Test tour of the West Indies this month.

The club said with those involvements previously not factored into his schedule, Rahane has now expressed his desire to take a break from cricket during August and September, meaning he will not feature for Leicestershire as planned.

"Firstly, we are fully understanding of Ajinkya's situation. He has experienced a hectic schedule in recent months, both in India and travelling with the national team, and we accept his wishes to recover and spend some time with his family," Director of Cricket Claude Henderson said in a statement issued by the club.

"We have been in constant communication with Ajinkya and accept how situations can change quickly in cricket. He is extremely grateful for our understanding and still hopes to play for Leicestershire one day."

Australian Peter Handscomb will replace Rahane. Handscomb has extended his stay with the Foxes to feature in next month's Metro Bank One Day Cup.

DEODHAR TROPHY

Central Zone beat North Zone by eight wickets

PTI ■ PUDUCHERRY

Shivam Chaudhary and Yash Dubey slammed fine fifties to complement the spinners' performance as Central Zone defeated North East Zone by eight wickets in a round-robin match of the Deodhar Trophy here on Sunday.

Opting to field, Central Zone dismissed North Zone for 164 in 49 overs before romping home in 33 overs, courtesy a 153-run second-wicket stand between Shivam (85) and Yash (72).

Chaudhary blasted seven

fours and two sixes in his 90-ball innings, while Dubey had seven hits to the fence and one maximum in his 91-ball 72-run knock.

With the win, Central Zone claimed their first win in four games to be at the fourth spot in the six-team tournament, while North Zone are in fifth position with one win and two losses.

Sent in to bat, North Zone couldn't get any momentum and were reduced to 17 for two in 6 overs.

The spin trio of Aditya Sarwate (3/19), Saransh Jain (2/39), Yash Kothari (2/4) and Karn Sharma (1/34) strangled



the batters, sharing eight wickets among them.

Shivam Mavi (1/19) and Yash Thakur (1/15) were the other wickettakers.

For North Zone, Kamsha Yangfo (35), Ashish Thapa (31), Rex Singh (27) and L

Keishangbam (24) scored the bulk of runs.

SOUTH ZONE BEAT EAST ZONE BY 5 WICKETS

Mayank Agarwal and Sai Sudharsan came up with superb half-centuries as South Zone

produced an allround show to continue its unbeaten run, coasting to a comfortable five-wicket win over East Zone in a round-robin match of the Deodhar Trophy here on Sunday.

Agarwal (84) and Sudharsan (53) shared an 118-run partnership for the second wicket, studded with 10 fours and two sixes, in South Zone's emphatic 230-run chase in 44.2 overs.

While Agarwal slammed six fours and a six in 88 balls, his partner Sudharsan send the ball four times across the fence and deposited it at the stands once in his 57-ball knock.

Once they were back in the hut, N Jagadeesan (32) and Rohit Rayudu (24) kept their chase on track.

South Zone was atop the points table with four wins in as many games, while East Zone are placed second with 3 wins in 4 matches.

The win was set up by a collective effort from the bowlers with seam trio of V Koushik (3/37), Vidhwath Kaverappa (2/40) and Vijaykumar Vyshak (1/62) sharing six wickets, while spin duo of Sai Kishore (3/45) and Washington Sundar (1/41) taking four.

Electing to bat, Virat Singh

(49) and Subhranshu Senapati (44) gave East Zone a good start but they suffered a collapse after the duo were back to the pavilion, losing regular wickets.

Akash Deep (44) and Mukhtar Hussain (33) then rescued the team, taking East Zone to a respectable score.

BRIEF SCORE: East Zone: 229 allout in 46 overs (Virat Singh 49, Akash Deep 44, Subhranshu Senapati 44; V Koushik 3/37, Sai Kishore 3/45)

South Zone: 230 for 5 in 44.2 overs (Mayank Agarwal 84, Sai Sudarshan 53; Avinov Choudhury 2/58).